

Valhalla School Foundation

Valhalla Centre, Alberta

Charter School Operator Evaluation Report

Evaluation conducted February 3, 2026
Presented to the board June 15, 2026



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I. INTRODUCTION

Background

Valhalla School Foundation has been in operation since 2008. There are 79 students enrolled in the Valhalla Community School in Valhalla Centre for the 2025/26 school year.

The mandate of the Valhalla School Foundation is grounded in whole-group direct instruction and incorporating mandatory second language and student leadership development for Kindergarten to Grade 9 students who are English Language Learners (ELL).

Enrolment in the past five years since the charter school operator's last charter renewal, as of February 2021 was as follows:

| School Year | ECS | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Total |
|-------------|-----|----|----|---|----|----|----|----|----|---|-------|
| 2021/22 | 7 | 11 | 5 | 9 | 14 | 12 | 13 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 94 |
| 2022/23 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 15 | 11 | 9 | 7 | 8 | 81 |
| 2023/24 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 16 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 46 |
| 2024/25 | 6 | 9 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 12 | 9 | 9 | 71 |
| 2025/26 | 9 | 8 | 10 | 2 | 8 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 13 | 8 | 79 |

Facilities

Valhalla School Foundation currently operates Valhalla Community School serving Kindergarten to Grade 9.

Staff

Charter school operator submitted the following data to Alberta Education and Childcare.

- The average class size reported for the 2025/26 school year is:
 - 17 students.
- Charter school operator employs 18 individuals. Current staffing of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE), is:
 - superintendent (0.6 FTE);
 - secretary-treasurer (0.4 FTE)
 - school certificated leadership staff (1.0 FTE) with teaching assignment;
 - certificated teaching staff (4.0 FTE);
 - educational assistants currently (2.0 FTE), beginning in January (3.0 FTE);
 - director (0.4 FTE) transportation lead;
 - administrative assistant (0.0 FTE) school secretary (1.0 FTE);
 - custodian (0.75 FTE) charter school employee; and

- bus drivers (3.0 FTE).
- Contracted non charter school employees:
 - bookkeeper (0.4 FTE);
 - Payroll (0.4 FTE);
 - speech language therapist (0.04 FTE);
 - occupational therapist (0.04 FTE); and
 - deaf hard of hearing consultant (0.04 FTE).

TOTAL = 15.07 FTE individuals.

Foundational Statements

Vision:

Students will become well-educated and engaged citizens, with strong ethical, civic and democratic standards, who are committed to their families, school, community, province and country.

Mission:

To instill a readiness for leadership by equipping rural students with both knowledge and skills necessary for success in a rapidly changing economy in the communities they serve.

Guiding Principles of Teaching and Learning:

1) Direct Instruction

Direct instruction emphasizes the importance of successive 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.

2) Sequential Mastery Learning

The success of direct instruction requires a philosophical embrace of sequential mastery learning, where students 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.

3) 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.

4) Automaticity and Recall

The VSF holds in high regard for its students the skills of memorization of prose as well as arithmetic mental calculation and recognizes the role of diligent drill and practice in fostering regular, automatic presentation of said mastered skills.

5) Core Knowledge

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 essential that students are able to converse on a broad scope of subject areas and develop a measurable proficiency in another language.

6) 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. 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 student understanding of civic and community group processes into its knowledge enrichment component, a keen grasp of the processes of organized group work in committees and civic arenas, and the development of skills and attitudes necessary to make effective contributions as adult members of the community.

7) Public Speaking and Presentation

The exercise of rural leadership requires that students be comfortable speaking in public 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. It is also a priority to enable students to present dignified visual written work in the form of excellent penmanship.

8) Critical Thinking

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 educational research indicates that 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.

Charter Goals and Outcomes

With the intent of developing leadership skills in its rural students, the goals of the Valhalla Charter School are:

1. To produce students who are excellent communicators.
 - 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.
 - Students will communicate with confidence on a broad range of subjects by developing a firm understanding of history, science and fine arts.
 - Students will express themselves in an articulate manner while public speaking.
 - Students will develop a measurable proficiency in a second language.

2. To prepare students for community involvement and leadership.
 - Students will recognize the importance of community involvement by directly experiencing the efforts of community and municipal groups.
 - Students in grades three and higher will participate in community and student groups by attending meetings and participating in relevant discussions at an age-appropriate level. (For example, all students attend at least one School Council or Board meeting with their parents every year.)

Current and Historical Terms of Charter

Valhalla School Foundation is currently in its 3rd year of operations of a 5-year term. The term of the current charter is from September 1, 2023, to August 31, 2028.

The foundation began with a 5-year term from 2008/09 to 2012/13, continued with a 5-year term from 2013/14 to 2017/18, 2018/19 to 2022/23, and 2023/24 to 2027/28 school years.

Terms of Reference

The Charter Schools Regulation requires that all charter school operators in the province be evaluated at least once in the term of their charter. There are a number of purposes for the evaluation of a charter school operator:

- To provide evidence to the Minister and the board that the charter school operator is in compliance with provincial requirements and the requirements of the charter, inclusive of charter amendments, approved by the Minister.
- To report to staff, parents, and the community on the success of the charter school operator and to identify areas of strength and areas that may require additional attention.
- To focus the attention of the board and staff on the goals and objectives of the charter and the need to establish and confirm measurable outcomes and measures.
- To facilitate continuous improvement in the charter school operator consistent with the assurance requirements of the ministry and with the local direction established by the charter school community and authorized by the board of directors.

The criteria by which the charter school operator is evaluated are:

1. Meets the requirements of its charter and has performance measures that show clear evidence of success.
2. Operates in a manner consistent with all applicable provisions of the *Education Act*, associated regulations and policies.
3. Charter school operator is governed effectively.
4. Charter school is administered effectively.
5. Charter school operator is fiscally viable and responsible.
6. Students, parents, staff, school council(s) and community members considered the school program to be successful.
7. Student success is determined in accordance with Ministerial Order #005/2024 goals and standards applicable to the provision of education in Alberta).

8. Charter school operator shares its innovative practices and learning outcomes with the education community.
9. Evidence of consistently strong or improving student achievement.
10. Multiple indicators that the charter school operator exhibits ongoing commitment to engaging students, teachers, parents, and community members in a collaborative model of continuous improvement in multiple ways.
11. Evidence that the charter school operator uses research-informed practices to create innovative learning environments and improve student learning outcomes.

Historic Charter Evaluations and Last Evaluation Follow-Up

Valhall School Foundation had their first charter evaluation in the 2010/11 school year, following with the 2015/16, and 2020/21 school years.

- The 2020/21 school year charter evaluation identified two required changes indicated below.
 - Enhance sharing of best practices with the education community: Valhalla needs to create opportunities to share results of its innovations and learnings with the educational community in the rest of the province.
 - Strengthen the research component of the school: That Valhalla establish and implement a research plan to better create, evaluate and share innovative practices.

2025/26 School Year Charter Evaluation Team and Processes

The findings of the evaluation were established using the following processes and activities:

1. The charter school operator was asked to develop and submit to Alberta Education and Childcare a self-evaluation report based on the 11 criteria named above (see Appendix).
2. Alberta Education and Childcare established a team of three staff from Field Services, including Connie Ohl, Christine Karas, and Nicole McNally, as well as one staff member from Business Operations and Stakeholder Support (BOSS), Hardeep Toore, to review the self-evaluation report, documents, and data submitted by the charter school operator. Onsite date was determined, including a schedule of events for the one day of onsite interviews and focus groups sessions. Secretary-treasurer interview was scheduled post-onsite as a virtual meeting.
3. Interviews and focus group sessions were established to provide opportunities for the board, superintendent, principal (school administration), teachers, support staff (non-certificated staff), students, and parents to share insights about the school's successes and ideas about how the charter school operator might become more effective. On February 3, 2026, the following processes were conducted:
 - Interviews were conducted with the board, superintendent, and principal (school administration).

- Focus group sessions were conducted with the teachers, support staff, students and parents.
 - One focus group was held with four teachers.
 - One focus group was held with four support staff.
 - One focus group was held with five parents.
 - Two focus groups were held with students from Kindergarten to Grade 4 and Grades 5 to 9.
4. Evaluation team members participated in all learning environment observations throughout Kindergarten to Grade 9 to observe instruction, the design of student learning activities, and student engagement.

Executive Summary

The charter school operator demonstrates overall effectiveness in meeting legislative and charter requirements, supported by stable governance, clear administrative leadership, and strong alignment with provincial expectations. The school provides a positive, inclusive learning environment where students report high levels of belonging, engagement, and access to meaningful leadership opportunities, supported by responsive instructional practices and targeted supports. Financial management is sound, with sustained surpluses and growing operating reserves, despite ongoing pressures related to enrolment, transportation, and staffing.

The organization demonstrates a strong commitment to continuous improvement through active stakeholder engagement and the use of feedback to inform decision-making and program refinement. Emerging research-informed practices and student-led inquiry initiatives are contributing to innovation, engagement, and community connection. While local measures indicate areas of improving student achievement, provincial assessment results remain below provincial averages in key areas. Continued focus on strengthening academic outcomes, reviewing the charter to reflect current practices and measurable results, and enhancing governance capacity and knowledge mobilization will be important to support long-term sustainability and accountability.

The evaluation report references requirements, which may necessitate an action plan, commendations, and recommendations.

II. EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS, COMMENDATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

1. Meets the requirements of its charter and has performance measures that show clear evidence of success.

Charter goals related to student leadership, communication, community engagement, and belonging are clearly reflected in instructional programming, student experiences, and school culture. Local measures, including stakeholder feedback, student-led initiatives, participation data, and engagement indicators—demonstrate positive trends in student growth, confidence, and engagement, highlighting strong implementation of these aspects of the charter.

However, while these strengths are evident, the current charter does not fully reflect the school's evolving practices or the emerging evidence of success. There is also limited evidence demonstrating that students are developing measurable proficiency in a second language, as outlined in the charter. The school is encouraged to clarify this area by either strengthening and formalising its approach to second language learning with clear, measurable performance indicators or by amending the charter to better align with current practice.

Updating the charter to align with the school's context, define measurable outcomes, and articulate a coherent five- to ten-year vision is essential to strengthening accountability and supporting sustained growth and success.

Commendation:

- Clear evidence that students experience a personalized approach, strong relationships, and have access to multiple opportunities to engage in the community and take on leadership roles consistent with the charter's intent.

Recommendations:

- Improve consistency in how charter evidence is consolidated and presented in planning and reporting documents.
- Review and amend the charter, if applicable, to ensure it is reflective of the current focus of the school and includes a future vision for Valhalla Community School students, as indicated in section 4 of the Charter Schools Regulation.

Requirement:

- Further develop charter-specific performance indicators by incorporating a more robust suite of multiple measures to strengthen the connection between charter goals, strategies and measurable outcomes over time, in accordance with section 7(3)(a) of the Charter Schools Regulation, e.g., second language proficiency results.

2. Operates in a manner consistent with all applicable provisions of the *Education Act*, associated regulations and policies.

Operates in a manner consistent with the Education Act, associated regulations, and ministerial policies. Governance and administrative evidence demonstrate clear awareness of legislative obligations and a deliberate effort to align policies, procedures, and practices with provincial requirements. Regular policy review processes, clear differentiation between governance and operations, and administrative oversight mechanisms support compliance across key areas, including student safety, inclusive education, curriculum delivery, assessment, and accountability. Leadership practices reflect an understanding of both statutory responsibilities and local context, supporting consistent and compliant operation of the charter school while maintaining responsiveness to student and community needs.

Commendation:

- There is continued growth in inclusive practices, including the development of a regulation classroom, mental health supports, counseling supports, and contracted specialized services, e.g., speech language therapist, occupational therapist and deaf hard of hearing consultant, which can be challenging to access in a rural area.

Recommendation:

- As an acknowledged best practice, sustain clear, consistent communications to parents regarding school decisions, including supports for students, enrolment information, fees, transportation, and key policy/procedure updates to support transparency as the organization grows.

Requirements:

- Review and update the registration form to ensure alignment with the requirements of the Student Records Regulation: e.g., aboriginal self-identification, religious declaration.
- Strengthen evidence that all students benefit from meaningful and consistent learning related to First Nations, Métis and Inuit foundational knowledge across subject areas by enhancing system-level documentation and actions that demonstrate alignment with the requirements of the Education and Childcare Ministry Business Plan (Outcome 2), the Education Act section 33, and the Funding Manual, including ensuring inclusion of how learning outcomes are intentionally planned, implemented, assessed, and monitored over time across grade levels. Curricular outcomes for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students are referenced throughout Alberta's programs of study.

3. Charter school operator is governed effectively.

There appears to be a clear division and increased communication between school operations and board governance, with the board demonstrating an understanding of its governance role, fiduciary responsibilities, and accountability for overseeing the charter. Governance practices show increased clarity and stability, including improved alignment with the charter mandate and strengthened working relationships with the superintendent and school leadership.

Stability in both the board chair and superintendent roles provides a strong foundation for future planning and organizational continuity and is having a positive influence on the overall direction of the school. The board engages in policy review, receives consistent reporting, and participates in stakeholder engagement processes that support informed decision-making. These practices collectively contribute to effective oversight, strategic direction, and a focus on long-term sustainability.

Commendation:

- Evidence of improved clarity between governance and operations supports effective oversight and strategic focus. Systematic board reporting processes demonstrate increased governance capacity. Board members show commitment to the charter mission and long-term sustainability of the school.

Recommendations:

- As a recognized best practice:
 - Continue to strengthen board succession planning including key leadership roles to support governance continuity by formalizing a board success plan, e.g., mechanisms to support staggered continuity, recruitment of diverse governance perspectives, and board members beyond the parent community.
 - Expand governance-level communication with stakeholders to further enhance transparency and engagement.
 - Continue the ongoing review and identification of policy gaps of a multi-year policy review plan within a structured review cycle and ensure that evidence of this process is communicated to stakeholders.
 - Formalize board governance professional development, including onboarding and development for board members.

4. Charter school is administered effectively.

The charter school is administered effectively, with school leadership providing clear instructional direction, responsive student supports, and consistent alignment with charter goals. Administrative practices support a positive school culture, student well-being, inclusive education, and the implementation of instructional programming aligned with provincial curriculum and charter priorities. Evidence indicates strong collaboration among staff, effective use of professional learning, and responsive

allocation of resources based on student need. Together, these practices contribute to stable operations and positive learning environments.

Increasing numbers of students with complex emotional and behavioural needs have placed significant demands on educational assistants, particularly among younger students entering the school with prior trauma.

Commendation:

- Strong collaborative staff culture observed, particularly within the teacher cohort, who all support consistency, safety, and positive learning environments.

Recommendations:

- Clarify and define the professional role of educational assistants within the school to ensure compliance with the *Education Act*, including establishing clear communication, decision-making processes, and related protocols.
- As a recognized best practice, continue enhancing leadership development and succession planning to ensure sustainability and continuity of effective administration stability.

5. Charter school operator is fiscally viable and responsible.

The Valhalla School Foundation operates within a tight financial environment but demonstrates a pattern of maintaining small annual surpluses and gradually building its operating reserve over the last three years. The administration's focus on maintaining a consistent enrolment has strengthened revenue capacity. However, the charter school operator faces continual operational pressures tied to staffing, transportation, and maintaining steady enrolments. Governance capacity and financial literacy at the board level also remain areas of ongoing concern, as confirmed during the secretary-treasurer interview.

Through a review of their financial reporting, and an interview with the secretary-treasurer, the Valhalla School Foundation demonstrates that it is fiscally viable and maintains responsible financial practices. The charter school operator manages its resources carefully, conducting regular monitoring of budgets and financial performance, which has supported its ability to maintain consecutive annual surpluses and steadily growing its operating reserve. While the board continues to develop its financial literacy, administration plays an essential role in guiding the board to ensuring informed financial decision-making. This collaborative relationship between administration and the board is critical to sustaining stable operations for this school. In addition, the charter school operator has policies in place that outline financial oversight and decision-making authority, providing structure and clarity to its fiscal management practices. Overall, the charter school operator is commended for its diligent financial processes and its commitment to strengthening governance capacity over time.

As a small rural school, the Valhalla School Foundation faces several fiscal challenges identified by the secretary-treasurer. Key pressures identified are rising transportation costs, and consistent enrolments. The administration is aware of

these challenges and has taken deliberate steps to lessen their impact by building and maintaining a healthy operating reserve and focussing on advertising efforts to ensure consistent enrolment. It is recommended that the charter school operator continue to monitor and sustain an appropriate reserve balance to mitigate the identified cost pressures.

Turnover within the current administration would pose a significant risk, as this group has been central in moving Valhalla Community School out of recurring deficits and stabilizing its financial position. Sustaining experienced leadership is vital to the long-term viability of the school, as continuity in financial oversight and governance support directly influences its ability to operate responsibly and remain fiscally sound. Strengthening the board’s financial literacy through ongoing education and support will also be important, as any administrative turnover could significantly affect the charter school’s ability to remain financially viable.

The last three years of financial reporting show that the Valhalla School Foundation is managing its finances effectively. The charter school operator has maintained annual operating surpluses and continues to strengthen its operating reserve, which has grown steadily over this period. Enrolment has increased significantly, and the school has adjusted its certificated staffing levels to align with student needs, ensuring appropriate staffing levels as enrolment rises.

Valhalla School Foundation’s Budget Surplus (Deficit) Summary for the last three years is as follows:

| | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Actual Revenue | \$1,831,901 | \$1,815,795 | \$1,625,038 |
| Actual Expenses | \$1,767,256 | \$1,766,968 | \$1,605,400 |
| Annual operating surplus (deficit) | \$64,645 | \$48,827 | \$19,638 |

| | | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Budgeted Revenue | \$1,690,034 | \$1,876,959 | \$1,445,315 |
| Budgeted Expenses | \$1,651,234 | \$1,841,058 | \$1,445,338 |
| Budgeted annual operating surplus (deficit) | \$38,800 | \$35,901 | \$-23 |

| | | | |
|---|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Accumulated Surplus (Deficit)/Operating Reserves | \$50,007 | \$119,912 | \$136,005 |
| Capital Reserves | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |

Commendations:

- The charter school operator is commended for the responsible stewardship of its finances and having a clear set of policies in place to guide their financial decisions.
- The charter school operator is commended for its consistent financial stewardship, maintaining annual surpluses over the last three years and steadily strengthening its operating reserve. This reflects deliberate, responsible management within a tight fiscal environment.

Recommendations:

- As a recognized best practice, the charter school operator strengthen governance capacity and establish a clear succession plan to reduce the sole dependency on the expertise of the current administration and ensure continuity if staffing changes occur.
- The charter school operator continues focusing on enrolment stability as consistent enrolment remains essential to maintaining predictable revenue.

6. Students, parents, staff, school council(s), and community members considered the school program to be successful.

Students, parents, staff, school council members, and community stakeholders, consider the school program to be successful. Stakeholder feedback reflects strong satisfaction with the school's culture, relationships, leadership opportunities, and student supports. Families and staff describe a welcoming and caring learning environment where students feel known, supported, and engaged. School council and community involvement further reinforce positive perceptions of program effectiveness and relevance.

Students report feeling that they belong and can be successful here when they were not successful at other schools. They reported feel supported, heard, and connected, and clearly identify student voice and leadership as defining elements of the charter. House teams, cohort groupings, and student-led events, e.g., hot lunch programs, junior high dances, contribute to a strong sense of belonging, teamwork, and cross-grade mentorship.

The small-school environment allows for individualized support and strong connections with teachers. Parents referenced that teachers focus on strategies for self-regulation, including helping students manage emotions, focus, and maintaining positive learning behaviors. Public speaking and student-led activities are viewed as particularly strong, with staff observing clear student growth, pride, and motivation over time. The school has a community library that community members use as a meeting space as well.

Commendation:

- Active school council with community involvement, within a small community, contributing to program success. The community that is involved in the school is very supportive of the work being done.

Recommendations:

- As recognized best practices:
 - Strengthen alignment with the School Councils Regulation by clearly defining and continuing to support the transition to an advisory role for the school council, including establishing processes that enable meaningful input into school policies, planning, and operations.
 - Continue to seek broader stakeholder participation in targeted engagement opportunities.
 - Strengthen mechanisms to capture and report ongoing stakeholder feedback.

7. Student success is determined in accordance with Ministerial Order #005/2024 (goals and standards applicable to the provision of education in Alberta).

Student success is determined in alignment with Ministerial Order #005/2024, with evidence indicating attention to academic achievement, well-being, belonging, and engagement. The charter school operator defines success broadly, incorporating student growth, leadership, agency, and social-emotional development alongside academic outcomes. Instructional and leadership practices reflect provincial goals and standards, supporting students to develop competencies and skills necessary for lifelong learning and citizenship.

Many stakeholders referenced the Reading Mastery literacy program used in the school as beneficial for students and student success. Reading Mastery is an explicit phonics program developed as a direct instruction resource and has proven to be successful in effectively teaching reading to children. Responsive instructional practices and collaborative supports have also contributed positively to student well-being and learning.

Professional learning is well supported, with access to external expertise and aligned to curriculum implementation, instructional design, and assessment practices. Partnerships with the Alberta Professional Learning Consortium to build staff capacity has been beneficial.

Valhalla's provincial assessment results indicate that student achievement on almost all core academic measures remains below provincial averages and has declined over the past year for both Acceptable and Excellence measures. These trends underscore a need to strengthen academic outcomes alongside the school's place-based learning mode. Following a period of staff and leadership turnover, the organization has recently reached greater stability, which is beginning to support observable progress in this area.

Recommendations:

- As a recognized best practice, enhance reporting that clearly links student success indicators to provincial standards. Continued focus on AECAM results and local measures to track success and drive targeted academic interventions.

- As a recognized best practice that staff continue to collaborate around instructional design, focusing on developing research-backed resources and assessment tools that effectively track student growth and achievement and inform educational programming.
- Staff indicated a need for greater transparency around resourcing that would sustain staff well-being, supporting program delivery, and the provision of specialized supports, e.g., strengthen transition supports for younger students who express anxiety moving to higher grades.

8. Charter school operator shares its innovative practices and learning outcomes with the educational community.

The charter school operator demonstrates emerging practices for sharing innovative approaches and learning outcomes. Internal sharing of innovation is evident through staff collaboration, student-led research initiatives, and community-based projects. While there is growing awareness of the expectation to share learning beyond the school, more consistent and systematic approaches to provincial-level dissemination are still developing. The community of Valhalla is small, and the charter school is a hub in the community. They are members of The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools (TAAPCS) and work with other charter school operators in sharing best practices.

In 2025, student-led community-based research projects were initiated resulting in a partnership in place with a consultant at the University of Calgary. This initiative is grounded in collaboration and partnership, bringing together students, community members, and academic experts to examine local issues and generate meaningful opportunities for social action and positive change. As referenced in the 2021 charter evaluation report as an area of growth, there is evidence of emerging progress in this requirement.

Recommendation:

- Clarify mechanisms and audiences for provincial-level knowledge sharing with a focus on research and innovation, beyond the local school and community.

Requirement:

- Strengthen and implement a clear, documented process for sharing research and innovative practices with the broader educational community, as referenced in the 2021 charter evaluation report and as indicated in section 13 of the Charter Schools Regulation.

9. Evidence of consistently strong or improving student achievement.

Evidence indicates improving student achievement in some areas. Local measures, provincial data where applicable, and stakeholder observations reflect positive academic growth, increased engagement, and improved confidence among students. Instructional practices, including small class sizes and targeted supports, contribute to student success, particularly for students who experienced challenges in other educational settings. Achievement data and local measures are used to inform instructional decisions.

The 2024/25 Annual Education Results Report (AERR) references improvement in Grade 9 English Language Arts, Science and Social Studies, returning to near-provincial levels after previous declines. There is continued focus on targeted instructional strategies in this area and tracking of progress.

Commendations:

- Students demonstrate increased confidence and engagement in learning. Small class sizes enable close monitoring of student progress through ongoing formative and summative assessment, observations, and regular check ins.
- Staff identify leadership development as a defining feature of the school, noting that students are intentionally given opportunities to build confidence, take initiative, and assume meaningful responsibility within the school community.

Recommendation:

- As a recognized best practice, continue to strengthen longitudinal tracking of student achievement data, to strengthen evidence of long-term impact and enhance integration of student achievement evidence into charter reporting.

10. Multiple indicators that the charter school operator exhibits ongoing commitment to engaging students, teachers, parents, and community members in a collaborative model of continuous improvement in multiple ways.

The charter school operator demonstrates an ongoing commitment to collaborative continuous improvement. Multiple engagement strategies are used to gather input from students, staff, parents, and community members, including surveys, focus groups, stakeholder sessions, and student voice initiatives. Evidence shows that feedback is considered and used to inform planning, programming, and school improvement efforts.

There is use of diverse engagement strategies to gather input from students, staff, parents, and community members. Evidence indicates that feedback informs decision-making and program adjustments and student-led research projects exemplify authentic engagement and improvement efforts.

Recommendation:

- As a recognized best practice, continue communication regarding school-wide decisions, e.g., staffing, programming, budget, resource allocation, including providing feedback to stakeholders on how their input has informed priorities and aligns with the overall direction and vision of the school.

11. Evidence that the charter school operator uses research-informed practices to create innovative learning environments and improve student learning outcomes.

The charter school operator demonstrates early evidence of research-informed practices that support innovative learning environments and improved student outcomes. Instructional approaches, professional learning, and student-led inquiry reflect engagement with research-informed strategies. Partnerships and pilot initiatives support innovation, although formal evaluation and external sharing of research outcomes remain areas for further development.

The emerging use of research-informed instructional practices is beginning to positively influence student learning and engagement. Student-led research initiatives are promoting agency, inquiry, and community connection. Partnerships and professional learning are supporting instructional improvement.

Recommendations:

- As a recognized best practice, strengthen documentation linking research-informed practices to measured outcomes, e.g., benchmarks, assessment evidence, engagement indicators, to make impact more explicit.
- Continue to build on current and future research, including developing clearer plans for evaluating and sharing research results as per section 13 of the Charter Schools Regulation.

Requirement:

- Expand and strengthen action research documentation through an evaluation process, critically applying theoretical learning, and clearly linking research-informed practices to measurable outcomes as part of an overall strategic plan in alignment with section 8(1)(d) of the Charter Schools Regulation.

Conclusion

Valhalla School Foundation's charter evaluation during the 2025/26 school year indicated that the charter school operator provided evidence of the criteria reviewed resulting in five requirements. This report supports the charter school's ongoing commitment to continuous improvement and the future charter renewal request to the Minister in the last year of the charter term.

As a result of the evaluation processes, Valhalla School Foundation may be required to develop an action plan to meet all requirements of the *Education Act*, associated regulations, and policies of the Minister in collaboration with Alberta Education and Childcare. All requirements shall be addressed prior to the charter renewal request.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, Valhalla School Foundation is encouraged to celebrate its successes while considering the recommendations offered by the charter evaluation team.

As the Charter Schools Regulation is amended, it is the charter school operators' responsibility to continue to review and ensure alignment with the current publication of the Charter Schools Regulation.

The Alberta Education and Childcare Charter Evaluation Team extends its sincere thanks to the board, school administration, staff, students, and parents for their time, perspectives, and insight.

APPENDIX
Self-Evaluation Report
December 17, 2025

DRAFT

Valhalla Community School Charter Self-Evaluation

The Valhalla School Foundation is pleased to present our self-evaluation as Alberta’s first rural charter school. We are proud of our accomplishments and are focused and determined in meeting our challenges and continuing to build the future of Valhalla Community School.

Background

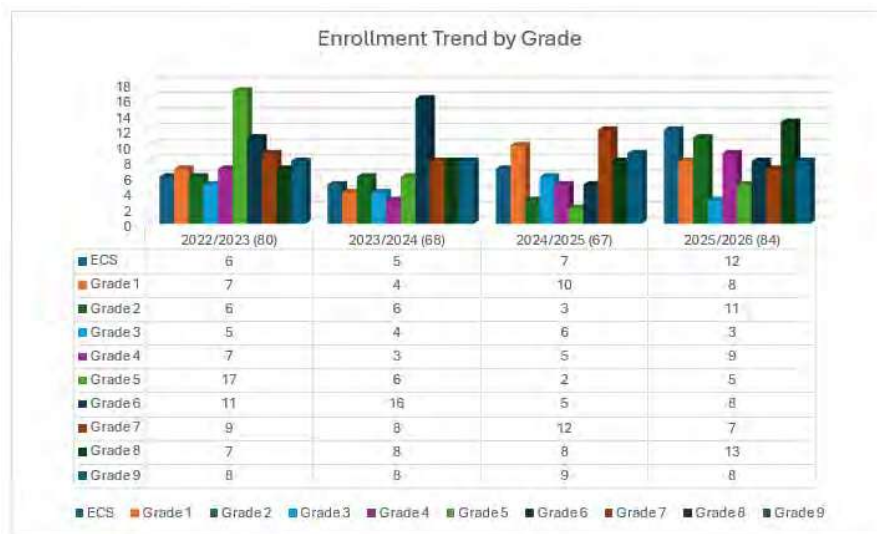
Valhalla Community School is a publicly funded charter school located in the hamlet of Valhalla Centre, which is approximately 50 km northwest of Grande Prairie, Alberta which is now in its 17th year of operation.

Valhalla Community School was started by a group of parents and local residents when adjustments were made to the local school boundaries in early 2008, and the school was slated to close at the end of June, 2008. Parents and supporters formed a steering committee to explore and develop initiatives. This committee began a series of meetings with the stakeholders in the local education system, and the charter school was established in place of the closed public system school. Three school buses were purchased and delivered to Valhalla Centre by volunteer community members. Resource materials were obtained and school staff and bus drivers hired, and Valhalla Community School commenced classes on September 2nd, 2008.

Valhalla Community School offered Kindergarten to grade 6 during the 2008-2009 school year, phased in a junior high program starting with grade 7 and 8 in 2010-2011 and offered grade 9 in 2011-2012. The school has supported children and students from Kindergarten – grade 9 since that time.

The school facility is comprised of five classrooms, a designated (and in the process of being designed) regulation classroom, a combined school and community library, gymnasium (including stage), washrooms, a small office suite and a staffroom.

At the time of the evaluation in November, 2025, the school employed five certificated teachers (5.0 FTE), including a principal and three support staff. Support staff includes a school secretary, and teacher assistants. In addition to school based staff are a superintendent (.6 FTE) and a secretary-treasurer (.4 FTE).



Vision Statement (from 2025-2028 Three Year Education Plan)

Vision - At Valhalla Community School (VCS), students will become well-educated and engaged citizens, with strong ethical, civic and democratic standards, who are committed to their families, school, community, province and country.

Mission (from 2025-2028 Three Year Education Plan)

Mission - To instill a readiness for leadership by equipping rural students with both knowledge and skills necessary for success in a rapidly changing economy in the communities they serve.

Charter Goals:

- To produce students who are excellent communicators.
- To prepare students for community involvement and leadership.

Values (from the 2025-2028 Three Year Education Plan)

At VCS, it is our firm conviction that we must effectively develop in our students the competencies for engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit. We further view rural education as possessing unique and beneficial characteristics with the potential to maximize student learning. We value:

- **Value 1** - VCS 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.
- **Value 2** - Because rural life is rooted in an entrepreneurial culture, bolstered by sharing and supportive relationships, rural students develop unique, personal ties to members of their family and community. As such, 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.
- **Value 3** - VCS 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.
- **Value 4** - VCS 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.
- **Value 5** - VCS believes that the long-term goal of rural education is to develop the skills, knowledge and values that will enable students to become strong and contributing leaders of tomorrow.
- **Value 6** - VCS 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.
- **Value 7** - VCS believes that mastery of outcomes through effective grouping of students leads to success for all.

Guiding Principles of Teaching and Leading

Direct Instruction. Direct instruction emphasizes the importance of successive 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 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.

Automaticity and Recall. The VSF holds in high regard for its students the skills of memorization of prose as well as arithmetic mental calculation and recognizes the role of diligent drill and practice in fostering regular, automatic presentation of said mastered skills.

Core Knowledge. 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 essential that students are able to converse on a broad scope of subject areas and develop a measurable proficiency in another language.

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. 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 student understanding of civic and community group processes into its knowledge enrichment component, a keen grasp of the processes of organized group work in committees and civic arenas, and the development of skills and attitudes necessary to make effective contributions as adult members of the community.

Public Speaking and Presentation. The exercise of rural leadership requires that students be comfortable speaking in public 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. It is also a priority to enable students to present dignified visual written work in the form of excellent penmanship.

Critical Thinking. 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 educational research indicates that 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.

Charter Self Evaluation

The contents of this evaluation are divided into the 12 indicators of success as requested by Alberta Education and Childcare.

1. The school meets the requirements and conditions of its charter and has performance measures that show clear evidence of success (section 7(3)(a)).

Vision, Mission, Goals

VCS has consistently established the goals in its Education plan to produce students who are excellent communicators and prepare students for community involvement and leadership, both of which are noted as key goals of the Charter. Research and partnership projects include the Outdoor Education program's partnership with Beaverlodge Research Center's scientist and classroom-based research supported by the the "Fish in Schools" (FinS) program for data collect/graphing to understand local species & their sustainability on the local ecosystem.

We recognize the importance of re-emphasizing our Charter goals and ensuring that they are reflected in meaningful, cohesive programming. To guide this process, we conducted research into best practices and engaged stakeholders to ensure that our future direction is grounded in a solid foundation that advances VCS's Charter and its long-term objectives. As a result of these actions from 2025-2027 VCS will be partnering with a consultant at the University of Calgary in Student Led Community Based Research projects. The project will entail development of a program with learning outcomes fostering leadership in civic engagement.

Guiding Principles of Teaching and Learning

Direct Instruction: VCS has focused professional learning on Assessment Capable Learners aligned with the new curriculum. There is a targeted a focus on student leadership and agency in their own learning.

Sequential Mastery Learning and Explicit Phonics: "Reading Mastery" is an explicit phonics program developed as a Direct Instruction resource and has proven to be successful in effectively teaching reading to children.

Student Communication and Leadership: Students have engaged in a variety of initiatives to develop excellent communication skills and prepare students for community involvement and leadership. Activities include yearly speech competitions (Gr. 1 – 9), providing diverse opportunities to engage in communication (i.e. announcements, student newsletter, student led community based research interviews, etc.), French as a second language provided gr. 1 – 9, participating in School Council meetings, Attending and Presenting at Board meetings and volunteering (i.e. seniors homes, Blades hockey, etc.).

Looking Forward

Charter goals and strategies are reflected in the 2025 – 2028 AERR. Prioritize research and implementation of Valhalla Community School's Charter including the student-led community-based research projects and a partnership with the University of Calgary. Engage in a Start Stop Continue through engagement to ensure the Charter remains current and aligned with current context (locally and provincially) will be essential.

2. Charter authority operates in a manner consistent with all applicable provincial requirements (section 7(3)(b)).

Valhalla Community School operates in full compliance with all applicable provincial legislation, regulations, and policy requirements as outlined by Alberta Education and Childcare. The school ensures alignment with the Education Act, the Charter Schools Regulation, and all Ministerial Orders. Administrative and financial practices adhere to provincial standards, including those related to budgeting, reporting, teacher certification, and student safety. The authority maintains up-to-date policies and procedures to reflect any changes in provincial directives, ensuring accountability, transparency, and sound governance.

VCS operates annually with a budget that respects all provincial requirements, and has had a surplus each year, contributing to a growing reserve in response to a shifting student population and challenges in finding certified teachers. The annual audits have been satisfactory, and recommendations have been efficiently implemented.

From year to year, the Annual Educational Results Report, the Annual Education Plan and related documents have been submitted on time and posted on the school website in accordance with provincial requirements.

VCS operates a calendar that respects and surpasses provincial requirements for number of hours and minutes accorded to each curriculum area.

VCS teachers operate in an environment that is respectful of their dedication and commitment to children, cognizant of the demands of their profession, supportive of their professional learning and responsive to the requirements of the collective agreement.

Looking Forward

Policies and procedures are consistently being developed and revised in response to Alberta Education and Childcare's ongoing changes in legislation and policy.

3. Charter authority is governed effectively (section 7(3)(a) and (c)).

The Valhalla School Foundation Board is elected by members of the Society, at an Annual General Meeting held in the spring, with approximately a third of the board being elected for a three-year term at each meeting. Reports from committees are presented to members of the society at the AGM. Board members are limited to three terms.

The VSF Board meets regularly monthly, with a schedule of meetings established at the beginning of the school year. Agendas are built by the Board Chair, Vice Chair and the Superintendent and are sent in advance to Board Members and to staff who attend the meetings. Minutes of the previous meeting are sent in advance as well, and adapted, approved, and posted on the website.

A Year Work Plan is established for meetings and priority items. The Board has a solid understanding of their governance role, and meetings operate under a format that respects Roberts Rules of Order. The Board has a clear set of policies and a schedule for regular review of each policy.

The Board receives presentations from the Principal, teachers and students on various aspects of the school programs. Other stakeholders and interested parties are added to the agenda for important information items.

The VSF Board has several committees with clear membership rules and mandates, and functions effectively in having regular committee meetings, with recommendation submitted to the Board well in advance for consideration before being proposed for Board approval.

The Board also has Committee of the Whole Meetings to support continued Board learning. A formal Board Evaluation is conducted yearly to review areas of strength and growth and determine next steps.

In their governance role, the Board has delegated operational control to the Superintendent and maintains an appropriate relationship with staff and parents regarding communication with the Board.

The Board conducts a thorough yearly evaluation of the work of the Superintendent, with questionnaires distributed to Board Members and the three other members of the administrative team. Superintendent uses this information for future learning and growth.

Looking Forward

We are continuously working at succession planning as board members move on, to ensure smooth transitions and continuity on what is a strong board. Continued Board learning continues to be a key area of continued growth.

4. Charter authority is administered effectively (section 7(3)(a) and (c)).

Valhalla Community School has four administrators as well as an administrative assistant. The Superintendent, Secretary Treasurer, and Transportation Lead are all part-time, while the Principal teaches half-time.

VCS has solid collaborative structures in place including:

- Full Administrative Team - once per month
- Transportation Team (Superintendent, Secretary Treasurer and Transportation Lead) – once per month
- School Lead Team (Superintendent, Principal and Administrative Assistant) – twice per month
- Finance Team (Superintendent, Secretary Treasurer and Bookkeeper) – once per month

There are strong levels of satisfaction from all parties with the work of the administrative team. All areas of administration, from finances to transportation to organization of the school facilities, scheduling and other administrative tasks are managed effectively and efficiently.

Looking Forward

Continued collaboration and refinement of structures and systems, including structures for enhanced communication throughout the organization is a continued area of focus.

5. Charter authority is fiscally viable and responsible (section 7(3)(c)).

The annual audit of the Valhalla School Foundation is conducted according to regulations and confirms the accounting procedures of the school. The facility lease arrangement with the Valhalla Heritage Society has resulted in a safe and very effectively functioning school and community building. All safety standards have been met by the school. Funding for the school is provided by Alberta Education and Childcare, and the school has secured a lease agreement which meets Alberta Education and Childcare standards.

Looking Forward

Transportation costs continue to be a challenge. Transportation for students is essential to maintain enrolments. With such a large attendance area, it is impossible to have reasonable length bus routes with the funding that is provided by Alberta Education and Childcare. This results in the need for additional bus routes which are not fully funded. Transportation requires supplemental funding from the system administration and instruction blocks.

6. Students, parents, staff, school council(s) and community members consider the school program to be successful (section 7(3)(d)).

Across all respondent groups—students, teachers, and parents—results indicate high satisfaction with students’ development of communication skills, confidence, leadership, and community involvement. The evidence suggests that the school program is viewed as successful in supporting these areas.

In the local survey in grades 4 – 6 100% satisfied students reported they and classmates use intelligent, grammatically correct language; 100% achieved an acceptable standard; 72% satisfied or very satisfied with their own active citizenship; 86% recognized the importance of community involvement; 100% participated in at least one school event; and all participated in two or more community or student groups.

In grades 7 – 9 over 80% satisfied with their communication skills and ability to speak confidently on a range of subjects; 89% satisfied with their achievement in public speaking; 85% satisfied with their growth in leadership and community involvement; 92% participated in school events; and 80% participated in two or more community activities.

Staff also reported strong results with 100% very satisfied that students can express themselves articulately; and 100% satisfied that students communicate confidently. Staff did express that continued focus on community involvement and second language proficiency could be areas of growth.

100% of responding parents were very satisfied with student communication, confidence, and public speaking. Parents also indicated satisfaction with students’ second language development and engagement in community-related discussions.

On the Accountability Survey, parent satisfaction has remained strong and stable, indicating continued trust in the school’s direction and the quality of learning experiences. The school’s focus on community engagement and leadership development appears to be valued by families.

The significant rise in enrollment for the 2025-2026 reflects the positive messages our families are providing about VCS.

Video of student voice and parent voice and their messages about the school can be found at our school's website. [Valhalla Community School | A K-9 Public Charter School Northern Alberta's First Rural Leadership Charter School - Governed by Valhalla School Foundation](#)

7. Student success is determined in accordance with Ministerial Order (#005/2024) (section 7(3)(a) and (d)).

Vision for Student Learning

The Ministerial Order outlines a clear vision and foundation for student learning: Students will gain knowledge and skill to form the foundation for successful and fulfilling lives (Ministerial Order #005, 2025, Alberta Education and Childcare). Valhalla Community School's programs align closely with Alberta Education and Childcare's vision for student success. The school emphasizes strong literacy and numeracy foundations. Students develop leadership and communication skills through community involvement and authentic learning experiences that connect classroom learning to real-world contexts. Through extensive stakeholder engagement students, staff, families and the community provided voice into the direction of Student Led Community Based Research projects in actualizing this mission and vision. Providing choice in education has resulted in many families in the rural area choosing the unique context of a charter school. VCS is responding to the MO in a direct and aligned fashion.

Foundations for Learning

Valhalla Community School's approach strongly aligns with Alberta Education and Childcare's Foundations for Learning by emphasizing literacy and numeracy as the cornerstones of student success. The school prioritizes explicit instruction in reading, writing, and mathematics. This focus is reflected in school priorities and assessment practices that target improvement in foundational skills. Project-based experiences further reinforce literacy and numeracy as tools for inquiry, communication, and problem solving.

Communication

The school places strong emphasis on developing articulate, confident communicators. Students regularly engage in public speaking, dramatic presentations, and community-based events that require them to express ideas clearly and thoughtfully. Writing and oral communication are explicitly taught across subject areas, and student confidence in these areas is reflected in local satisfaction measures showing high levels of comfort with speaking and presenting.

Critical Thinking

Valhalla's Student Led Community Based research projects encourages students to question, explore multiple perspectives, and make reasoned decisions. Classroom discussions, project-based learning, and community partnerships nurture curiosity and analytical thinking. Students are guided to evaluate information, consider alternative viewpoints, and approach problems with creativity and objectivity—developing both intellectual rigour and innovation.

Knowledge Development

VCS maintains a strong focus on mastery of foundational academic content in literacy, numeracy, science, and social studies. VCS prioritizes knowledge of literacy and English comprehension building a strong foundation off of Reading Mastery (learning the initial skills). Students

participating in Missoula Theatre also provides them an opportunity to practice public speaking. Developing a strong proficiency in oral language as well at VCS supports greater civic and democratic engagement.

Health for Life

VCS has a strong focus on well-being of our students. A strong focus on PEW along with a nutrition program, sensory regulation spaces, counseling supports and universal programs such as Mind Up support our students in their readiness for learning.

8. Charter authority shares its innovative practices and learning outcomes with others in the educational community (section 7(3)(a) and 13).

VCS undertook two research initiatives: The Outdoor Education program's partnership with Beaverlodge Research Center's scientist and classroom-based research supported by the "Fish in Schools" (FinS) program for data collect/graphing to understand local species & their sustainability on the local ecosystem.

While the research initiatives above are experiencing great success, VCS undertook exploration and research into meaningful and sustainable research projects to support its Charter. We recognized the importance of re-emphasizing our Charter goals and ensuring that they are reflected in meaningful, cohesive programming, rather than fragmented initiatives. To guide this process, we conducted research into best practices and engaged stakeholders to ensure that our future direction is grounded in a solid foundation that advances VCS's Charter and its long-term objectives. To move stakeholder voice into action in 2025-2026 VCS is partnering with a consultant at the University of Calgary in Student Led Community Based Research projects. The project will entail development of a program with learning outcomes fostering leadership in civic engagement.

VCS has submitted newspaper articles to our local community and jurisdiction to share the experience of Valhalla Community School. The school has also developed a promotional video highlighting the Charter [Valhalla Community School | A K-9 Public Charter School Northern Alberta's First Rural Leadership Charter School - Governed by Valhalla School Foundation.](#)

VCS has developed a formalized communications plan, including routine posting of board meeting minutes and newsletters, so that information is available to parents. Newsletters specifically highlight strategic actions taken for the schools three main priorities as highlighted in the education plan. Social media communicates (i.e. Facebook and Instagram) to community members who do not routinely access website-based data and those members of the community who do not have children in Valhalla Charter School.

Looking Forward

We continue to see our developing relationship with Northwestern Polytechnic, College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) and the Rural Symposium with regards to our student led community-based research projects as the next step in sharing our innovative practices and learning outcomes with the educational community.

9. Student achievement is consistently strong or improving (section 8(1)(a)).

Results of student achievement can be found on VCS's AECRR.

There is strong student achievement in areas such as the fine arts program, particularly arts and dramatic arts. Missoula Theatre plays a significant role in that, a production that brings community together in celebrating our students and their skills in that regard.

Valhalla Community School's early literacy and numeracy screening data indicate strong foundational skills across K–3, with only isolated students identified as at-risk. Kindergarten RAN results highlight a potential area for additional focus, but the school's targeted, one-on-one support and Reading Mastery strategies are proving effective, as evidenced by the absence of at-risk students by Grades 1–3 in literacy and minimal risk in numeracy. These results reflect the school's strengths in early intervention, assessment-driven instruction, and consistent monitoring, ensuring students build a solid foundation for later academic success.

Over the past four years, Valhalla Community School's Provincial Achievement Test (PAT) results at the Acceptable Standard show both notable strengths and areas requiring continued focus. The data must be interpreted with caution due to small cohort sizes, which can cause significant year-to-year fluctuations particularly in grade 6; however, some patterns are emerging that guide instructional priorities. Teacher shortages have proven to have an impact on this area. As such restructuring of staffing has occurred this year to support this age group.

Grade 9 English Language Arts achievement recovered in 2024/25 to align closely with provincial results, and Science showed a remarkable improvement—rising from below the provincial average in earlier years to well above it in the most recent administration. Social Studies also demonstrated substantial growth, returning to near-provincial levels after previous declines. These gains suggest that targeted instructional strategies, increased student engagement, and consistent teaching practices in the junior high division are positively influencing learning outcomes.

Through new curriculum implementation we have partnered with Alberta Professional Learning Consortium to support clarity of learning outcomes and ensure resources and materials utilized are aligned with the new curriculum.

Looking Forward

Continued collaboration with Alberta Professional Learning Consortium to build staff capacity is a key strategy. Teacher professional development is also being enhanced through Professional Growth Plan meetings and supervision.

There is also a focus on increased cross-curricular emphasis on writing skills and opportunities such as the student newspaper and Student Led Community Based Research projects.

With the digitalization of PATs this year, structured opportunities for practice are being embedded. A more complete and detailed analysis of our PAT results will help in identifying areas for special attention.

To address concerns around recruiting teaching staff a Bursary Program is being implemented in the winter.

10. Charter authority is committed to engaging students, teachers, parents and community members in a model of continuous improvement (section 8(1)(b)).

Valhalla Community School demonstrates a strong and ongoing commitment to engaging all stakeholders in continuous improvement through a variety of formal and informal strategies. Students are actively involved in shaping their learning environment through class discussions, student Speak Out forums, and projects that connect classroom learning to real-world experiences, fostering agency and responsibility for their growth.

Teachers engage in regular professional learning communities and data-driven reflection cycles, using student assessment data—including literacy and numeracy screenings and Provincial Achievement Test results—to inform instruction and plan targeted interventions.

Parents and guardians are engaged through multiple channels, including newsletters, surveys, parent-teacher conferences, and diverse stakeholder engagement opportunities providing meaningful opportunities to share feedback and participate in school planning.

Community members, including local organizations and service providers, are involved in partnerships that enrich student learning and support school initiatives, with their input considered in the development of programs and improvement plans.

This collaborative approach is reinforced by a culture of transparency and reflection: data and feedback from students, staff, parents, and community partners are regularly analyzed at staff meetings and Principal/Superintendent meetings to evaluate progress, identify areas for improvement, and adjust strategies accordingly. Through these multiple avenues of engagement, Valhalla Community School ensures that continuous improvement is embedded in the school culture, leading to positive outcomes for all learners.

A focus on implementation drivers throughout implementation ensures celebrations are noted and barriers to success are identified and removed in real time.

11. Charter authority reaches out beyond its walls to demonstrate broad and sustained levels of community engagement (section 8(1)(b)).

Community engagement is a cornerstone of Valhalla Community School. From its inception, the Valhalla Community School has been a product of and contributor to exceptional levels of community engagement. The vision for the charter school comes from the local community which had a desire to keep their own school in their own community and also held the belief that people and communities can and should be the architects of their own projects and the main contributors to community development.

It has been a partnership with a local organization, The Valhalla Heritage Society (VHS) which made a local school possible. The VHS's initial purchase of a closed school building from a local school jurisdiction gave the conceived charter school its school facility. Support from the VHS helped the school purchase its first fleet of buses. Significant locally sourced funds and planning by the VHS resulted in complete renovation to the school building and the building of additional space. For its part, the school facilitates bookings of its rooms and gymnasium for community use for many events, from funerals, religious services, community group workshops and celebrations to individual family get-togethers. The building has also regularly served as a polling station for federal and provincial elections. The school is a hub for Remembrance Day, Christmas Concerts and Canada Day celebrations each year (after the school year has ended).

The school facility houses a community library, which serves both school students and staff as well as community members from the wider area. Community members have daily access to the library and the library staff are very supportive and helpful to teachers and students, bringing in resources for class and student activities. Without the school building, the community would have no space to locate a library and this valuable service would be difficult to maintain at its current level of service.

A notable highlight of the VCS year is the annual Christmas concert. Each year students from Kindergarten to Grade 9 participate in the Christmas concert. Involving lots of music and drama, the concert is a huge focus for the school and a significant tie to community outside the school. Many seniors and families attend. A tradition has developed wherein the concert always ends with all the school students and staff joining to perform a simple arrangement of the Halleluiah Chorus from Handel's "Messiah". The audience honors the tradition of rising to their feet as the music begins and the air is electric with excitement. It's a fitting tribute to the joining together of the school and community for the benefit of all!

The school is pleased to seek opportunities for public service in the community as well as a means of instilling an appreciation and desire to build community in our students. These opportunities present themselves in a variety of forms. Examples include volunteering at the Blades Games, cleaning up along highways and roadsides in the village each year. In turn, community members frequently help school staff and parents with everything from small volunteering like bringing presentations to school classes or food to school celebrations to large projects.

Most recently the community has been involved in student led community-based research projects. On October 23, 2025, our junior high students hosted their first "Conversations That Build Community" event—an innovative speed-interview experience designed to spark ideas for future community projects. Community members were invited to spend one hour with students, participating in a series of six 10-minute interviews. During these conversations, guests shared stories, insights, and ideas about what makes their community special — and what they hope to see in the future.

The students approached the event with professionalism, curiosity, and confidence. Guests (including Board Chairs, Town Counselors, parents, RCMP and 4H representatives) commented on how meaningful it was to be heard and to contribute their perspectives to the next generation. They also commented on how professional and well-behaved the students were during the conversations. Students left the afternoon energized, with rich insights they will now use to shape community-based project ideas.

This event was a powerful example of student voice in action — creating authentic opportunities for youth to engage with their community, build relationships, and imagine new possibilities together. Next, they will be interviewing three individuals to explore their topics in greater depth and further refine their project directions. A "Pitch Your Project" event is expected to occur in later November or early December.

12. Charter authority uses research-informed practices to create innovative learning environments and improve student learning (section 8(1)(d)).

VCS utilizes a variety of research informed practices including:

- **Student-Led Community-Based Research:** This dynamic initiative is built on collaboration and partnership, uniting students, community members, and academic experts to explore local issues and create meaningful opportunities for social action and positive change. Through this iterative process, students will develop critical thinking, leadership, and civic engagement skills—all while making a real impact in their community. We're especially excited to announce our partnership with Adelee Penner, Ph.D. student at the University of Calgary, who will work alongside our students to deepen their understanding of local challenges and help guide innovative, community-driven solutions.
- **Direct Instruction:** Direct instruction continues to be a high yield strategy supported at VCS. The focus on Assessment Capable Learners has not only enhanced this instruction but have supported students in becoming more active agents in their own learning.
- **Reading Mastery:** The large research base of Reading Mastery distinguishes it from all other currently available commercially developed reading programs. The specific instructional techniques, as well as the program as a whole, have proven superior in extensive research involving students of all ability levels. These studies have generally found that the more Reading Mastery differs from a comparison program, the better it accelerates the acquisition of reading competence and improves the quality of reading for all students.
- **JUMP Math:** All teaching materials developed by JUMP are tested before final release. JUMP relies on the input of educators, parents, and students, using their first-hand experience of learner needs to guide the process. Once the full set of materials is developed, they are piloted by research partners in several classrooms in various locations. The data supplied through the pilot programs are used to review the materials prior to publication. After publication, materials and their implementation are evaluated using feedback process based on an ongoing relationship with JUMP users.
- **Assessment Capable Learners:** Having an effect size of 1.44 the evidence-based practices supports direct instruction and encompasses clarity of learning outcomes, formative assessment and identification of next steps. The engagement students in their own learning through ACL supports student engagement and leadership.

Key Areas of Growth, Achievement and Success

Areas of Success and Achievement

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** From families, staff and the Board, there is a very strong commitment to the students, the staff and the school as well as the history of VCS. There is a commitment for continuous improvement and collaborative problem solving in addressing challenges. The care and commitment to VCS of the full school community is a significant strength to continue to be leveraged.
- **Community Partnerships:** Community partnerships have been identified as a strength of Valhalla Community School. The VCS community is deeply engaged with our students, and in turn, our students are meaningfully involved in the community.
- **Early Learning:** Early learning in literacy and numeracy is a notable strength at Valhalla Community School. Tools such as Alberta Education and Childcare's screening assessments enable early identification and targeted interventions, while programs like Reading Mastery and pedagogical approaches such as direct instruction provide structured

support that ensures students build strong skills and confidence from the very beginning of their learning journey. VCS literacy screening assessments in Kindergarten identified 5 students at risk with the RAN and 2 students with the LeNS with the initial administration in January. In grades 1 – 3 no students were identified at risk at the beginning or the end of the year. VCS numeracy screening assessment in Kindergarten identified 1 student at risk with the initial administration in January. In grades 1 – 3 no students were identified as at-risk at the beginning of the year, while one child in grade 1 was identified at risk at the end of the year.

- Student leadership: An innovative Student-Led Community Based Research projects have substantially increase enrollment at VCS and have ensured that our students are meaningfully engaged with the Charter in actualizing our vision where students will become well-educated and engaged citizens, with strong ethical, civic and democratic standards, who are committed to their families, school, community, province and country and mission of instilling a readiness for leadership.
- Student Success: In the Alberta Education and Childcare Assurance Measure of Education Quality 81% of students said they are clear on what they are expected to learn.
- The local survey results point to strong student participation in school and community activities. Students report strong engagement, with most satisfied that they are developing leadership skills and communicating with confidence. The staff survey results show strong satisfaction with students' communication skills, as 100% of staff reported being very satisfied with both the ability of students to communicate confidently across a range of subjects and to express themselves articulately in public speaking. Parent survey results show strong confidence in students' communication abilities, with high satisfaction in their use of language, confidence across subjects, and skill in public speaking. Parents also expressed strong approval of teacher communication regarding curriculum and student progress, as well as students' development in mathematics and modeling of active citizenship.

Areas for Growth

- Strained Resources: The current level of transportation funding provided by Alberta Education and Childcare has created a gap that requires us to reallocate resources from other areas of the budget to maintain student transportation services. While we recognize the critical importance of transportation and remain committed to meeting the needs of our students, this reallocation limits our capacity to fully invest in instructional programs and supports. We have resourced strategically to address this gap and are continuing to actively explore sustainable solutions to address this challenge in a way that minimizes any impact on student learning.
- Staffing: One of the ongoing challenges we face in northern Alberta is the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers and leaders. The unique geographic and environmental factors of the region, combined with the competitive nature of the education workforce, make it difficult to attract and retain the skilled professionals we need to support our students. Despite these challenges, we remain committed to providing high-quality education by exploring innovative strategies, including professional development opportunities and partnership initiatives to ensure our students have access to dedicated

educators. A Bursary, supported by the Fund Development Committee, is also being developed to address this issue.

- **Student Success:** Continued building of staff capacity in new curriculum implementation and pedagogical practices aligned with direct instruction to advance student learning and success. Building a continuum of supports and services within and outside the walls of the school will advance student growth and success.
- **Provincial Measures:** In the AEA Survey parents are generally positive about citizenship but are not outperforming the province. The concern is generally raised by students. Formal engagement regarding this, along with a priority in creating welcoming, caring, respectful and safe notifications and focused action with Student Led Community Based Research is put in place to address this concern. Satisfaction with parental involvement in decisions regarding their child has decreased over the previous year. Parental involvement is a core value at Valhalla Community School, and we are committed to building on this. Considering diverse ways of engaging parents and ensure visibility of using their voice will be an area of focus.
- **Charter Review:** The charter renewal process offers VCS an important opportunity to pause, reflect, and realign their work with the realities of today's educational landscape. By revisiting the charter's goals, innovative practices, and intended outcomes, VCS can ensure that the charter remains responsive to current research, demographic shifts, emerging priorities, and system-wide expectations, and reaffirm its commitment to providing high-quality, future-focused learning.