

Progressive Academy Education Society(PAES) Education Plan - May 31, 2021

Preamble

This plan is written under the guidance provided in Alberta Education's *Assurance Framework* as described in the [2020-21 Funding Manual for Schools](#). While this plan in part fulfils the requirements of the Ministry, PAES has determined that an Education Plan is of greater importance than simply a compliance document. It serves a number of purposes. It is intended to provide our stakeholders with a plan that outlines our key priorities over the next three years and beyond. It further guides the staff of PAES, providing them with a unified focus for their work of helping students be successful. In publicizing our priorities for a minimum of three years, PAES is publicly stating our commitment to continually improving what we do, but not in the sense of continually adding new initiatives and strategies. Rather, it is making a commitment to consistent outcomes, through continuously improved processes. This plan holds out for the staff of the school a set of priorities that will guide their community of practice as they seek to create learning environments that promote outstanding student achievement.

Accountability Statement

The Education Plan for Progressive Academy Education Society, PAES, commencing September 1, 2021 was prepared under the direction of the Board in accordance with the responsibilities under the Education Act and the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act. This plan was developed in the context of the provincial government's business and fiscal plans. The Board has used its performance results to develop the plan and is committed to implementing the strategies contained within the plan to improve student learning and results. The Board approved the Education Plan for three years on May 27, 2021.

C-Anne Robertson,
PAES Board Chair

Setting the Context

Vision

The vision of PAES is *A vibrant society shaped by individual excellence.*

Mission

Our mission is *To provide a student-focused program that cultivates a passion for learning and critical thinking.*

Values

PAES values:

- School Community
 - Strong school-family relationships
 - A culture of diversity, appreciation for individual differences, respect for all
 - Engaging parents in planning
 - Engaging parents in the life of the school community
 - Celebrating and sharing successes
 - Open communication of the school's vision, mission and values and results
 - Community connections and partnerships
- Inspired Learning
 - Student engagement
 - Academic success
 - Personal ownership of learning
 - Creativity
 - Critical thinking
 - Innovation
 - Collaboration
 - Providing passion-driven learning experiences
 - Pathways for accelerated learning
- Inspired Teaching
 - Teaching from strengths and passion
 - Supporting all learners according to their need
 - Ongoing professional learning
 - Clear communication of our vision, mission, values, program and activities
 - High expectations of all
 - Creating connections with our community
 - Collaboration with parents and student

School History

Progressive Academy opened in 1983, founded by a group of homeschool parents who believed that together, they could better provide for the type of learning they envisioned for their children. This original society applied to Alberta Education to operate a school and officially began with two classrooms in the Oliver School under the name of The Beanstalk School. After two years the need for larger facilities led to the Beanstalk School relocating to the Sherbrooke School where it operated for several years and continued to grow. In 1998, the Progressive Academy Education Society purchased the Talmud Torah School and with the availability of space, the school has slowly grown its program to serve upwards of 200 students.

The dream of the school's founders was to create a community that fostered self-directed learning, provided students with authentic learning experiences, assisted them to develop strong literacy skills that would open doors to success in all areas of learning, and helped them discover their inherent strengths and qualities and build competencies around those qualities. The vision was simple: to improve the world by influencing positive student development. As the school grew, so did its program offerings. The original early learning and early elementary programs developed into a full grade school, extending to high school with out of school care programs, and annual summer camps. With innovative school leadership, the school added pull-out individual music lessons(2014), and a summer high school outdoor education program called Mountain Adventure School (2012). In 2013, the school took on more of a global focus as it deliberately began to recruit international students, formed partnerships with several schools in Beijing, China, planned international travel opportunities for students and began to celebrate the international diversity of it's community. This global focus also led to the implementation of a Mandarin as a Second Language Program in 2017. The addition of robotics programs in 2015 and a unique cross-grade options program the following year greatly enriched PA's technology offerings. The beginning of the 2018-2019 school year also saw the beginning of school operated busing routes. While the high school grades were discontinued at the end of 2011-12, they were reintroduced in 2019, along with programs for gifted and talented students which allow all students to progress vertically through the program where there is interest, ability, and support.

School Profile and Programs

The Progressive Academy community is a richly diverse community of families from many different ethnicities, cultures and backgrounds. Many of the families that select the school as the learning home for their children are professionals and/or entrepreneurs. They place high academic expectations on the school, but value the highly engaging environment that offers students many different opportunities to explore who they are and discover their passions and giftings. They also value the school's efforts to create a welcoming, caring, supportive environment that includes the family as partners in learning. One indicator of the strong community that exists in the school is its growth by referral. While the school advertises extensively and draws students into its Junior Kindergarten through advertising, the majority of

students who enter the elementary and secondary grades are referred to the school by current or past families.

Progressive Academy's core programs currently include a full-day Junior Kindergarten (JK) which is open to children three years of age and up. While the JK program is play based, it is designed to build strong literacy and numeracy foundational skills. At five years of age, students move into the kindergarten program where they further develop their literacy and numeracy skills and begin to study two additional languages, French and Mandarin. Teachers in the Kindergarten year are already identifying students who show the capacity and interest to advance more rapidly through the curriculum. These students are not only given opportunities to learn at an enriched level, but also at an accelerated pace, sometimes in one subject area and sometimes across the curriculum. While the classroom is the home base for learning in grades 1 to 9, teachers plan a rich array of learning experiences for their students, taking them on many outdoor and off-campus learning experiences. Prior to Covid-19, PA provided many cross curricular and cross grade learning opportunities, including robotics, fine arts productions, outdoor sports, Spring Break travel, and junior high internships. The high school day program at PA is a highly individualized, yet collaborative learning experience. Subject area specialists work with small groups or individual students to actively teach, coach and tutor. PA's high school learners are based in a multigrade learning center, but the entire school and beyond is their classroom. Perhaps most innovative of PA's many programs is its summer Mountain Adventure School, where high school aged students from across the province come together for intensive two weeks sessions based at HELA Wilderness Adventures near Rocky Mountain House. While there is a small component of indoor classroom and online learning, the vast majority of the learning takes place in outdoor venues, including nearby lakes and forests, the eastern slopes of the Canadian Rocky Mountains, and the North Saskatchewan River.

The outcomes envisioned by the school's founders continue to be important goals of PA today. The school uses the Province of Alberta's *Early Learning and Care Framework* for its Junior Kindergarten and for K to 12, the *Program of Studies* as the starting point for all programs. The school liberally incorporates its own outcomes to build a rich program that prepares students for ongoing success in learning and living. While Progressive Academy is not a faith based school, it encourages teaching staff to celebrate the rich diversity within the school community and to use the many cultures and faiths represented in PA as important learning springboards.

School Accomplishments

There are many milestones that mark Progressive Academy's development and successes over its 37 year history. The most recent successes include:

1. A re-introduction of high school grades and our first new graduate in June, 2020. He was subsequently admitted to the University of Toronto, adding to our previous list of successful high school graduates.
2. Consistently maintaining high standings in accountability pillar results.
3. The growth of our Mandarin as a second language program. Not only has the community overwhelmingly embraced this at the Kindergarten and early elementary

levels, but the popularity has led to the opening of a Saturday Mandarin Language School.

4. A growth in the number of international students. While the school has frequently hosted a small number of international students who were referred by our existing families, our deliberate outreach into international markets has brought us increasing numbers of students from an ever expanding selection of international locations.
5. The growing popularity of our International Day celebration. This has grown from an international potluck to a major annual event highlighting dancing, cuisine, artistic performances and fashions from around the world and providing a significant opportunity for community members to build relationships.
6. Success with online learning. The Covid-19 pandemic forced schools around the world to develop remote delivery models. Progressive Academy is proud of the way that its teachers and students embraced the opportunity and created rich learning experiences for all students. The satisfaction of our families was such that retention rates were significantly above the previous five-year average and many families encouraged their peers to consider Progressive Academy for their children. In this current year, with many families still choosing to keep their children at home due to the pandemic, PA has assigned a full-time teacher to manage the online learning in collaboration with classroom teachers.

Community Engagement

As outlined in our values section, Progressive Academy values its relationship with its many stakeholders as an important element of the school's success. In its early years, cultivation of relationships with parents and community supporters was an organic process, facilitated by the small size of the schools and its dependence on volunteers who shared PA's mission and vision. Parents knew that by enrolling their children, they were also committing their time and resources to ensure that many support tasks in the school successfully happened. They knew that in exchange, teachers and administrators were in constant communication with them and they were included in important decisions about their children.

As the growth and program offerings of the school became more complex and many of the support tasks became professionalized, the nature of community engagement has also evolved. The school, by necessity, has become more deliberate in facilitating relationships with parents and community. Several key elements of this are:

- Creating an environment that welcomes parents, as evidenced by such things as:
 - Encouraging parents, in non-Covid-19 times to drop children off and pick them up at the classroom door where they can get to know their child's teacher(s)
 - Special events such as a welcome barbecue prior to the start of classes or our annual international night
 - An open door policy with school administrators where parents are encouraged to meet with the Principal or Executive Director at their convenience to hear concerns or simply visit

- The formation of a Parent Advisory Group whose function it is to meet with the school's Executive Director and Principal, receive reports on student progress, and provide input into school direction, programming, issues.
- A more organized approach to soliciting, orienting, and recognizing volunteers. While this has been curtailed due to the Covid-19 safeguarding measures, we plan to renew this in the coming year once pandemic restrictions are relaxed. Volunteers are not limited to parents, and have included university students who are considering teaching as a future career, newcomers to Canada who are building their language skills, and university students who are looking for volunteer opportunities while they seek employment in their area of training.
- Hosting parent focus group meetings. The past two years, the administrative team of the school has invited groups of parents representing students of various grade levels within the school to meet with us for short morning focus groups. These meetings begin with a brief time of food and fellowship and end with a one-hour dialogue asking parents to respond both in written and verbal form to a number of questions that are determined from analysis of Accountability Survey results or from informal feedback that has indicated to administrators a possible area of concern.

Identification of Priorities

The PAES board along with the school's administrative team and staff are committed to creating and maintaining a school community that encourages excellence. They are united in their view that excellence is not achieved by continually changing what we do, but by identifying what we do well and then seeking to continually refine our delivery of these services. This creates a sense of stability in the organization. Parents who selected the school for its strong focus on literacy and numeracy development or its commitment to encouraging acceleration of students at a rate determined by their readiness will find that this is consistent throughout the different divisions and over time.

Alberta Education has identified five domains of Assurance to guide schools in planning and reporting. These are:

- Student Growth and Achievement
- Teaching & Leading
- Learning Supports
- Governance
- Local & Societal Context

Progressive Academy is committed to reporting on each of these using data that is collected through Alberta Education's processes. It will furthermore report on all required provincial and local measures.

The PAES has also established its own priorities for its 2021 Education Plan. These priorities will remain in place over the next three years and beyond.

1. An examination of PAT results over the past number of years has identified that while our students have excellent reading and comprehension skills, they have not always demonstrated strong writing skills. As our K to 12 teachers in their professional learning community meetings pondered the PAT data, **they believed that a cross grade systematic approach to developing writing skills would be an important and ongoing priority for the school.**

2. PA’s administrative team and teaching staff have long recognized that many capable students lose interest when they are ready to advance but are forced to continue on with their similarly-aged peers. Parents have frequently advocated for these students, seeking the opportunity for them to be challenged at a higher level *when they are ready*, not when they chronologically reach the next grade level. As the school staff and administrators pondered workable solutions to this they have begun to develop strategies that allow students to accelerate in one or more subject areas based on their readiness, their desire, and the availability of school and home support. Out of this has grown a second priority, **to strengthen our flexible grade system allowing students access to supports, enrichment and acceleration opportunities.**

3. The third priority has grown out of the observation that students are most likely to experience success when they study and play within a community where parents, teachers and administrators collaborate on multiple levels to support student wellbeing and success. **Thus, the PAES is committed to building a collaborative, supportive community that appropriately scaffolds all students, enabling them to experience belonging, wellbeing and academic success.**

2021 to 2024 Assurance Framework Education Plan for Progressive Academy Education Society			
<i>School Priorities</i>	Develop Student Writing Skills	Flexible Grade System Allowing Students to Accelerate Vertically	Building a Supportive Community
<i>Matching Assurance Framework Domain</i>	Student Growth & Achievement	Student Growth & Achievement Teaching & Leading Learning Supports	Governance Local & Societal Context

<p>Outcomes</p>	<p>PA students demonstrate outstanding age appropriate writing skills</p>	<p>PA students who have demonstrated mastery in one or more areas are able to access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In-class support ● Additional challenge within their current level ● Pull-out enrichment ● Acceleration <p>Depending on their engagement, their willingness and availability of home-based support</p>	<p>Parents and teachers collaborate</p> <p>Community professionals are readily accessed</p> <p>Families feel welcome</p> <p>Families develop positive relationships within the school community</p> <p>Parental input into school planning is encouraged</p> <p>Parents can access learning that better enables them to support student wellbeing & academic success</p>
<p>Context</p>	<p>Since its beginning, PA has focused on the development of strong literacy skills, believing that this is a foundation for all other learning. The development of strong writing skills is a natural parallel that opens doors for students in a world that increasingly demands strong communication skills.</p>	<p>The intent of PA's founders was that a student's chronological age was not as important as a student's interest, ability, and foundational learning in determining the level at which a student learns. When students have demonstrated mastery of learning, and are motivated to move on, it is counter-motivational to hold them back until all in the peer group are equally ready.</p>	<p>Learning is a social activity which best happens in a supportive community where students sense that the school, the home and the community are all working together to encourage success and support student achievement</p>

<p>Budgetary Principles:</p> <p><i>(The school's budget summary can be accessed at www.proacad.ca/news)</i></p>	<p>Progressive Academy will budget in a way that ensures the appropriate resources are available for developing the teacher skills and student supports needed to build strong writers</p>	<p>Progressive Academy will budget in a way that ensures structures are in place and support is available for students who wish to accelerate vertically through the curriculum</p>	<p>Progressive Academy will budget in a way that facilitates strong parental and community engagement</p>
<p>Strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify and train a lead teacher to champion & coach others ● Staff professional learning via the schools Professional Learning Community (PLC) or dedicated professional Learning sessions ● Monthly teacher check-ins through the Professional Learning Community ● Hire a writing coach to both coach teachers and provide support to student groups ● Dedicated frequent/daily times for writing ● Teach students a writing process - basic strategies and variations (Short-term implementation) ● Include basic skills teaching (handwriting, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Orient all teachers to understand the school's approach to vertical acceleration (Short-term implementation) ● Map out patterns of acceleration (Medium-term implementation) ● Annually identify students who are capable of acceleration, determine if students/parents desire acceleration & if home support is available (ongoing) ● Establish a support team for interested students (short-term implementation) ● Write Individual Education Plans for students who chose to accelerate (Medium-term implementation) ● Establish a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Host an annual pre-startup event allowing parents to meet teachers (Short-term implementation) ● Parents are invited by teachers to share goals for their children, participate in development of Individual Program/Education Plans (Short-term implementation) ● Host at least two Parent teacher conferences annually to discuss progress (short-term implementation) ● Develop a mental health network to consult with the school staff and support students (Long-term implementation) ● Participate in AISCA's student supports initiative (Short-term implementation) ● Host an annual <i>International Event</i>

	<p>conventions, keyboarding, word processing)(Medium term implementation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify basic writing expectations at each grade level(Medium term implementation) ● Create a writing community (choice, opportunities to demonstrate product, collaboration, peer critique, etc.) (Long-term implementation) ● Encourage older students to participate in essay contests (Short - term implementation) 	<p>system of collaboration with parents that ensures their involvement in the program planning for their children and regular access to information on their child's progress (Short-term implementation)</p>	<p>to celebrate the many cultures in our school community (Short-term implementation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Re-implement (Post-Covid) student dropoffs at classroom door by parents (short-term implementation) ● Host <i>Mixer Events</i> in conjunction with school events such as Winter Concert, School Musical (Medium-term implementation) ● Utilize the school's <i>Parent Advisory Council</i> for both reporting and planning input (Medium term implementation) ● Post Covid host annual parent-administrat or breakfasts & focus groups (Short-term implementation) ● Host annual series of FOPs for parents of students at all grade levels (Short-term implementation)
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<p>Measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student results on writing component of ELA PAT's & Diploma Exams. This is the long-term objective. The results from 2020-21 will provide baseline data. ● Anecdotal reporting of progress in other strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anecdotal reporting on progress in strategies ● Parent & Student Satisfaction that students have the opportunity to accelerate beyond their chronological grade level ● Parent and student satisfaction that students have the support necessary to be successful in accelerated programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Satisfaction surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parents, students & teachers satisfied that students with learning needs can access the supports they need to be successful ○ Parents satisfied that the school provides opportunities for them to meet other parents ○ Parents satisfied that the school provides opportunities for them to learn about parenting skills & learning strategies to support their children's learning. ○ Parents satisfied that they have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in program decisions that impact their children ○ Parents satisfied that they have the opportunity to provide input that impacts the overall
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2021 to 2024 Assurance Framework Education Plan for Progressive Academy Education Society	
Provincial Priority	<p>First Nation Metis, and Inuit students are successful.</p> <p>All students, teachers and school leaders learn about First Nations, Metis and Inuit foundational knowledge, including perspectives, experiences, treaties, agreements, and the history and legacy of residential schools.</p>
Matching Assurance Framework Domain	<p>Student Growth & Achievement</p> <p>Teaching & Leading</p> <p>Learning Supports</p> <p>Governance</p> <p>Local & Societal Context</p>
Outcomes	<p>While historically, PA has not been home to a significant number of self-identified FNMI students, our goal is that all self-identified FNMI students at the school are provided with the supports they need to be successful.</p> <p>Students in all grades participate in grade appropriate learning that introduces students to indigenous foundational knowledge, perspectives, experiences, treaties, agreements, history and legacy of residential schools.</p> <p>Teachers are satisfied that they have the training, confidence, resources and supports to provide learning opportunities for their students.</p>
Measures	<p>Satisfaction Surveys - Students, Teachers and Parents report satisfaction that students have opportunities to learn about FNMI foundational knowledge, perspectives, experiences, treaties, agreements, and the history & legacy of residential schools. Teachers report satisfaction that they have the confidence levels and adequate levels of training, support and resources to teach FNMI foundational knowledge.</p> <p>Anecdotal reporting on progress of strategies</p>

Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Targeted professional learning for classroom teachers● Acquisition of library and learning resources● Collaborative sharing on teaching strategies, learning activities● Develop strategic partnerships with indigenous and Metis leaders/knowledgekeepers/schools● Annual celebration of National Indigenous People's Day
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