

CALGARY GIRLS' SCHOOL SOCIETY

Calgary, Alberta

Charter School Evaluation Report

Evaluation conducted November 2024
Presented to the charter board April 2025

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background

The Calgary Girls' School Society (CGSS) operates Calgary Girls' Charter School, a public charter school in Calgary, Alberta, serving students in Grades 4 to 9. Established in 2003, Calgary Girls' School Society was founded to provide an educational environment designed specifically to support the academic, social, and emotional development of girls. The school aims to foster self-awareness, confidence, and advocacy skills through its programs and learning approaches, aligning with its mission to empower girls in their formative years.

Calgary Girls' Charter School employs a research-informed educational framework that focuses on an inquiry-based learning model. This approach encourages students to engage in responsible risk taking, develop collaboration skills, and practice self-reflection. The school's programming is further distinguished by its locally developed Go Girls programme, which spans Grades 4 to 9. This programme is structured around four recurring themes aimed at fostering critical thinking, cultural analysis, and personal growth. It addresses topics such as identity, agency, relationships, and societal norms, equipping students with tools to navigate their world thoughtfully and independently.

In 2024, Calgary Girls' School Society marked its 20th anniversary, coinciding with the completion of a five-year modernization and consolidation project. This initiative centralized all students and staff at the Lakeview campus, which now serves as the school's single operational site. This consolidation aimed to enhance community cohesion and provide updated facilities to support educational objectives. The school continues to operate under Alberta's charter school framework, adhering to provincial education standards while delivering a specialized program that caters to the unique developmental needs of girls.

As of January 6, 2025, student enrolment for the past 12 years since their last charter renewal is as follows:

	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
2013/2014	78	105	109	109	104	63	568
2014/2015	71	110	115	125	107	84	612
2015/2016	71	87	120	107	111	89	585
2016/2017	76	89	99	116	104	101	585
2017/2018	62	92	94	112	107	98	565
2018/2019	40	92	100	91	87	93	503
2019/2020	55	62	107	111	87	87	509
2020/2021	55	79	75	114	96	83	502
2021/2022	52	85	112	77	95	85	506
2022/2023	38	64	97	117	70	85	471
2023/2024	50	58	80	107	107	67	469
2024/2025	53	76	80	107	108	92	516

Facilities

During the 2023-2024 school year, Calgary Girls' School Society completed the consolidation of its operations into a single location at the Lakeview campus, leased from the Calgary Board of Education (CBE). This marked the conclusion of a five-year modernization and consolidation project, during which the school vacated its former Bel-Aire campus. The decision to centralize operations was intended to create efficiencies and streamline the school's delivery of programming for students in Grades 4 through 9.

Staff

Calgary Girls' School Society employs 43 staff with a total Full Time Equivalent (F.T.E) of 41.8. As of January 8, 2025, F.T.E. included:

- Superintendent: 1.0 F.T.E.
- Secretary-Treasurer: 0.8 F.T.E.
- Administrators: 3.0 F.T.E.
- Teaching Staff: 26.0 F.T.E.
- Educational Assistants: 3.0 F.T.E.
- Administrative Assistants: 2.0 F.T.E.
- Learning Commons Educator: 0.8 F.T.E.
- Director of Student Services/School Counsellor: 0.6 F.T.E.
- Complex Learning Strategist: 1.0 F.T.E.
- Director of Technology: 1.0 F.T.E.
- Finance/Transportation/Executive Assistant: 2.6 F.T.E.

Custodian services and lunchroom staff are provided through contracted services.

Foundational Statements

Vision

Our vision is to be a centre of excellence enabling girls and young women to become confident and innovative leaders in a complex and global world.

Mission

The girls and young women of Calgary Girls' School Society are agents of change who develop confidence and a strong sense of self in a safe, collaborative, inquiry-based learning environment.

Beliefs

- Girls are entitled to authentic learning experiences that are rich, engaging and inquiry based.
- Girls achieve their personal best when there is a focus on their needs and their unique ways of learning in dedicated all-girl environments.
- Girls have the right to learn in a safe environment while learning to take risks.

- Calgary Girls' School fosters and celebrates a learning community that promotes leadership.
- Active citizenship and engagement with the larger community can change people's lives and the world in which we live.
- Collaboration is a hallmark of all relationships and processes.
- Opportunities to learn about and engage with successful women in society provide girls with positive role models.
- Teachers are supported in their professional growth and development.
- Calgary Girls' School fosters a learning community that promotes reflective practice that is rooted in a growth mindset.
- Parents are valued partners in the education of their daughters.
- Calgary Girls' School engages in research rooted in innovation and best practices and shares with the greater educational community.

Charter Goals and Outcomes

Goal One:

Girls' academic achievement is enhanced in an all-girls learning environment.

Goal Two:

Girls' social development and awareness are enhanced in an all-girls learning environment.

Goal Three:

The school community is supported through teamwork and collaboration.

Goal Four:

Staff is supported in pursuing excellence.

Prior Charter Evaluation

The most recent charter evaluation of the Calgary Girls' School Society was completed in 2011, with the evaluation report delivered to the Calgary Girls' School Society in June 2011. The evaluation concluded that they met all requirements.

Term of Charter

Calgary Girls' School Society is currently operating in year 12 of a 15-year term. The term of the current charter is from September 1, 2013, to August 31, 2028.

Terms of Reference

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

- To provide evidence to the Minister and the board that the charter school 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 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 metrics and measures.
- To facilitate continuous improvement in the charter school 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 is evaluated are:

1. The school meets the terms and conditions of its charter and has performance measures that show clear evidence of success.
2. The school operates in a manner consistent with all applicable provincial requirements.
3. The charter school is governed effectively.
4. The school is administered effectively.
5. The school is fiscally viable and responsible.
6. The students, parents, staff, school council, and community members consider the school program to be successful.
7. Student success is determined in accordance with Ministerial Order (#005/2024).
8. The charter school shares its innovative practices and learning outcomes with the education community.
9. Student achievement at the charter school is consistently strong or improving.
10. The charter school exhibits, in multiple ways, an ongoing commitment to engaging students, teachers, parents, and community members in a model of continuous improvement.
11. The charter school works collaboratively with stakeholders and demonstrates broad and sustained levels of community engagement.
12. The charter school uses research-informed practices to create innovative learning environments and improve student learning.

2025 Evaluation Processes

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

1. The charter school authority was asked to develop and submit to Alberta Education a self-evaluation report based on the 12 criteria listed above (see Appendix of this report).
2. Alberta Education established a team of four staff from Field Services, as well as one staff member from Business Operations and Stakeholder Support to review the self-evaluation report submitted by the charter school authority and to determine appropriate school site evaluation processes.

3. On November 25 and 26, 2024, Field Services staff conducted focus group sessions to provide opportunities for the board, superintendent, principal, teachers, support staff, students, and parents to share insights about the school's successes and ideas about how the charter school authority might become more effective. On November 25 and 26, 2024, the following processes were conducted:
 - One focus group interview was conducted with the superintendent, school administration, board chair and members, secretary-treasurer, and teachers.
 - One focus group was held with four school support staff.
 - Two focus groups were held with twenty-two parents.
 - Two focus groups were held with Grade 4 to 9 students.
 - Grade 4 to 9 classroom observations to view the charter in action in the classroom with instruction, the design of student learning activities, and student engagement.

Executive Summary

The department's November 2024 Calgary Girls' School Society evaluation determined that the society has provided evidence of meeting the twelve charter criteria, subject to addressing one required change:

1. That Calgary Girls' School Society update their charter to ensure alignment with the 2022 Charter Schools Regulation and that the charter goals are aligned and reflective of the current direction of the board.

II. EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS, COMMENDATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & REQUIRED CHANGES

1. The school meets the terms and conditions of its charter and has performance measures that show clear evidence of success.

Calgary Girls' School Society emphasizes a girl-centered learning environment, recognizing the unique educational opportunities it provides. The school employs an inquiry-based learning model, encouraging students to engage deeply with subjects and develop critical thinking skills. Collaboration is a cornerstone of the school's philosophy, with team-based projects and group work integral to the curriculum. This approach not only enhances academic performance but also nurtures social development and communication skills.

Based on interviews with the parent group, the school is highly valued for its unique "Go Girls" programme, which fosters confidence and independence in students. Parents appreciate the welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment, as well as the effective communication and relationships between the board, superintendent, principal, staff, and parent community. The school council and active parent involvement in decision-making processes further highlight the school's commitment to transparency and responsiveness. Parents also commend the school's effective communication regarding their children's progress and success, noting the detailed feedback from, and accessibility of, teachers and administrators. Overall, the school is to be commended for its supportive community, innovative programs, and dedication to student growth and well-being.

It is evident from student interviews that the school provides a unique and supportive environment that fosters confidence, inclusivity, and personal growth. Students appreciate the "Go Girls" programme, which empowers them to embrace their strengths and develop leadership skills. They feel safe and supported by approachable teachers who provide regular feedback and assistance. The school's focus on creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, along with its commitment to addressing accessibility needs, further enhances the students' learning experience. Overall, the students value the strong sense of community, the emphasis on personal development, and the opportunities for academic and social success.

The Calgary Girls' School Society effectively meets the terms and conditions of its charter, as evidenced by its commitment to foundational beliefs and clear communication of roles and responsibilities. The school has maintained its focus on providing education in a single-gender environment, which aligns with the unique elements of its charter. Performance measures such as exit surveys, alumni surveys, and biannual parent surveys demonstrate the school's dedication to continuous improvement and accountability. These surveys provide valuable data that inform the school's goals and strategies, ensuring they remain relevant and effective. Additionally, the school's engagement with professional development and partnerships, as well as its

integration of diverse perspectives, further supports the objectives of its charter. The consistent achievement of these performance measures highlights the school's success in creating a supportive and dynamic learning environment that promotes student achievement and well-being.

Commendations:

- The community atmosphere, inclusive environment, and focus on individual student growth stand out. Staff collaboration and student success stories underscore the positive culture.

Recommendations:

- Showcase Success Stories:
 - Case Studies: Create case studies or success stories that highlight individual or group achievements within the school. These can be shared in newsletters, on the school website, and during meetings.
 - Awards and Recognition: Celebrate and recognize achievements through awards, certificates, and public acknowledgments to motivate students and staff.

Required:

- That the Calgary Girls' School Society engage with stakeholders in accordance with the school's charter amendment process to review the school's charter and create a stand-alone charter document to confirm alignment with the 2022 Charter Schools Regulation prior to requesting a charter renewal in the 2027/2028 school year. The charter amendment process may be an exercise on its own or may accompany the charter renewal request to be submitted prior to December 1, 2027. This charter document should be posted on the charter authority's website. The charter amendment process typically includes a review of the following:
 - the vision, purpose, charter goals, and foundational statements to ensure alignment throughout;
 - the way measurable outcomes are expressed for each charter goal; and,
 - all other elements of the charter, ensuring that all requirements in section 4 of the Regulation are addressed and align with the school's vision and purpose.

2. The school operates in a manner consistent with all applicable provincial requirements.

The school complies with provincial requirements, aligning its educational practices and administrative procedures with mandated standards. It supports the Teacher Quality Standard (TQS) and Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) through Professional Growth Plans (PGPs) and ongoing professional development and has an Indigenous Education Committee to inform instructional practices with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives.

The board ensures compliance with provincial requirements through a systematic policy review process every two years, aligning with the *Education Act* and other legislation. Policies are updated and communicated to stakeholders, and the board's structure facilitates effective governance and oversight, ensuring high educational standards and accountability.

Commendations:

- The Calgary Girls' School Society demonstrates a strong commitment to provincial compliance through its systematic policy review process and transparent governance structure and they maintain high standards of accountability and educational excellence.

Recommendations:

- That the school expand its professional development programs to further enhance compliance with provincial requirements, focusing on emerging educational standards and inclusive practices. Increasing collaboration with external experts and community partners will provide valuable insights and resources, ensuring the school remains current with educational innovation and inclusivity.

3. The charter school is governed effectively.

The school board of the Calgary Girls' School Society is comprised of both parent and non-parent members. The chairperson of the board is a former student of the school and has a deep understanding of the traditions and the direction of the program. The directors and subcommittees provide leadership throughout the year through *ad hoc* committees struck as new or unique situations arise. The board meets in June to review recommendations from the past year and solidify long-term commitments based on the school's vision to develop students' confidence in their personal abilities and prepare them for the future.

4. The school is administered effectively.

Over its 20-year history, the Calgary Girls' School Society has remained committed to its founding principles while continually seeking growth and improvement. The school offers a variety of extracurricular opportunities that allow students to explore interests beyond the classroom including crochet, gaming, math, science fair, robotics, athletics, peer tutoring, and library. The school is well-equipped with modern technology, including touch screens and video walls, enhancing the learning experience. A dedicated marketing team supports the school's outreach and communication efforts.

Interview responses from staff indicated an overall sense of kindness and community, enhancing the school's warm and welcoming environment. The staff feel there are opportunities to have their opinions recognized, whether it is during monthly staff meetings, open door policies with administration, conversations, or side-by-side learning opportunities. Recognizing the diverse needs of its student body, the school has

bolstered its student services in recent years. The school offers support through coordinators, counselors, occupational therapists, psychologists, and learning strategists, ensuring that each student receives personalized assistance.

Commendations:

- The administration of Calgary Girls' Charter School is demonstrated by the community atmosphere, open door policies, staff engagement, and positive examples of safe and caring environments.

5. The school is fiscally viable and responsible.

A financial reporting review and on-site meetings confirm that Calgary Girls' School Society has been fiscally viable over 22 years of operation. However, the school has been in an annual deficit position in each of the past four years and has been using reserves to maintain operations and offset these deficits.

Board members and staff from all departments take a collaborative approach to financial planning processes. The secretary treasurer meets with these groups on a monthly and quarterly basis to review budgets, financial statements, and cash flows. This has allowed their team to identify cost pressures and plan accordingly to mitigate risk, which demonstrates a responsible approach to fiscal management practices.

The secretary treasurer indicated that being a smaller school in a large metropolitan area has created fiscal pressures, especially around teaching staff and student transportation costs. These two factors have caused fluctuations in enrolments which, in previous school years, have affected the school's ability to balance its financial position. While staffing costs are its largest expense, the Calgary Girls' School Society understands that having qualified staff is a key driver of student success, and vital to delivering the school curriculum in alignment with its charter philosophy. Over the past two years, the school has conducted salary surveys across the Calgary region to ensure competitive salaries and recruitment practices. Many staff are at the mid-point or higher on the salary grid, with some staff nearing retirement. Through attrition and retirement, the charter expects teaching staff costs will decline over the next few years while their competitive pay grid will attract quality candidates for recruitment.

The public charter authority recognizes that reliable transportation service and consistent student enrolment are highly correlated. The school has struggled to maintain reliable service with their contracted bus operator for two years due to a shortage of bus drivers. Transportation daily route costs have increased during this time which has resulted in fee increases for students. The charter is prioritizing reliable transportation services for families, while trying to minimize cost increases.

Facility maintenance and central administration are other significant cost pressures for the school. The charter's aging facility often requires repairs and replacement of components to uphold its lease obligations. The charter has completed an engineering

study for facilities planning purposes with the objective of identifying cost-cutting measures to reduce maintenance expenditures. The school has also conducted an Information Technology study to create an evergreen schedule for procurement and replacement of equipment.

The charter is also finding it increasingly difficult to manage their central office costs within the System Administration Targeted Grant allocation and are aware they may need to find ways to keep these costs contained to their allocated amount.

Calgary Girls' School Society is projecting a balanced budget with a small surplus for the 2024/25 school year. The society recorded deficits in the 2020/21 and 2021/22 school years and subsequently worked with the department to create deficit elimination plans approved by the Minister. The school has drawn on their reserves to cover recent deficits, but this is not sustainable for much longer. An operating reserve balance for 2023/24 school year of 0.52 per cent of total expenses indicates poor financial health (a healthy range is typically between one to five per cent) and may present challenges in covering potential emergency expenses. Plans are being formulated to replenish operating reserves in upcoming years.

Calgary Girls' School Society is aware of its fiscal pressures and is exploring other school-generated revenue streams to mitigate future budget shortfalls. The charter is aware of many fiscal pressures and creating plans to use its many different assets to raise funding to mitigate its budgetary constraints.

Calgary Girls' School Society's Budget Surplus (Deficit) Summary for the last four years is as follows:

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Actual Revenue	5,779,250	6,561,677	6,626,236	6,381,358
Actual Expenses	6,395,050	6,878,258	6,855,179	6,536,994
Annual operating surplus (deficit)	(615,800)	(316,581)	(228,943)	(155,636)

Budgeted Revenue	5,632,979	5,534,561	6,683,783	6,390,473
Budgeted Expenses	6,323,098	5,976,830	6,917,283	6,390,473
Budgeted annual operating surplus (deficit)	(690,119)	(442,269)	(233,500)	0

Accumulated Surplus (Deficit)/Operating Reserves	(509,082)	(338,878)	164,925	33,912
Capital Reserves	1,500,000	1,050,000	350,000	323,524

Commendations:

- Completed environmental scanning and planning exercises demonstrate a willingness to prioritize deficit recovery and achieve balanced budgets.
- Planning activities intended to minimize unexpected costs and identify additional revenue streams to support financial goals are thorough.

Recommendations:

- That the board continue to work closely with Alberta Education Capital Planning and finance staff to address facility planning and lease costs.
- That the board exercise caution in not overextending its financial position, as it cannot continue to use reserves to cover unexpected expenses.
- That the board continue to work with Financial Reporting and Accountability Branch to meet Funding Manual requirements regarding operating reserve balances.

6. The students, parents, staff, school council, and community members consider the school program to be successful.

Parents reported that there is a lot of communication from teachers about what students are learning and that teachers are very approachable if there are any questions or concerns about student progress. Report cards are provided twice a year and provided comments indicate that teachers truly know their students. The school publishes weekly newsletters for each grade level as well as a newsletter that covers the whole school. Students noted that teachers are clear and open about how they are doing and that they regularly perform check ins. Students offer peer tutoring on Thursdays, providing extra help and support to other students while teachers offer Help Lunches to assist students with Math. Students believe the school is doing a lot to support high school transition by working with local high schools to organize school tours for Grade 9 students and providing Grade 10 marking expectations.

Staff described that the school life is an extension of home life – a place you want to come to and where you can be yourself. Office staff, teachers, administration, and board office staff reported feeling like they are on the same team. Staff identified a successful student as one who builds their own critical thinking skills, stands up for themselves, and is independent, caring, and empathetic as they move on to high school and beyond. Several Calgary Girls' School Society staff and board members are former students.

Commendations:

- Staff report feeling valued and appreciated in the work they do at the school and are supported in their professional learning to be the best that they can be in their roles.

Recommendations:

- That the school expand its parent or volunteer base.

7. Student Success: Student success is determined in accordance with Ministerial Order #005/2024.

The Calgary Girls' School Society's charter and practices aligns with the Ministerial Order on Student Learning. First with the vision of student learning provides a tailored option for parents and students to interact with the curriculum to enable and empower young girls and women to become leaders in the community. In the area of foundations of learning, the school's literacy and numeracy program demonstrate a comprehensive commitment to improvement using universal and intervention strategies. The Go Girls programme, which compliments the charter's philosophy, highlights the character development, citizenship, and student preparation outcomes. The development of communication and critical thinking skills in an inquiry-based learning model leads to excellent student learning opportunities.

8. The charter school shares its innovative practices and learning outcomes with others in the educational community.

The Calgary Girls' School Society shares its practices with the educational community through professional networks such as The Alberta Association of Public Charter Schools (TAAPCS) and the Ever-Active Schools Conference. It has implemented research on quality and critical thinking, earning a Class Act Award from the Critical Thinking Consortium. The school's charter and complimentary programming promote a sense of belonging, is a key component of its Go Girl programme which has been a presentation topic at educational conferences. There are opportunities to engage in active research or collaboration with post-secondary institutions to continue gathering data on the unique learning outcomes of this charter. Additionally, the public charter authority has provided presentations focused on transitions and development to adulthood for women, which are frequently attended by the parent community.

Recommendations:

- That Calgary Girls' School Society invite staff to participate in active research and/or pair with post-secondary institutions to research and share methodology and best practices.

9. Student achievement at the charter school is consistently strong or improving.

The public charter school's students continue to achieve outstanding academic results and personal success. It is evident that the staff and students share a common culture of striving for excellence that leads to success for all students. Stakeholders spoke about the strong community atmosphere and effective communication between home and school. Fall 2024 Alberta Education assurance measure results show exceptional results in all categories.

The administration attributes much of the success of their student's personal and academic growth and success to the committed, hardworking, professional, and focused approach of staff to their work. Staff were described by administration as "going beyond" to meet the teaching and learning needs of their students.

Commendations:

- The school has achieved and maintains strong annual results in both provincial as well as strong survey results in providing a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe school, access to supports and services and parental involvement.

10. The charter school exhibits in multiple ways ongoing commitment to engaging students, teachers, parents, and community members in a model of continuous improvement.

School administration send out surveys twice a year to families (Fall and Spring), exit surveys and alumni surveys to gather feedback. The superintendent explained that this led to a recent improvement made with communications to stakeholders. They have improved their newsletters and increased their presence on social media, and parent feedback has been positive. The principal shared that parents are involved in the school through a wide variety of opportunities such as field trips, in-school volunteers, reading groups, hot lunch program, and parent advisory council.

Staff indicated that Professional Growth Plans (PGP) need to include three focus growth areas. First staff include a goal from the 3-year education plan, a focus to improve the practice of a charter goal and strengthening one area of the Teaching Quality Standards. School administration explained that PGPs are brought up throughout the year, staff with similar goals are connected, and administration provides support to the staff to help them reach their goal. The staff share that there is continuous feedback and opportunities for professional improvement throughout the year due to open door policies, side-by-side learning opportunities and ongoing conversations and communication. The staff also shared that the school focuses on year-long learning opportunities for all staff, and additional professional development funds – which the staff explained has helped them plan the year. It is evident through surveys, opportunities for continuous feedback, and transparent communications, that Calgary Girls' Charter Society is committed to continuous improvement.

Commendations:

- There is a variety of opportunities for feedback from stakeholders.

11. The charter school works collaboratively with stakeholders and demonstrates broad and sustained levels of community engagement.

Students shared that they feel the school is open, welcoming, inclusive, and encourages engagement. They referenced that the Go Girls programme helps everyone to feel included. They believe they are learning strategies they can use for the rest of their lives. Students felt they actively shape strategies through equity committees and extracurricular leadership.

Parents reported that the school is open and that there is a willingness to accept diversity. There is a cohesiveness with staff – as all the adults in the building work to lift the students up and support students, building their confidence. They shared that the superintendent and board staff are always available and very connected to the school. They felt that school staff were always willing to listen to parents and appreciated the opportunity to attend Coffee Talks with school administration.

Calgary Girls' School Society has worked to establish relationships with the local community, including collaboration with the Trellis Society, Snow Angels, supporting local charities, and various partnerships with post-secondary institutions across the province to host student teachers at the school.

Commendations:

- A land acknowledgement created in 2019 through a collaboration between Grade 9 students and Indigenous and Métis partners is showcased on the front doors of the school.

12. The charter school uses research-informed practices to create innovative learning environments and improve student learning.

The Calgary Girls' School leverages research-informed practices to foster innovative learning environments and enhance student achievement. By collaborating with experts like Cheryl Babin on inquiry-based learning and integrating the Go Girls programme, the school ensures that its instructional methods are grounded in the latest educational research. This approach supports the development of effective teaching strategies and fosters a culture of critical thinking and belonging. Additionally, the school engages in professional development and partnerships with external organizations, like Mount Royal College, to stay current with educational innovation. These efforts create a dynamic and supportive environment that promotes student success and continuous improvement.

The school also emphasizes the importance of understanding and integrating diverse perspectives, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit knowledge, to create a more inclusive and equitable learning experience. Through these efforts, the school continuously adapts and evolves to meet the needs of its students and community.

Commendations:

- The Calgary Girls' School utilizes research-informed practices to foster innovative and dynamic learning environments. Integrating innovative educational research and collaborating with experts, the school ensures that its teaching methods are both effective and engaging. This commitment to continuous improvement and educational excellence has the potential to enhance student learning and success.

Recommendations

- That the school continues to expand its integration of diverse perspectives and knowledge, particularly in relation to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures. While the school has made commendable efforts in this area, further development of partnerships with Indigenous communities and the inclusion of more staff members with expertise in Indigenous knowledge could enhance the cultural richness of the curriculum.

Conclusion

As a result of our evaluation processes, the Alberta Education Evaluation Team is satisfied that the Calgary Girls' School Society is meeting the requirements of legislation and regulations for charter schools. In the spirit of continuous improvement, the Calgary Girls' School Society is encouraged to celebrate its successes while considering the recommendations offered by the Alberta Education Evaluation team. There is an expectation that all required changes will be addressed prior to the charter renewal request.

The Alberta Education Evaluation Team extends its sincere thanks to the board, administration, staff, students, and parents for their time, perspectives, insights, and hospitality.

APPENDIX

Self-Evaluation Report

October 31, 2024



2024 Calgary Girls Charter School Self-Evaluation

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Vision and Mission

Our vision is to be a centre of excellence enabling students to become confident and innovative leaders in a complex and global world. The students at Calgary Girls Charter School are agents of change who develop confidence and a strong sense of self in a safe, collaborative, inquiry-based learning environment.

Calgary Girls Charter School Charter Evaluation - 2012-2027

October 31, 2024

Contextual Overview

Calgary Girls Charter School (CGCS) was founded in 2003 empowered by the knowledge that when every aspect of school is designed to build self awareness, confidence, and advocacy skills in students, opportunities for their academic and social emotional growth will be endless in an all-girls learning environment. One of the guiding principles of the school is that all girls should have equitable access to an all-girls education, without prejudice, and therefore, students from all quadrants of the city and beyond the city limits attend CGCS. Because of this, our student population is rich in diversity, bringing together students and families with a wide variety of lived perspectives and experiences.

CGCS is unique as our Charter serves students in grades 4 through 9, where research shows girls-centered learning to have the highest impact (particularly in Science, Technology and Math related subjects). These years are also key in promoting self-confidence, resiliency and healthy relationship-building skills. To facilitate growth in these areas, CGCS students learn through an inquiry model, where there is dedicated focus on responsible risk taking, building skills for collaboration, and self-reflection. Additionally, all students at CGCS learn the Go Girls curriculum, a locally developed course with 4 recursive themes, spanning grades 4 - 9. Go Girls provides the foundation for students to analyze and deconstruct cultural and societal norms, messages and values, explore the complexities of friendships and relationships, as well as exploring identity, expression and agency. While learning to apply critical thinking and questioning to their world, students are empowered to actively decide who they are and make choices to grow into the person they want to become.



In the 2023-2024 school year, CGCS celebrated our 20 year anniversary. In our 20th year, we were fortunate to bring to completion a 5 year modernization and consolidation project, where our Lakeview campus welcomed our grade 4, 5 students and staff, bringing our learning community back together. Along with our recent consolidation and modernization, we completed a three-year revision and update process for our Go Girls curriculum, which was adapted to ensure that current topics relevant to girls' growth and development are included. We are deeply proud of this curriculum revision. While there have been contextual changes in education throughout the past 20 years, the lessons learned in Go Girls remain foundational to our program and our dedication to girls learning has been unwavering.

CGCS is currently in the 12th year of our current 15-year charter, which is scheduled to require renewal August 31st, 2028.

Indicator 1: The authority meets the terms and conditions of its charter and has performance measures that show clear evidence of success.

Charter Goal 1:

Girls' academic achievement is enhanced in an all-girls learning environment (academic measures reflect strong results in math, science and humanities)

Year over year, students at Calgary Girls Charter School score higher on provincial achievement tests (PATs) than peers of the same age across the province. Additionally, when compared with same-aged girls across the province, CGCS students maintain higher PAT scores, far outsourcing peers at both acceptable standards and standards of excellence. When analyzing report cards for CGCS students, narrative comments and grade indicators showcase that CGCS students demonstrate strong understanding of grade level outcomes and a high level of transference in their learning.

Provincial Achievement Tests by Gender (CGCS | Provincial Averages)

Performance Measures: The percentage of girls in grades 6 and 9 relative to all students in grades 6 and 9 in the province of Alberta	Calgary Girls Charter School (%)					Provincial Results (%)				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Acceptable Standard	92.0	n/a	n/a	86.4	81.3	73.1	n/a	n/a	65.5	64.2
Standard of Excellence	44.2	n/a	n/a	28.2	21.1	n/a	n/a	n/a	18.5	16.3

**PATs were canceled in 2020, due to a pivot to emergency learning (2020), as well as the following year, as students transitioned out of emergency learning (2021)*

Charter Goal 2:

Girls' social development and awareness are enhanced in all-girls learning environment

The Go Girls curriculum, a locally developed course, grounds our Charter and permeates the learning and lived experience of CGCS students. Between 2021- 2024, CGCS staff worked closely with Cheryl Babin (Alberta Professional Learning Consortium) to update this curriculum and ensure the learning outcomes and content are relevant and supportive of social and emotional development of students grades 4-9. Through the Go Girls curriculum, student learning is focused on four themes: Identity, Expression & Agency, Relationships, Resiliency & Feminism for Everyone, and Historical & Futures Thinking. Students have time set aside in their schedules to learn this curriculum, as well, its themes are integrated into core curriculum learning and options courses.

Over the past years, CGCS staff have engaged in threaded and ongoing professional learning with Usha James (Critical Thinking Consortium), focused on enhancing staff understanding of practices which consider equity, diversity, and inclusion in school culture. Through this professional learning, staff have increased their understanding of how to create learning environments that embrace and celebrate diversity and amplify a variety of voices and lived experiences, as well as create a culture of belonging, where everyone feels seen, heard and cared for. Increased staff capacity in this area has had a positive impact on students, providing space for them to better understand themselves and many elements of their development and identity, furthering their empathy toward self and others.

Charter Goal 3:

The school community is supported through teamwork and collaboration

Ensuring there is dedicated time for collaboration among teams is a prominent guiding principle that is considered when building teacher and student schedules each year. Knowing that each team has time allocated for collaboration, it is an expectation that teaching teams co-create learning and assessment opportunities to ensure students across a grade have a shared learning experience. Teaching teams are dedicated to the collaborative process, making collaboration a natural way of working and learning at CGCS. To support effective collaboration among teams, at the beginning of each school year, school administration meets with teaching teams to engage in team norming. By norming, teams are able to establish shared expectations and work toward developing high levels of trust in one another early on in the school year.

School administration continues to meet with teaching teams throughout the year to support collaborative planning and revisit team norming.

Each year, a variety of committees work collaboratively to further the success of the school community. A few examples of school committees that have been supportive and successful at CGCS are those focused on the planning and facilitation of whole staff professional learning, development and revision of administrative procedures, alignment of teaching practice, alignment of technology for learning, and updating and revision of the Go Girls curriculum.

Charter Goal 4:

Staff is supported in pursuing excellence

CGCS staff are committed lifelong learners. All staff have access to personal professional learning money to fund professional learning opportunities and are supported to attend professional learning sessions/conferences that are related to the vision and mission of the school and are supportive of their professional growth plan goals. To support progression toward professional growth plan goals, school administration meets a minimum of 3 times yearly with staff to set goals and reflect on goals. Additionally, CGCS staff can request to access graduate bursaries in support of continued post-secondary education, as well, all staff have access to a shared professional learning fund, through an application process.

To ensure learning opportunities are relevant and meaningful, school administration is committed to seeking staff input when planning for whole-staff professional learning for each school year and working closely with a committee of school staff to facilitate this professional learning. In the past 5-7 years, CGCS staff have learned with experts from the Critical Thinking Consortium, Alberta Professional Learning Consortium, Bloom Occupational Therapy, and from various educational psychologists in support of capacity building and ensuring school alignment.

Additionally, CGCS fosters excellence among staff through the appointment of school based Learning Leaders. Learning Leaders are integral to the growth and development of staff capacity and to the positive direction of the school. With over the past 5 years, Learning Leaders have had the opportunity to participate in the Charter School Leadership Networking group where they have participated in a variety of professional learning sessions, which focus on enhancing leadership ability.

Indicator 2: The authority operates in a manner consistent with all applicable provincial requirements.

Calgary Girls Charter School is consistently meeting provincial requirements as outlined in the Education Act, the Charter School Regulation, Ministerial Orders and other Alberta Education publications (eg. Alberta Education Guide to Education, Funding Manual). In constructing the school calendar and daily schedule, CGCS has annual processes that support school-wide planning and the development of structures in place for learning for staff and students. CGCS is consistently over the required number of instructional hours annually, while also providing an average of 20 non-instructional days to support organization and professional learning for all staff. When planning for instruction, all certificated staff follow the Alberta Program of Studies and have been eager to adopt the changes to the new curriculum in Division 2 and 3, often volunteering to field test new curriculum.

All staff are expected to comply with Occupational Health and Safety requirements, as well, be versed and/or know how to access in our Administrative Procedures and Board Policies. All staff are expected to generate annual Professional Growth Plans and share those with their direct supervisor, including tangible and measurable outcomes of their learning. As well, all staff receive regular training in first aid. With regard to teaching staff, all carry valid Alberta Education certifications, meet the Teaching Quality Standard, and often hold additional certifications and memberships which support their work at the school level (eg. College of School Superintendents (CASS), Association of School Business Officials of Alberta (ASBOA), Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA)).

At CGCS, annual reports that are required for submission to Alberta Education are made without incident in a timely manner, including but not limited to the Alberta Education Results Report (AERR), The Three Year Education Plan, Annual Budgets and/or Capital Plans.

Indicator 3: The charter authority is governed effectively.

Calgary Girls School Society Board of Directors operates effectively as a governance board, comprised of both parents and non-parent members. Board members are recruited through a fair and open process and most often appointed because of a specific expertise that serve and support governance of the school. The board has well developed policies and board by-laws, which also support robust governance. Within the CGCS Society policies, which are reviewed approximately every two years by the Governance Committee, there are clearly defined roles and responsibilities of the Chair, Vice Chair and Directors. Board policies also outline Code of Conduct, the role of the committees, Policy Making, Safe and Caring School Environments, to name a few. Among the sub-committees of the Board of Directors, CGCS has active membership to *The Alberta Association of Public Charter Schools (TAAPCS)*.

At regularly scheduled Board of Director meetings, the Board frequently reviews important documents such as CGCS's Annual Education Assurance Measure Results, our AERR, the Three Year Education Plan, Quarterly and Annual Budgets (both forecasted and actual), as well as annual audit results. Both at the beginning of a Board member's term and annually throughout their three-year term, they are officially sworn in, as well, sign a confidentiality agreement, a Director Disclosure Statement and an Oath of Office form, and receive onboard training provided by the Chair or Vice Chair. Each June, the Board holds a retreat, where the Board of Directors engages in professional learning, in areas that are collaboratively identified (eg. Enhancing understanding of inclusive education and diverse identities). At the annual board retreat, the board also conducts a Board Self-Evaluation, where members of the board evaluate themselves against predetermined criteria, identifying strengths of the team and potential areas for growth.

Indicator 4: The charter authority is administered effectively.

The Superintendents and Administrative teams have effectively provided leadership, managed school operations, allocated resources appropriately and have worked collaboratively with staff, students and families, through the many changes that have occurred at CGCS throughout the past 12 years. While the senior leadership team has had many iterations and changes since the last charter school evaluation, and the school campuses have consolidated into one campus, CGCS continues to value the support of a Superintendent, two Vice Principals and Principal. The Superintendent and each Administrator is committed to continual professional growth, through the development of annual growth plans, meeting frequently with their respective direct supervisor to discuss and reflect, where appropriate. Both the Superintendent and the Administrative team have been committed to leadership development and succession planning, through strategic and intentional professional learning opportunities, which have been offered and provided to not only the core team, but to the extended Learning Leader team as well. Such opportunities include targeted leadership learning, leadership retreats and participating in the Charter School Leadership Network, on an annual basis. Additionally, all administrators have either completed their Masters in Education, or are currently in the process of completing.

In addition to developing professional growth plans, the Superintendent and the administrators are evaluated using the *Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard* and the *Leadership Quality Standard* (respectively) developed by Alberta Education, and in accordance with the Administrative Procedures at CGCS. Additionally, CGCS leadership team has shown a deep understanding of and commitment to the vision and mission of the Charter, and an intimate understanding of the Go Girls curriculum. Both their leadership expertise and skill, as well as their knowledge of the programming at CGCS assist in their collaborative development of the Three Year Education Plan, and the Alberta Education Results Report annually, as well as the development of a comprehensive plan for threaded professional development for staff each school year.

The Superintendents and administrative teams have been approachable and accessible to families, students and staff, with high visibility in the school and/or school events. Staff have noted through regular surveys that they are often provided the opportunity to be included and consulted in school operations and internal procedures, allowing the senior leadership to be responsive to the educational contexts that emerge, like COVID, building modernizations, campus consolidation and/or increases to student enrollment with regular cadence. As well, senior leadership has invited parents to be active participants in their child's education through a variety of means, including but not limited to, attending student-led conferences, completing annual surveys, volunteering for class/school events, attending school-hosted events (assemblies, performances, family events), participating in School Council meetings, collaborating on their child's Individual Program Plan (where applicable) and attending student-parent teacher conferences.

Indicator 5: The charter authority is fiscally viable and responsible.

The Calgary Girls Charter School (CGCS) has demonstrated financial viability and responsibility, ensuring transparency and accountability in its financial operations throughout the past 12 years. Our school follows Public Sector Accounting Standards, aligning with provincial guidelines for financial management. This adherence ensures that all funds received from the Alberta government are spent effectively, while maintaining the highest standards of education for its students and in accordance with Alberta Education regulations.

The school's financial processes are highly structured and accountable. Our annual budget is carefully reviewed at multiple levels before finalization each year, starting with the school's administration, followed by the Audit and Finance Committee, and then approved by the Board of Directors. Quarterly financial reports are reviewed by the Audit and Finance Committee then presented to the Board of Directors. CGCS also conducts forecasts to anticipate and manage its financial needs as part of the annual budgeting process.

For the 2022-2023 fiscal year, CGCS received a clean audit; which means that its financial statements were found to be free of material misstatements and were in full compliance with auditing standards. This demonstrates that the school manages its finances transparently and adheres to high levels of fiscal responsibility. For further information, the CGCS Audited Financial Statements have been shared with our school community and prospective families on our school website for review, under Important Documents | Calgary Girls Charter School (www.calgarygirlsschool.com).

Indicator 6: The students, parents, staff, school council(s) and community members consider the school program to be successful.

CGCS has consistently maintained results higher than the provincial average for teachers, parents and students overall satisfaction of the quality of education, as measured in the Alberta Education Assurance annual survey. The scores are often in the 80-90% range indicating that teachers, parents and students believe that CGCS's school program is successful. Additionally, teachers, parents and students agree that our school is a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe school for students. Again results in this area have consistently been above provincial averages and are often in the 80-90% range, also noting high levels of student engagement, as reported by families and teachers.

Calgary Girls Charter School also collects local data from further supplementary surveys from parents and former students with regular cadence. Within those surveys, in addition to likert scale rankings on different aspects of programming at CGCS, families are able to share anecdotal comments about their experience at the school, providing rich feedback to CGCS. Some common themes pulled from our most recent surveys include how much students in Grades 4 - 9 enjoy their options, co-curricular activities, clubs and athletics offered at the school. Parents often share that not only have their children grown academically, but they have also noticed significant growth in their student's self-confidence. Additionally, parents have shared that they appreciate the "hands-on learning experiences" and that their child is "being challenged to think in different ways". Throughout the past twelve years, students continue to have access to and participate in many

different opportunities such as camp, outdoor education, a major theater production every couple of years, robotics, science fair, leadership opportunities, to name a few, as we believe that a successful program is one that not only meets educational standards but also aligns with the values and needs of the community, creating a well-rounded and supportive environment for all students.

Students, parents, staff, school councils, and community members consider CGCS's school program successful because it fosters a positive and inclusive learning environment where students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally, as has been indicated on previous and current Alberta Education surveys and locally developed surveys. A key indicator is the academic progress of students, with high performance on standardized tests and assessments. Success is also measured by how well the program supports students' well-being, with initiatives like mental health support, extracurricular activities, and opportunities for student leadership that have been offered annually. The sense of safety and belonging within the school is another important factor, ensuring that all students feel valued, respected and encouraged to take academic risks, which may not be prevalent in girls in mixed-gender classrooms, also indicated in Alberta education data and locally developed surveys. It is clear by the supportive data that families and students feel that programming at CGCS is successful.

Indicator 7: Student success is determined in accordance with Ministerial Order ([#028/2020](#)).

The Alberta Ministerial Order on Student Learning (#028/2020) sets the vision for student success in the province, with an emphasis on developing well-rounded individuals who are engaged thinkers and ethical citizens. The Charter for Calgary Girls Charter School is aligned with the Ministerial Order on Student Learning in the following areas:

- 1) *Knowledge development:* CGCS measures student academic success through a variety of classroom based assessments and uses continuous feedback with students and their families to ensure that students are meeting foundational competencies. The Ministerial Order emphasizes literacy and numeracy as being the building blocks of learning. Over the years CGCS has engaged in whole staff professional learning in relation to numeracy and literacy and has worked with experts from those areas such as Olive Chapman (Professor of Mathematics Education from the University of Calgary) and Peter Bowers (founder of the WordWorks Literacy Centre). Learning at CGCS is taken up through an inquiry based model which allows students to solve problems collaboratively, question assumptions, evaluate sources of information and apply their learning to real world contexts. CGCS has also used a variety of standardized assessments to internally measure growth, progress and required interventions that students may need, as a result of the data measured over time. Such measures have included the MIPI, Jerry John's and most recently, Lexia.
- 2) *Character Development:* Go Girls, our locally designed and developed curriculum, provides Calgary Girls Charter School's students with engaging learning experiences that support the development of skills and dispositions necessary to become a caring, knowledgeable and responsible citizen. While learning to apply critical thinking and questioning to their world, students are empowered to actively decide who they are and make choices to grow into the person they want to become. In the Go Girls Curriculum students explore concepts of self identity, agency, relationships, resilience, feminism and historical/futures thinking. These targeted learning outcomes in a girl's school support the social emotional development of our students as they developmentally change through adolescence, as the curriculum has been a keystone of our Charter.
- 3) *Community Engagement:* Students at CGCS make meaningful contributions to their community and world. Some ways they have shown this is by participating in yearly food drives to support veterans and the Calgary Food Bank, raising money for the Calgary Food Bank, partnering with Animal rescue in Calgary to promote the adoption of orphaned animals, raising money for the Canadian Cancer foundation through participating in run for the cure and/or Terry Fox, and collecting period products for local organizations to address period product access and inequity. Additionally, CGCS partnered with Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (CW4WA) to recognize the resilience and rights of Afghan girls for two years post

COVID, where students had participated in actions such as organizing a “walk out” of the classroom to support “I’m walking out because they can’t walk in” on International Day of the Girl and drew attention to human rights violations being committed against girls and women in Afghanistan.

CGCS promotes the academic, social and personal development of all its students inclusive of diverse backgrounds and academic ability. CGCS monitors student progress, adapts instructional methods and provides interventions where necessary to ensure that no student is left behind.

Indicator 8: The charter authority shares its innovative practices and learning outcomes with others in the educational community.

At CGCS, we pride ourselves on our innovative teaching practices, as such we recognize the importance of sharing our learned experiences and successes with the broader educational community. In sharing, we not only contribute to the professional growth of others but also deepen and strengthen our own learning.

Our teachers, administrators, and student support teams have engaged in presenting at a variety of conferences across the province and country, as well as internationally. These presentations emphasize our innovative approaches to teaching and learning, highlight effective strategies that support diverse learners within an all-girls learning environment, and promote collaborative practices that contribute to our unique learning environment.

Below is a chart listing some of the conferences where our staff has had the opportunity to present. The impact of our work extends beyond our school, as we look to share best practices, engage in meaningful discussions, and establish partnerships with others in our field.

Presentations Shared by CGCS Staff - Sharing Knowledge, Understanding and Research

Presenters	Name of Event	Shared with Educational Community
Zoey Graf	Telus Spark SHIFT Lab conference (October 2017)	“Cultivating Empathy and Authentic Connection in Learning Environments”
Sarrah Johnstone Zoey Graf	Ideas Conference Galileo Network - University of Calgary (May 2017)	Picture Books at the Heart of Innovative Educational Practice: Deepening Our Conceptual Lenses <i>Co-presented research of project</i>
Cayley Ermter Yasmine Chamseddine Colleen Parks	The Association Of Alberta Public Charter Schools Conference (October 2019)	Design Thinking for Social Change
Dani Sever Zoey Graf Jenelee Jones Colleen Parks Cayley Ermter Marlene Vazquez	National Coalition of Girls School Annual Conference International Virtual (June 2021)	An ongoing journey towards a pedagogy of belonging for all: Creating Cultures of Belonging CGCS presented a pedagogical framework for ways in which cultures of belonging are created by leaning into our the Go Girls curriculum, as supported by educational research
Sarrah Johnstone	The Alberta Association Public Charter Schools TAAPCS Conference Calgary, Alberta (October 2021)	En-Abling Self-Advocacy: Fostering a Culture of Self-Determination <i>Presented personal research on learning disability support advocacy in students and ways in which students are supported</i>

Cayley Ermter Colleen Parks Sarrah Johnstone Zoey Graf	The Alberta Association Public Charter Schools TAAPCS Conference Calgary, Alberta (October 2021)	School Belonging for All: Towards a Comprehensive Pedagogy of Belonging <i>This presentation highlights CGCS exploration of the relationship between research and practice, while working towards the design of a preliminary conceptual framework that operationalizes school belonging research into practice.</i>
Lisa Hood Colleen Parks Vanessa Van Nistelroo Nicola Swanby	The Alberta Association Public Charter Schools TAAPCS Conference Calgary, Alberta (October 2021)	Closing the Digital Divide: Gender Equitable Computer Science in Middle School <i>This presentation details the findings of an integrative literature review and offers educators a practical framework for gender equitable CS instruction. CGCS teachers offer guidance on how this model can be used to translate research into practice.</i>
Cayley Ermter	Alberta GSA Conference November 2022	Queering Your Library A workshop designed to share your favourite novels, talk about inclusive diverse stories in personal reading and in classrooms, and learn how to intentionally diversify reading.
Jenelee Jones Dani Sever Cayley Ermter Sarrah Johnstone	Critical Thinking Consortium Partner Symposium National Virtual Conference (May 2023)	Co-presenter with Usha James (TC2): Doing the Inner Work – A yearlong staff inquiry into Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. <i>CGCS co-presented our year long staff critical inquiry which unpacked ways in which learning communities become more inclusive, culminating in a staff commitment to create a community where every person feels seen, heard and cared for. CGCS was recognized with a Class Act Award, which was presented by the Critical Thinking Consortium.</i>
Cayley Ermter Jenelee Jones Sarrah Johnstone Usha James	International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement Conference Dublin, Ireland (January 2024)	Co-presenter: Creating Cultures of Belonging: A Critical Inquiry Approach to Deepening Staff Understanding of Equity, Inclusion and Diversity
Stacey McNichol Emily Bentley	Ever Active Schools Conference (January 2025)	Innovative Ways to Create a Healthy School Environment Sharing CGCS's philosophy and framework for physical education.

In addition to extending our innovative practices with others within the field, we also engage our parent community in learning opportunities that are in alignment with our school charter, population, and overall vision of the school. This includes providing learning sessions on transitions through adulthood; ADHD in girls, adolescent development in girls, and executive function and its relationship learning, to name a few. We also opened these sessions up to parents and teachers from other charter schools in the Calgary area.

Lastly, we are in the process of finalizing a copyright license for our recently revised Go Girls curriculum. Once secured, we are excited to promote and share this rich resource while maintaining our ownership rights. We believe the potential impact on educators and girls beyond our school community is significant, and we're eager to see it flourish.

Indicator 9: Student achievement is consistently strong or improving.

Local and provincial measures show that student achievement is consistently strong or improving.

Data from Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs) shows that throughout the years all students, including students with educational codes, consistently demonstrate academic success that typically surpasses the provincial average across all areas. The data that identifies CGCS student success (PAT results) includes those students who have been identified and coded with mild, moderate, or severe learning needs. Relative to all grade 6 and 9 students across the province, CGCS students outperformed students by 20-30% in the acceptable and excellence range, on average, in every subject area. CGCS has consistently had extremely high participation rates in PAT, which includes students with mild, moderate and

severe needs, who account for approximately 30% of our population over the past 7 - 10 years. This achievement reflects not only the hard work and dedication of students, but also the support and guidance of the exceptional educators at CGCS. Statistical evidence from the Alberta Education Assurance survey (2020 - 2024) reports high overall academic engagement of CGCS students, which is consistent with students across the province of Alberta. Further to this, our own local measures, such as student report cards and supplementary family surveys, show CGCS students consistently demonstrate high levels of achievement in their academic programming.

At CGCS, our dedication to student achievement guides the ways we organize and allocate school resources:

- **Learning Commons Educator:** Over the past year, CGCS has instituted the position of Learning Commons Educator (LCE). With the support of the LCE, staff and students are provided access to varied learning resources that enhance student understanding of curricular concepts meant to support the learning in the classroom. The LCE plans with grade teams and works with staff to ensure that all students have learning resources that meet their level of understanding and further them in developing skills and knowledge.
- **Student Services:** Over the past 5 years, CGCS has benefited from the significant increase in funding following the SLS audit, which has been allocated directly to student supports, including the addition of education assistants, learning strategist, counsellor, occupational therapy, professional learning and educational assessments. This is in addition to developing a comprehensive framework for student services, in an effort to provide students with support that will be most impactful to their success and achievement. Individual Program Plans are closely monitored and reviewed regularly at CGCS to ensure students with learning needs are provided the required supports that allow them to grow and improve. Students requiring academic program modifications are provided access to the Knowledge and Employability program, in grades 8-9, further supporting our student's high academic achievement and success. The most recent AER, which speaks to the past 5 years, has shown that teachers, parents and students feel their students have timely access to appropriate support, with CGCS scoring above provincial average. In particular, and most notable, in the past year, 99.4% of teachers felt students have access to appropriate support.
- **Educational Technology:** At CGCS we understand how technology can be leveraged to improve student learning and academic success and are committed to continual growth in this area, as technology and/or philosophies about technology are ever-changing, emerging and becoming obsolete. Because we are committed to this, a committee of CGCS staff is currently creating a Technology Framework that is grounded in the vision, mission, and values of our school. The guiding principles that underscore this framework will be considered when adapting and creating administrative procedures for technology, making decisions related to the use of technology, resource allocation, and learning opportunities to ensure positive impacts on student learning and success. Future ambitions include plans for rich professional learning and an audit of the technological resources (equipment and software) our educators use to deepen student learning.

While student achievement is a noted strength at CGCS, we have future aspirations in this area. Staff at CGCS have identified a need to commit to continually improving vertical and horizontal alignment in assessment, our pedagogical approach of inquiry, and the teaching of the Go Girls curriculum in our most recent staff engagement sessions. To support alignment, our current area of focus for whole-staff professional learning is to enhance understanding of an effective inquiry-based learning approach and to create a framework for inquiry-based learning at CGCS. In addition to supporting alignment of practice, this shared framework will allow for students to engage in learning that is rigorous and enriches their understanding of complex and nuanced curricular concepts.

Indicator 10: The charter authority is committed to engaging students, teachers, parents and community members in a model of continuous improvement.

At CGCS, we value collaboration and shared success and we are thoughtful to engage all community members as we strive to model continuous improvement.

Students:

CTF programming at CGCS is designed to provide a comprehensive educational experience centered around four essential pillars: Applied Technology and Engineering, Leadership, Service Learning, and Health and Wellness. Together, these four pillars create a holistic framework that supports students in becoming well-rounded individuals. Throughout the year, the CTF programming at CGCS helps to foster a learning environment where students thrive academically and personally while preparing them for their future roles as engaged and responsible citizens, and compliments the option offerings in the fine and performing arts also available to all students.

Our students have various opportunities for enrichment through extracurricular and co-curricular activities that contribute to their overall continuous improvement, including field trips, overnight camps, sports teams, and clubs. These offerings promote academic, social, emotional, and physical growth, teaching essential skills like teamwork, leadership, and resilience. Active participation keeps students engaged and motivated, enhancing their academic performance and instilling a positive attitude toward learning. Additionally, enrichment opportunities encourage creative thinking and problem-solving, while also building a sense of community.

This year, we have launched a school-wide initiative to support student literacy through the implementation of Lexia. This program enhances our commitment to literacy and individualized learning by using Artificial intelligence to tailor instruction to each child's specific needs. Teachers and parents can leverage the data provided by Lexia to deliver targeted interventions for students who require additional support.

Teachers:

Teacher timetables are carefully built to include dedicated time for collaborative team meetings, enabling teachers to work together on best practices, innovative strategies, as well as have time to analyze student data to determine next steps in teaching and learning.

Our staff has, consistently over the years, been deeply committed to continuous improvement, fostering an environment where professional learning is integral to our growth. Over the past several years, we have implemented a variety of staff professional learning opportunities, including threaded whole staff professional learning sessions that encourage collaboration and build collective capacity. The design and implementation of our Go Girls curriculum is a robust example of our entire community coming together around a common goal to support student growth and achievement. Staff satisfaction with professional learning opportunities at our school has been consistently over 90% over the past five years, surpassing that of the provincial average. Our primary focus for the current school year is developing a common and comprehensive understanding of inquiry-based learning that will ultimately yield a collaboratively built framework for teachers to use when designing learning experiences for their students.

Due to our commitment to improvement and life-long learning, an area of future aspiration is to continue to create strong connections with community members who will support our professional growth and development. CGCS staff have identified the importance of fostering strong relationships with Indigenous elders, knowledge keepers and community members allowing us to develop reciprocal relationships and create spaces of reconciliation. Additionally, at CGCS we are committed to being responsive to the needs of our learning community and creating ongoing partnerships that will enhance staff understanding of how to best serve students by consulting with experts in the field (eg. psychologists who

specialize in ADHD in girls and/or complex learners or educational consultants who specialize in best practices in Mathematics education, universal design for learning, or inquiry based learning).

Parents/Community Members:

Parents play an integral role in enhancing our overall learning community. Through volunteering, parents provide additional support for teachers and students, as well as help contribute to engaging learning experiences for students. When parents share their expertise, whether in science, art, or other subject areas, they enrich the curriculum and further inspire students. We also have parents serving on the board of directors, which allows them to contribute to strategic decisions, ensuring that the school's goals align with our unique community's needs. Their involvement fosters stronger partnerships between home and school, leading to a more cohesive educational experience focused on continuous improvement.

We have a very active and productive School Council who focus on supporting programming aligned with our charter and three-year education plan. This ensures that our initiatives reflect our collective goals. One of our current goals is to rebuild and strengthen our community, especially after consolidating our two campuses and addressing the lasting effects of COVID-19. The School Council has been instrumental in this effort by hosting events like our annual family BBQ, where we welcomed 800 - 1000 attendees annually, post covid, and the annual Snowball or family skate event that brings all students together prior to winter break, fostering relationships and connections across all grade levels. These events also encourage family volunteerism and community involvement. Additionally, our School Council organizes the International Women's Day conference annually in March, featuring inspiring women from diverse backgrounds within Calgary and Southern Alberta who present and engage with our students, and provide strong role modeling for our students.

We also have collaborated with local community members and organizations to further enhance CGCS programming that aligns with our charter and our goals. Some examples include:

- Activate YYC and Community Grants from the City of Calgary - Paint the Pavement
- Champions in Education for Education in Afghanistan - students presented virtually at national and international conferences
- Period Product Drive partnered with Junior League of Calgary (looking at period inequity)
- Collaborating with artist Mike Hooves to collaboratively design a CGCS mural
- Week long artists in Residence, such as Trickster Theatre and Indigenous Elder and Knowledge Keeper Shirley Hill
- Capstone Engineering Academy, who supported our teachers and students in CTF options related to applied technology and engineering programs in Grades 4 - 5 and 7
- First Robotics, who has been integral to assisting our staff and students to start our robotics program, sending our teams to provincial competitions throughout the past three years.

Indicator 11: The charter authority reaches out beyond its walls to demonstrate broad and sustained levels of community engagement.

CCGCS greatly values the strong connections we have with community partners beyond the walls of our school. Our staff and students have been involved in various service learning and activism initiatives in the past 5-7 years where we have fostered strong and lasting relationships. Our grade 9 students have collaborated with Trellis Society to support the Hera program, building a library for their education center and curating baskets and essentials for young mothers and girls currently experiencing homelessness and exploitation. Students and staff at CGCS have raised funds for and supported Women for Afghan Women and partnered with this organization to present at two conferences, *The British Columbia Council for International Cooperation* and *Breaking Barriers in Education, Calgary and Beyond our Borders*. Additionally, CGCS had ongoing involvement with the Stuff-a-Bus initiative, where we had an ongoing relationship with the Calgary Food Bank for many years, donating food and money to support local Calgarian families. Because we also value our Lakeview neighbours, CGCS students and staff create opportunities for community connection. Each winter, CGCS

students volunteer in the neighbourhood as “snow angels”, shoveling walkways around the neighbourhood. In the 2023-2024 school year, CGCS was approved for a grant from Activate YYC and the City of Calgary which we used to create an outdoor community art piece that represents and celebrates the beautiful landscapes of the community and those who make their homes here.

CGCS also values co-curricular activities where we are able to connect with the broader community. In 2019, CGCS staff members and grade 9 students collaborated with Indigenous and Metis partners to write a land acknowledgment with strong ties to the ancestral lands that CGCS is built on, where we work and play together each day. Following the creation of the land acknowledgment, CGCS was approved for a community grant which allowed us to have our land acknowledgement showcased on the front doors of the school, where it still proudly lives.

To ensure we stay connected with our parent community, CGCS seeks parent voice and feedback through stakeholder engagement and Speak Out sessions, parent surveys 2-3 times per year, as well as an exit survey when families move on from our community, and Coffee Talks with school administration. Through these sessions, CGCS has been able to gather valuable information and feedback about parent experiences and satisfaction with programming.

Beyond community members and families, CGCS has also partnered with many post-secondary institutions throughout the past 12 years to further teacher development through on-going support of and participation in teacher education programs (Bachelor of Education). We host student teachers from St. Mary's, Ambrose, University of Calgary and Lethbridge and Mount Royal University, who have been in various stages of completion of their degrees. It is common that following the completion of their education degree, CGCS student teachers return to the community as members of staff.

Indicator 12: The charter authority uses research-informed practices to create innovative learning environments and improve student learning.

Calgary Girls Charter School highly values research and data informed practice and decision making in all aspects of school operations and student programming, and uses a variety of mechanisms to ensure staff are considering and using educational research. CGCS staff have capitalized on opportunities to partner with post-secondary institutions to contribute to educational research, as well as developed administrative procedures to support this important work. Our most recent research partnership, with a University of Calgary doctoral student in 2021, examined *Anxiety as a Symptom Among Adolescent Females: Sub-Clinical Characteristics and Influences of Parenting and Peer Relationships*. Future ambitions for Calgary Girls Charter School include seeking out and developing research projects focused on how to best support girls in their educational programming.

Because of the provincial Charter Regulation, CGCS has allocated resources to support research informed practice, as well as research production and/or contribution. Following the two years of disrupted learning due to COVID restrictions in 2020-2022, CGCS created a Research Lead position, as part of the Learning Leader team. The Research Lead was allocated additional time to both lead research initiatives and opportunities, as well as collect research that would inform school-based decisions. Because CGCS has recently consolidated and undergone facility modernization we have temporarily paused the role of the research lead. Currently, the senior leadership team is collaboratively revisioning ways to meet the research mandate in authentic and meaningful ways.

Beyond the role of the Research Lead, each year, the school has allocated additional funds for staff to participate in opportunities to share research or consult research. The staff have used grounding books by authors who share their expertise in areas of need throughout the years, related to girls' education and development and/or subject specific topics. CGCS is also a member of the International Coalition of Girls Schools (ICGS), and has access to current educational research conducted globally. Evidence of our research-informed program design can be drawn from the redrafting process of the *Go Girls*, where numerous print sources and experts were consulted, or in the development of the framework for Student Services, which followed a similar process in order to ensure our framework was research informed. At CGCS,

staff are actively encouraged to consider action-research projects when developing their annual focal points for professional learning, as outlined in our Employee Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Administrative Procedure. Finally, multiple staff members engage in graduate studies work, where they are exposed to and participate in educational research.