



**Fort McMurray  
Public School District**

School Review Report

**École McTavish  
Junior High School**

**Presented by the School Review Team  
(Roxanne Fudge, Jodine Wells and Rick Thorne)  
Nov. 2015**



## **Fort McMurray Public School District**

### **School Review Process**

#### **TERMS OF REFERENCE (March 2, 2015)**

##### **A. BACKGROUND**

The School Review Process, supported by the Board of Trustees and administration, will involve conducting external school reviews which are meant to be both formative and supportive. Two or three schools will be reviewed each year.

##### **B. REVIEW TEAM MANDATE**

The Review Team will provide information in the form of observations, commendations, and recommendations to the school Administration and staff, the School Councils, and the District Leadership Team with respect to the following areas:

###### 1) Implementation of FMPSD and Alberta Education Goals

- Education plans
- Timetabling and time allocations
- Professional Growth Plans
- Course Outlines

###### 2) Core, Co-curricular and Extracurricular Programs

- Core program offerings
- Extra-curricular program
- Intramurals
- Student Council (if applicable)

###### 3) School Communications

- Newsletters
- Phone calls home
- Email

###### 4) Support Staff

- Secretaries
- Teacher Assistants
- Support Staff evaluations

###### 5) Parent/Community Involvement

- School Council
- Volunteers

6) School Leadership

- Teacher supervision
- Staff meetings
- Decision-making process
- Budget

7) School Climate

- Student satisfaction
- Parent satisfaction
- Staff satisfaction

8) Student Achievement and Recognition

- Achievement results
- Achievement analysis
- Recognition programs

9) The School as a Safe and Caring Environment

- Student conduct
- Bullying issues

10) Professional Development

- Professional Learning Communities/Professional Learning Fridays
- Staff attendance at workshops and in-services
- Available funds

11) Technology

- Equipment and facilities
- Future plans

12) Library

- Resources available
- Programs offered

13) Physical Facilities

- Appropriateness
- Custodial services
- Central Office Maintenance

14) Student Support Services

- Identification
- IPPS, Inclusion & Programming
- Central Office supports

15) Other priorities identified by the École McTavish administration

- Opportunities afforded by the PEAK program.
- Effectiveness of and support for Project Based Learning

### **C. REVIEW TEAM MEMBERSHIP - École McTavish Junior High School (April 2015)**

- Rick Thorne - District Principal
- Roxanne Fudge - Principal, Frank Spragins High School
- Jodine Wells - Vice Principal École Dickinsfield School

### **D. PROCESS FOR GATHERING INFORMATION**

- Staff, Student & Parent surveys
- Staff, Student & Parent interviews
- School Council interview
- Review of school based documents and materials

### **E. HOW THE REVIEW RESULTS WILL BE USED**

1. To affirm the positive features and practices which are taking place at the school and to provide positive feedback where appropriate.
2. To provide feedback to the school Principal/Staff/School Council that will assist the school with planning for the future.
3. To develop a short-term and long-term action plan to address any areas that need strengthening.
4. To provide a Review Report to the District Senior Leadership team.
5. To produce a one page summary that can be shared with the School Community.

### **F. ACTION PLAN FOLLOW-UP**

1. The responsibility for follow-up monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plan will rest with the Superintendent or designate.
2. The principal shall be responsible for reporting progress on the Action Plan to the Senior Leadership Team.

## SCHOOL REVIEW

**The findings in this school review are based on:**

**Online surveys:**

Survey	# of Respondents	Total Possible	Return Rate %
Parents (students represented)	174	667	26%
Students	403	667	60%
Teachers	34	34	100%
Support staff	13	19	68%

**Individual interviews** (conducted at École McTavish Junior High School Oct 19-20 and Nov. 3, 2015)

- Teachers (7 staff randomly selected + 2 who requested to be interviewed)
- Support staff (4 staff randomly selected)
- Interview with School Council with school admin absent
- Interview Student focus group
- Interview school administration (Mr. Barr, Ms. Tebay and Mr. Hayward)

**Other Documents**

- École McTavish School Growth Plan (SEP/AERR 2014-15)
- Alberta Education Accountability Pillar Results Fall 2015 (The survey section was completed only by parents of grade 7 students. 33 parents completed the survey, down from 43 in 2014.)
- Tell Them From Me survey summary (grades 7-9 students)

The School Review team spent three full days at the school. As much time as possible was spent in and around the school trying to get a sense of the 'feeling' of the school.

Data collected from each of these sources provided the review team with critical input into this report. Although we do not mention every comment written on the surveys or made during our interviews, we have included trends and recurring themes identifying areas of satisfaction and/or areas of concern.

Though sheer volume prevents us from including all responses in this report, the survey results in their entirety have been available to the École McTavish Junior High School Administration for their use in continuous improvement.

# 1. IMPLEMENTATION OF FMPSD AND ALBERTA EDUCATION GOALS

## Observations:

- The school's Annual Education Plan is complete, including a school philosophy and mission statement.
- The principal meets annually with each teacher to review their growth plans and course outlines.

## Class sizes

Grade	Avg. Homeroom size	Avg. Homeroom size French Immer.	Avg. Homeroom size English	Largest class	Smallest class
Grade 7	28	28	28	30 - Basketball Class	15 - French as a second language
Grade 8	27	26	28	32 - Art	12 - French as a second language
Grade 9	23	22	24	30 - Art	5 - French as a second language

## Alberta Education Accountability Pillar Results (May-June 2015)

Measure Category	Measure Category Evaluation	Measure	École McTavish Junior High Sch			Alberta			Measure Evaluation		
			Current Result	Prev Yr. Res	Prev 3 Yr. avg	Current Result	Prev Yr. Res	Prev 3 Yr. avg	Achievement	Improvement	Overall
Safe & Caring Schools	Good	Safe and Caring	84.7	82.8	85.1	89.2	89.1	88.9	High	Maintained	Good
Student Learning Opportunities	n/a	Prog. of Studies	82.2	80.4	82.8	81.3	81.3	81.2	Very High	Maintained	Excellent
		Ed. Quality	86.9	84.9	86.4	89.5	89.2	89.5	Intermediate	Maintained	Acceptable
		Drop Out Rate	0.3	0.0	0.0	3.4	3.3	3.3	Very High	Maintained	Excellent
Student Learning Achievement (Grades K-9)	Good	PAT: Acceptable	83.7	75.9	73.6	73.0	73.1	73.9	High	Improved Significantly	Good
		PAT: Excellence	20.4	22.3	19.5	18.8	18.4	18.9	High	Maintained	Good
Preparation for Lifelong Learning, World of Work, Citizenship	n/a	Work Preparation	78.2	78.1	73.5	82.0	81.2	80.4	High	Maintained	Good
		Citizenship	77.1	78.4	78.5	83.5	83.4	83.1	Intermediate	Maintained	Acceptable
Parental Involvement	Good	Parental Involvement	80.4	80.6	75.4	80.7	80.6	80.2	High	Maintained	Good
Continuous Improvement	Excellent	School Improvement	85.7	78.6	75.5	79.6	79.8	80.1	Very High	Improved Significantly	Excellent

- In six of the ten "Measure Categories", the school results are below the province, though

in most cases the difference is small.

- 61% of teachers felt that the number of students in their classes was acceptable.

### **Commendations:**

- Most areas of the Accountability Pillar remain good or excellent, with two categories having “Improved Significantly” and no categories having noted a decline.
- PAT acceptable and excellence both remain above province.
- 96% of parents and 90% of students indicated satisfaction with the overall quality of education.
- 95% of parents and 81% of students are satisfied with the instructional methods used by teachers in the school.
- 85% of parents and 83% of students feel that the number of students in classes are acceptable.
- 85% of teachers felt that their teaching assignment and working responsibilities are reasonable and 88% expressed satisfaction with the timetable.
- 100% of support staff surveyed felt their assigned work responsibilities were fair and reasonable.
- 97% of teachers indicated that they know the key strategies in the School’s Growth Plan. There was general agreement that they play a significant role in developing the plan.
- Some staff members indicated that the cyclical schedule has meant less disruption in learning than with the previous Monday to Friday Schedule.

### **Recommendations:**

- With only 33 of their grade seven parents completing the Accountability Pillar Survey, efforts should be taken to explore ways to increase this number for 2016. In doing so, the information received will provide even greater insight into parent perceptions.

## 2. CORE AND CO-CURRICULAR\* AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR\* PROGRAMS

### Observations:

- The school's educational program is currently supported by 31.2 FTE teaching staff (ATA), 4 fte of which are dedicated to the French Immersion Program. This also includes a principal and two vice principals, one of which teaches 40% and the other 28%. École McTavish School has 668 students from grades 7-9 offering both a French Immersion and an English stream. Some students are registered in the PEAK athletic academy and others are offered Flex programming to allow them to pursue other athletic activities at an elite level.

	Total students	French Immersion	English stream	PEAK	FLEX
Grade 7	246	46	200	28	4
Grade 8	230	42	188	22	4
Grade 9	192	22	170	13	6
Total	668	102	576	63	14

PEAK Registration Numbers 2015-16	Dance Academy	Hockey Academy	Soccer Academy
Grades 3-6 (École Dickinsfield and Thickwood School)	25	25	12
Grade 7	7	13	8
Grade 8	4	14	4
Grade 9	2	10	1
Grades 10-12 (Westwood HS)	1	2	1

- The school is also home to students in the PEAK Athletic Program. These students are in grades 7-9 and are involved in either the hockey, dance or soccer academies. While many of the students are École McTavish students, the PEAK program also has elementary students grades 3-6 from École Dickinsfield and high school students from Westwood High School. Mr. Barr, principal at EMT is also Director of the PEAK program.
- The school offers a wide range of co-curricular activities / sports including Science Fair, Chess Club, DJ Club, Northern Elements Hip-Hop Crew, Yearbook Club, McTavish Green Team, Robotics Club, Theatre Arts, Christmas Concert Production, Set Design Team, Theatre Tech Club, Jazz Band, Musical Travel Club, Student Council, Students Assisting Students (SASP) Program, Student Wellness Action Team (SWAT), Grade 9 Farewell Committee, Golf Club, Volleyball Teams, Basketball Teams, Cross-Country Team, Track & Field Team, Badminton, Intramural Sports, Anime Club, McTavish Football Team, We-Day Team, and Show Choir.
- Given the number of activities, it was somewhat surprising that in the Tell Them From Me Survey only 33% of students in this school had a high rate of participation in clubs with the Canadian norm being 47% ("Students take part in art, drama, or music groups;



school clubs; or a school committee.”)

### **Commendations:**

- 95% of parents and 90 % of students are ‘satisfied with the variety of courses offered such as music, P.E or alternative program’.
- 92% of parents and 86% of students also feel that ‘students have a good choice of lunchtime and after-school clubs, teams and programs.’
- Teachers and students also share this view as communicated through the interviews and focus groups.
- Programs such as this demand a major commitment from staff and other leaders. That such a large number of activities can be offered speaks well of their commitment.
- Not only is there a wide variety list of activities for students, there is also strong support for District Initiatives/Big 3 such as with the McTavish Green Team and the school SWAT (Student Wellness Action Team).
- Options such as PBL Tech with the counselor where students learn how to use social media to learn how to deal with mental health issues.
- McTavish Time is time dedicated each week to address current issues of social justice. It allows students to become more socially aware and active 21st century global citizens. Eg. Project Cambodia

### **Recommendations:**

- Keep up the great work and continue to strive to offer programs that meet the needs of students with a diverse range of interests and aptitudes.
- Review with students the result from Tell Them From Me survey regarding involvement in sports and other school clubs and activities. Try to determine why those results don’t appear to be consistent with the number and variety of co-curricular programs available to students at École McTavish.
- Continue to tell the story of the multitude of core, co and extracurricular opportunities at École McTavish. Share the opportunities with staff and community members with the aim of enticing more student participation.

**\*The terms co-curricular and extracurricular are often used interchangeably . For the purpose of this report we will most often use the term co-curricular to represent both, as we feel that all experiences that children are exposed to support the education of the whole child and are not necessarily ‘extra’ to the curriculum. According to the Glossary of Educational Reform, 2013,**

*“Generally speaking, co-curricular activities are an extension of the formal learning experiences in a course or academic program, while extracurricular activities may be offered or coordinated by a school, but may not be explicitly connected to academic learning. **This distinction is extremely fuzzy in practice, however, and the terms are often used interchangeably.** Athletics, for example, are typically considered to be extracurricular activities, while a science fair would more likely be considered a co-curricular activity, given that students are learning science, participation may be required by the school, students may be graded on their entries, or a science teacher may coordinate the fair. Still, in some schools certain athletics activities might be considered “co-curricular,” while in other schools a science fair may be labeled “extracurricular.”*

### 3. SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

#### Observations:

- Communication to the parent community occurs through a school app, website, Facebook and Twitter page along with the usual emails. Communication to individual parents tends to happen through telephone or face-to-face conversations.
- Communication among staff generally occurs through e-mail or face-to-face.
- Admin communicates with staff face-to-face where possible or through e-mail.
- Teachers communicate with parents in person or by phone where possible. This year, teachers have been directed to email parents at least once per week with important information about classes, courses and school activities (dates).
- While they are not mandatory for support staff, 30% of support staff indicated that they attend staff meetings.

#### Commendations:

- School administration employs a number of means to communicate to parents, staff and students.
- 86% of parents surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed that their child's report card provided them with clear and useful information regarding his/her program.
- 82% of parents were satisfied with the information they receive from the school.
- 84% were satisfied with how they receive information from the school.
- 100% of teachers indicated that staff meetings are productive.
- Staff indicated that admin have an open door policy.

#### Recommendations:

- Ensure relevant results of the School Review including the student survey results are shared with students. The student focus group recommended that teachers share the report with students during class time.
- During the parent focus group, it was commented that parents would welcome more communication from teachers. It should be noted that one of the school's priorities this year was that teachers would communicate weekly with their parents sharing upcoming activities among other class news. The ability to do this was made more difficult with the delayed implementation of the PowerSchool program, and thus the inability for school and teachers to do mass emailings using this system. These issues with Power School have since been ironed out, making it possible for teachers to follow through on this plan. It is recommended that a communication from the school to parents highlighting this initiative will draw attention to the fact that the school staff is committed to improving communication.
- 60% of teachers and 61% of Support Staff are satisfied with the level of communication at the school. Teachers recognize that there are sometimes confidentiality issues with the sharing of information regarding students. However, teachers expressed a need to have more information about special circumstances of students where possible in order to help support students. Admin and counselling staff should explore ways to facilitate the **appropriate** sharing of information regarding students where and when possible.

## 4. SUPPORT STAFF

### Observations:

- Delivery of the school's educational program is supported by 11 educational assistants, 3 secretaries, 1 librarian and 4 custodians.
- Ms .Tebay, vice principal, assumes primary responsibility for supporting and communicating with support staff.
- It was felt by some staff that there are not enough Educational Assistants.

### Commendations:

- 97% of parents and 85% of students felt that support staff (eg. Educational Assistants, secretaries, librarian and custodians) are helpful and friendly.
- 88% of teachers indicated that support staff provide effective support for students and teachers.
- 85% of support staff indicated satisfaction with equipment, materials and supplies with which they were provided
- It was clear that support staff is a valued part of the the École McTavish team, and every effort was done to involve them in all aspects of the school. This is supported by the fact that:
  - 85% of support staff feel that other staff understand and support their role in the school.
  - 100% of support staff enjoy working at this school.

### Recommendations:

- Continue to fully involve support staff in all aspects of school life.
- While attendance at staff meetings outside their hours of work cannot be compulsory without pay, continue to invite support staff to attend these meetings. (Currently 30% indicate that they attend staff meetings, a relatively large number given that this is not mandatory for them.)
- It is apparent in conversation and interviews with the staff, as well as in the teacher survey results that the role and responsibilities and schedules of Educational Assistants are not evident to the whole staff. It is recommended that the LAC and administration share information regarding the roles and responsibilities and schedules of the Educational Assistants with the entire staff.

## 5. PARENT/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### Observations:

- This school has clearly and effectively delineated the work of the School Council with an advisory function from the Parent Council, which deals with fundraising efforts. There is however significant overlap in their membership.
- Both groups operate very effectively within the parameters set out for them.
- The School Council meets monthly.
- There is also a Parent Council, whose focus is on fundraising. One of these fundraising initiatives has provided the school with a large number of Chromebooks.
- There was a 26% response rate to the parent survey for the School Review process.
- 15 parents attended the parent focus group (interview) as part of the school review process.

### Commendations:

- Parents appear to be engaged and committed to their school community. 92% of parents surveyed agreed that they have the opportunity to provide input into decisions that are made at the school that impact their child.
- 92% felt that when they brought their concerns to the school they were heard and taken seriously.
- School Council felt that their opinions were valued by school administration who often ask the Council for input in important decisions.
- 88% of teachers felt that parents were supportive of the school.
- École McTavish breakfast program is entirely supported and run by parents 3 mornings a week.

### Recommendations:

- During the parent focus group, it was commented that parents would welcome more communication from teachers. It should be noted that one of the school's priorities this year was that teachers would communicate weekly with their parents sharing upcoming activities among other class news. The ability to do this was made more difficult with the delayed implementation of the PowerSchool program, and thus the inability for school and teachers to do mass emailings using this system. These issues with Power School have since been ironed out, making it possible for teachers to follow through on this plan. It is recommended that a communication from the school admin highlighting this initiative would alert parents to the fact that the school staff is committed to improving communication with home.

## 6. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

### Observations:

- The principal and vice principals conduct teacher evaluations with probationary and long term temporary contract teachers. The full administrative team is involved in supervision of staff on a regular basis through scheduled and unscheduled classroom visits.
- Principal is also the director of the PEAK Athletic Academy
- 54% of support staff felt that they receive appropriate feedback about their performance. In the interview with support staff it appeared in many cases staff equated feedback with formal evaluation.

### Commendations:

- 92% of parents agreed that they have the opportunity to provide input into decisions that are made at the school that impact their child. School council concurred that they felt they had input and commented that administration is always willing to listen and often asks their input on issues.
- 93% of parents expressed satisfaction that when they bring concerns to the school, they feel they are heard and taken seriously. One parent indicated, "We feel listened to by admin."
- 97% of teachers and 77% of support staff felt that they have the opportunity to provide meaningful input into the decision-making process at the school.
- 85% of students surveyed felt the principal and vice principals make time to listen to their concerns when they approach them.
- 74% of students felt they have the opportunity to provide input into decisions that are made at school that impact students. This was reinforced by the student focus group. "Principals make themselves very approachable during lunch, or you can ask to see them."
- 88% of teachers feel they receive appropriate supervision/evaluation at school.
- 82% of teachers and 85% of support staff felt their contributions to the school are recognized and valued.
- 73% of teachers felt they were aware of how school funds are allocated. The principal presented the budget to staff and indicated that they can "see the books" anytime they wish.
- Staff members recognized that each member of the admin team possessed different and complementary attributes. "They have their own personality, all can help in different ways, in general very helpful and open to helping." Another teacher said "Sometimes I feel like there are different personalities (of administration) and we send the kids to the person we need them to talk to at that time".

### Recommendations:

- It is strongly recommended that the leadership team continue to exhibit the behaviours and attributes that have proven to be so effective thus far. Their visibility, open mindedness and attention to dealing with concerns presented to them in a timely fashion have all contributed to the positive way that they are perceived by students staff and parents.



## 7. SCHOOL CLIMATE

### Observations:

- “Not at all what you’d expect a Junior High School to feel like”. This sentiment was expressed by a parent and was very obvious to the team as they went about the school. The prevailing perception among the public and even many educators is that entering a school filled with junior high students would be somewhat intimidating, and not terribly welcoming. A place where disorder abounds and hormones run rampant. École McTavish is anything but the stereotype perception of a Junior high school. Students appear to be happy and enjoying and respecting the freedom associated with such a school. The halls are orderly as is the atrium, which is the main gathering place for students outside class time.

### Commendations

- 98% of parents said they feel welcome when they visit the school
- 93% of parents indicated that their child enjoys attending school. 74% of students concurred. One student in the student focus group said “It is way more fun than you think”.
- 96% of parents felt that their child’s teacher cares about their child. 84% of students agreed.
- In our student focus group, students showed a great deal of pride in their school as they shared the many things that they loved about their school.
- 82% of teachers and 85% of support staff feel that their contributions to the school are recognized and valued.
- 100% of teachers surveyed said they would recommend working for FMPSD to a friend.
- Care is taken to recognize staff accomplishments. During staff meetings admin and fellow teachers recognize individual staff members for their contributions to the school and students.
- There is a real sense that École McTavish is like a family. One staff member commented that it “Feels like home, doesn’t feel like a job - we really are a family.” Another staff noted that “It’s a good school - we are all part of a family.” This sentiment was expressed by staff, parents and students.

### Recommendations:

- Continue to celebrate, foster and maintain the supportive and welcoming climate and culture that the students, staff and parents have created at École McTavish.

## 8. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND RECOGNITION

### Observations:

Accountability Pillar Report (2015) Student Learning Achievement:

		École McTavish Junior High Sch						Alberta				
Course	Measure	Achievement	Improvement	Overall	2015		Prev 3 Yr Avg		2015		Prev 3 Yr Avg	
					N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
English Language Arts 9	Accept. std .	High	Improved	Good	188	88.8	225	83.3	43,532	75.6	38,021	76.8
	Std. of Excell.	Intermediate	Declined	Issue	188	12.8	225	16.7	43,532	14.4	38,021	15.4
French Language Arts 9	Accept. std .	Very High	Improved	Excellent	19	100.0	24	82.5	2,601	85.9	2,496	87.1
	Std. of Excell.	Intermediate	Maintained	Acceptable	19	10.5	24	19.1	2,601	10.1	2,496	12.4
Math 9	Accept. std .	High	Improved Significantly	Good	187	77.5	224	68.0	43,190	65.3	37,734	66.8
	Std. of Excell.	Very High	Improved	Excellent	187	24.6	224	19.7	43,190	18.0	37,734	17.8
Science 9	Accept. std .	Very High	Improved Significantly	Excellent	187	86.6	225	75.3	43,653	74.1	38,253	73.4
	Std. of Excell.	Very High	Improved	Excellent	187	26.7	225	21.9	43,653	22.9	38,253	21.5
Soc. Studies 9	Accept. std .	Very High	Improved Significantly	Excellent	187	80.2	225	67.2	43,451	65.1	38,360	66.7
	Std. of Excell.	Intermediate	Maintained	Acceptable	187	18.7	225	19.5	43,451	19.8	38,360	19.3

At the Fall 2015 Awards Assembly student academic achievement was recognized.

Grade	Honours (Core average above 80%)	Honours with Distinction (Core average above 85%)
7	113/254 ( 44%)	69/254 (27%)
8	101/217 (47%)	60/217 (28%)
9	74/192 (39%)	47 (24%)

Five students were recognized for scoring 100% on a Provincial Achievement Test (June 2015), and eight students recognized for scoring 98% on a Provincial Achievement Test (June 2015)

### Commendations:

- In 8 of 10 measures on the 2015 Provincial Achievement Tests in grade 9, students in École McTavish scored above the province. The exceptions were Standard of Excellence in ELA 9 (12.8% compared to 14.4% provincially) and Social Studies 9 (18.7% compared to 19.8% provincially).
- In 7 of 10 measures on the 2015 Provincial Achievement Tests in grade 9, students in École McTavish have shown improvement scoring above the school's previous 3 year average.
- 100% of students in French Language Arts 9 scored at the acceptable standard.



- Five students were recognized for scoring 100% on a Provincial Achievement Test (June 2015), and eight students recognized for scoring 98% on a Provincial Achievement Test (June 2015).
- In the Tell Them from Me survey, students were asked their overall current mark in language arts, mathematics and science. In all cases, in all three grades, they reported grades above that which was reported nationally. 83% compared to 79% Canadian norm for language arts; 82% compared to 79% in mathematics: and 83% compared to 79% for science.
- In the student focus group, students noted satisfaction with the academic support available to them through tutorial sessions provided by teachers, some regularly scheduled and others provided as needed.
- 92% of parents are satisfied with the academic progress of their child.
- 88% of students were satisfied with their academic progress.
- 94% of teachers, 89% of parents and 83% of students are satisfied that the school recognizes students for their accomplishments (ie. academic achievement, athletics, fine arts, etc..) in a variety of ways.
- In the eight grade 9 Provincial Achievement tests completed in 2015, École McTavish averaged 86.8% of students achieving Acceptable Standard, compared to 85.2% and 73% in each of the two other grades 7-9 schools north of the river, with the Separate School District.
- With regards to Standard of Excellence on these same tests, École McTavish averaged 17.3% of students achieving this compared to 13.7% and 11.3% in each of the two other grades 7-9 schools north of the river, with the Separate School District.
- For PATs written in English (Grade 9 ELA, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies), at Acceptable Standard, École McTavish averaged 82.8%, compared to 77.9% and 73% in each of the two other grades 7-9 schools north of the river, with the Separate School District.
- For PATs written in English (Grade 9 ELA, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies) at Standard of Excellence, École McTavish 20.1%, compared to 16.2% and 11% in each of the two other grades 7-9 schools north of the river, with the Separate School District.

### **Recommendations:**

- Continue to focus on academic achievement as a priority, including providing the necessary support for students to succeed.
- It is recommended that the school follow through on the plan to host a Fine Arts recognition night to augment the ones that currently exist for academics and athletics. In the student focus group, it was indicated that some felt that while academics and athletics were well recognized, the fine arts were not.
- Continue to use PLF and Google Drive to make sharing and collaboration effective and efficient for the purpose of continuous improvement in student achievement. One staff member indicated “One of the best things about École McTavish is the close-knit staff and departments who are so willing to share resources and ideas that they have implemented and worked”. This collaboration has led to common assessment practices which has contributed to high student achievement.

## 9. THE SCHOOL AS A SAFE AND CARING ENVIRONMENT

### Observations:

- The school employs a system of progressive discipline with a primary focus on remediation rather than being punitive. Most discipline issues are handled by teaching and support staff, with the admin getting involved in cases that are more serious or repetitive. Parents are also advised of incidents involving their child and become a part of the process.
- On the School Review survey, 55% of students indicated that students are respectful and well behaved. Interestingly, on the Tell Them From Me survey 88% of students were identified as having positive behaviours at École McTavish, compared to 85% nationally.

### Commendations:

- In the student focus group, when asked if they felt they had someone at the school who they could turn to if they had a problem, students indicated that they did, specifically mentioning school administration, teachers and counsellor.
- In the Tell Them from Me survey students rated advocacy at school (feeling they have someone at school who consistently provides encouragement and can be turned to for advice) as 3.4/10 compared to 2.9 for the nation. École Mctavish students rated advocacy outside school at 5.9/10 compared to 4.9 nationally.
- 100% of teachers, 98% of parents and 85% of students feel the school has a safe and orderly environment.
- 82% of parents and 73% of students agreed bullying was NOT a major problem at their school.
- 94% of teachers and 92% of parents agreed that the students are respectful and well behaved.
- 91% of parents and 79% of students felt that the school's discipline policy and procedures are fair and effective.
- 96% of parents felt that their child's teacher cared about their child.
- One student commented that "Principals make themselves very approachable during lunch, or you can ask to see them."

### Recommendations:

- The fact that the admin team at École McTavish has committed to being visible to students around the school during break times such as lunch appears to be having a very positive effect, particularly on the perception that students have towards the principal and vice principals. Students feel that the admin are approachable and attentive to them. They have also identified the members of the admin team as people they can turn to if they have a problem. It is strongly recommended that the admin team continue to make this practice a priority.
- Concern was expressed by students regarding food services (lunch options) by an outside provider. They expressed concern over the fact that there was little or no consideration given to students who had food sensitivities or cultural dietary restrictions (eg. vegetarian). They further expressed concern over the cost of the food. It is recommended that the food service provider be made aware of these concerns and

encouraged to address them.

## 10. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Observations:

- 58% of support staff surveyed felt they had adequate opportunities for professional development.
- Some newer staff to École McTavish indicated that they had not received professional development in Project Based Learning (PBL) and would like to have training in this area. Furthermore, staff who received the training indicated that they would like to have a refresher now that they have had a year of using it.

### Commendations:

- 88% of staff were satisfied with the opportunities they have had to be part of a collaborative group that communicates regularly to share resources and ideas.
- 85% of teachers felt that Professional Development opportunities have enhanced their teaching skills and effectiveness.
- 81.9% teachers indicated they had support and time from the school to help develop my PBL knowledge.
- Several staff indicated that they felt that they had an in-house PBL expert in Derek Shackelford who was sharing with other staff “both formally and informally”.

### Recommendations:

- Ensure that all staff is familiar with current professional development opportunities and work toward offering appropriate opportunities for both teaching and non-teaching staff.
- Ensure teaching staff is familiar with and encouraged to avail of the new district professional development fund.
- Explore ways to ensure that all staff are introduced to and updated on PBL.

## 11. TECHNOLOGY

### Observations:

- The school currently has 8 - 10 iPads, 120 Chromebooks and 207 laptops/desktops available for student use. The iPads are assigned to specific students who require them as per the accommodations on their IPPs. The Chromebooks are assigned to 12 specific classrooms, with an average of 10 per classroom. However, these Chromebooks are often shared with the classrooms that don't have them anytime that the need arises. 70 of the desktop computers are based out of our 2 computer labs. There are also 28 laptops on a mobile cart in the library that are available for sign-out. The remaining desktops and laptops are all assigned to specific classrooms, resource rooms, pull-out rooms, and the life-skills room. However, again the laptops are often shared with the classrooms that don't have them anytime that the need arises. Teachers regularly have students use their own devices for instructional purposes and formative assessment.
- Promethean boards are available in all classrooms.
- Only 50% of teachers were satisfied with the technology available at school. Most indicated that while moving in the right direction, there was still a shortage of devices available for students. Others pointed to the issues related to the roll out of Power School this fall as extremely frustrating.
- There is some concern expressed by staff over the distribution of technology.

### Commendations:

- 93% of parents surveyed felt that their child is utilizing technology in the school that assists his/her learning.
- 93% of students felt they had access to technology in the school that helps them learn.

### Recommendations:

- Staying on top of evolving technology in a large school with limited resources is indeed a challenge. This school is very fortunate to have a Parent Council who have supported the school through the purchase of needed technology. It is recommended that the school continue its commitment to staying current with the technology with the support of their Parent Council and any other means available to them.
- Continue to advocate for maintenance of current technology.

## **12. LIBRARY**

### **Observations:**

- The school has the services of one full time 6 hour library tech.
- 79% of teachers felt that the school library effectively supports student learning.

### **Commendations:**

- 91% of parents surveyed felt that the school library contributes to their child's quality of education.

### **Recommendations:**

- Explore ways that the library (Learning resource centre) can more effectively be used to support student learning. Possibly look towards the current research on creating learning commons, as this would support the school's emphasis on the use of technology as well as Project Based Learning.

### **13. PHYSICAL FACILITIES**

#### **Observations:**

- École McTavish Junior High School was opened in August 2011. It consists of 25 classrooms, 2 computer labs, 1 art room, 1 drama room/stage, 1 wood shop, 1 foods room, 2 gyms and new portables that will be occupied in the near future.
- It is currently slated to undergo an addition of a high school wing to the school, scheduled to open in January 2018. This will house 800 additional students (room for total of 1600) Program development is currently underway.

#### **Commendations:**

- 99% of parents, 94% of teachers, 94% of support staff and 82% of students feel the school is clean.
- 99% of parents and 91% of students felt that the school facility and its physical condition provide a safe and comfortable environment for students
- 91% of teachers felt that the school facility and its physical condition are adequate to accommodate the programs offered at my school
- 92% of support staff feel the school building is a healthy, clean and suitable work environment

#### **Recommendations:**

- Regularly inform parents and the community of progress related to the High School expansion throughout the process. In doing so, you gain support from the parent community and create excitement in the wider community.

## 14. STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

### Observations:

- Along with one LAC for the English stream and 0.25 for French Immersion, students are served by 11 Educational Assistants, 4 One to One Educational Assistants and 7 support Educational Assistants. 9 of these Educational Assistants support the English stream students and , 2 support the French Immersion students
- 65% of teachers feel supported regarding inclusion of ALL student in their classroom.
- 79 students with an IPP:
  - Grade 7 - 28 students
  - Grade 8 - 30 students
  - Grade 9 - 21 students

### Commendations:

- 95% of parents felt that their child receives the help needed to succeed in school
- 94% of parents and 88% of students agreed that the school teaches all students in a fair and equal manner, while at the same time taking individual learning styles into consideration.
- Monthly meetings are held to review every student grade by grade where they discuss the needs of the students, discuss their conduct and achievement. In addition, every student who has an IPP is discussed as well as those who are on the radar.

### Recommendations:

- It is recommended that the LAC and administration share information regarding the roles and responsibilities of the Educational Assistants as well as their timetable where possible with entire staff.



## 15. Other areas identified by school administration

### Observations:

- The administration of the school was given the opportunity to add items specific to their school. Items were added related to:
  - Project Based Learning
  - The PEAK Program

### Commendations:

- 80% of teachers indicated that they felt comfortable using Project Based Learning in their class.
- 82% of teachers have indicated that they have had support and time from the school to help develop their PBL knowledge.
- 72% of students surveyed indicated that the PBL style of instruction helps them attain a better understanding of the concepts covered in the class.
- 86% of parents feel that the PEAK Athletic Program adds to the school culture and makes École McTavish a more rounded school.
- 80% of students feel that the PEAK Athletic Academy adds to the opportunities for students at the school.
- Parents felt staff was very supportive of PBL.

### Recommendations:

- Ensure that staff are knowledgeable about the opportunities available to students through programs at École McTavish such as PEAK and FLEX.
- Explore ways to better promote the Flex program.

## SUMMARY

Immediately upon entering École McTavish, one is somewhat surprised that this feels like a good place to be, a warm and welcoming school. Somewhat surprising only because of the preconceived notions that abound about Junior High Schools. Suffice it to say, one quickly discovers that École McTavish does not fit any of these stereotypes. In the three+ days that the team spent at EMT we found students and staff who were truly very happy to be there. There was sense that the École McTavish 'family', which we heard of frequently was a reality and not just a label. As one staff member put it, "Feels like home, doesn't feel like a job - we really are a family." Another staff noted that "It's a good school - we are all part of a family."

The school's culture is exceptionally warm and welcoming. 98% of parents said they feel welcome when they visit the school, and 93% indicated that their child enjoys attending school. 74% of these junior high students admitted to enjoying attending school. This was strongly reiterated by the student focus group who showed a great deal of pride in their school. One student in the focus group said "It is way more fun than you think". It is incumbent on the administration and staff to uphold this exceptional reputation.

École McTavish offers a safe and caring environment. 100% of teachers, 98% of parents and 85% of students feel this is the case. In the student focus group, when asked if they felt they had someone at the school who they could turn to if they had a problem, students indicated that they did, specifically mentioning school administration, teachers and counsellor. There is also overwhelming agreement that students are respectful and well behaved, with 94% of teachers and 92% of parents concurring. 96% of parents felt that their child's teacher cared about their child, a fact that was echoed by the parent focus group.

When it comes to handling discipline, the school's progressive approach to discipline is considered fair and effective, with 91% of parents and 79% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing. With regards to bullying, 82% of parents and 73% of students agreed bullying was NOT a major problem at their school. The presence and visibility of school administration in the common areas contributed to the students feeling safe at school. Students generally feel that the admin team is visible, approachable and attentive to their concerns.

Indeed the 'open door' leadership style of the administrative team was praised by students, parents and staff alike. All felt that they had input into decisions at the school and could approach the principal or vice principals and have their concerns and issues addressed. All felt that they were "listened to" and their opinions valued. School council specifically felt they had input and commented that administration is always willing to listen and often asks their input on issues.

Although only in its fifth year of operation, EMT has already earned a reputation for having exceptionally high academic achievement results. At a recent academic awards night, 43.4% of all grades 7, 8 and 9 students received honours standing (average marks on core subjects exceeding 80%) In Provincial Achievement Tests administered to all grade nine students in Alberta in Spring 2015, students at École McTavish performed above the province in 8/10 measures. École McTavish also outperformed the two other schools in the city with the Separate District that house grades 7-9 students. In the PATs written in English they exceeded the two

other schools both in the percentage of students achieving Acceptable Standard and Standard of Excellence. In the French Language Arts 9 PAT 100% of École McTavish students scored at the acceptable standard. Five students from École McTavish were recognized for scoring 100% on a Provincial Achievement Test (June 2015), and eight students recognized for scoring 98% on a Provincial Achievement Test (June 2015). In the student focus group, students noted satisfaction with the academic support available to them through tutorial sessions provided by teachers, some regularly scheduled and others provided as needed. Not surprisingly, 92% of École McTavish parents were satisfied with the academic progress of their child.

An abundance of programming both curricular and co-curricular, meeting the very diverse needs of the school community, is available at École McTavish. Along with a full complement of English language curriculum courses, this school offers a French Immersion Junior High School Program to approximately 15% of its students. This is the only such program in FMPSD and one of only two in the city. Furthermore, it is the home school of the PEAK Athletic Academy which has approximately 130 students in their Hockey, Dance and Soccer Academies, and Flex academy. In fact, École McTavish principal Scot Barr is also the director of the PEAK Athletic. To support instruction, École McTavish prides itself in providing a 21st century learning environment and has led the way with a focus on Project Based Learning and its commitment to staying ahead of current technology.

Co-curricularly, École McTavish has a wide variety of clubs, activities and programs for students with virtually any interest. In line with the FMPSD big 3 priorities, the school has been extremely active in environmental stewardship through its Green Team and healthy living through its SWAT team. Its fine arts offerings range from a variety of musical offerings to theatre arts. Athletically, students can participate in a wide range of teams and clubs. To promote leadership and social consciousness, students can participate in student council, Project Cambodia and many others. There is even a Pokemon club. Of course, none of these co-curricular activities can happen without a dedicated staff and parents who commit time from their extremely busy schedule to provide the students with experiences that contribute to the development of the whole child.

Parental engagement at École McTavish remains strong. While the parents and admin are both seeking ways to improve on the number of parents involved, it is evident that the ones that are involved are extremely dedicated and hard working and engaged. The School Council spoke well of their strong relationship with the school and school administration, and felt that their input was both valued and welcome by them. The Parent Council, the fundraising arm is quite active and effective, raising much needed funds for the school in many areas, including providing technology such as chromebooks. Members of the Parent Council have taken full responsibility for operating the Breakfast Program, providing students with healthy options to start their day.

The staff at École McTavish is held in extremely high regard by the students and parent community. In the student focus groups, students spoke of the support that was available to them academically and reiterated the fact that there were numerous people they could turn to if they needed to speak to someone. Parents reinforced these positive comments about the school staff, with 96% indicating that their child's teacher cared about him/her. Furthermore, 97% of parents and 85% of students felt that support staff (eg. Educational Assistants, secretaries, librarian and custodians) are helpful and friendly. 88% of teachers indicated that support staff provide effective support for students and teachers. There was a high degree of satisfaction among the staff in all aspects of their work at École McTavish. They are very

positive about the support received from admin, colleagues and parents.

This report provides overwhelming evidence of junior high school that doesn't fit the preconceived notions of what a Junior High looks like. It's welcoming culture underpins a strong, progressive, and responsive school community, where students are given freedom to be themselves and receive all the support they need to succeed at the highest levels, academically and in all aspects of a well-rounded education.