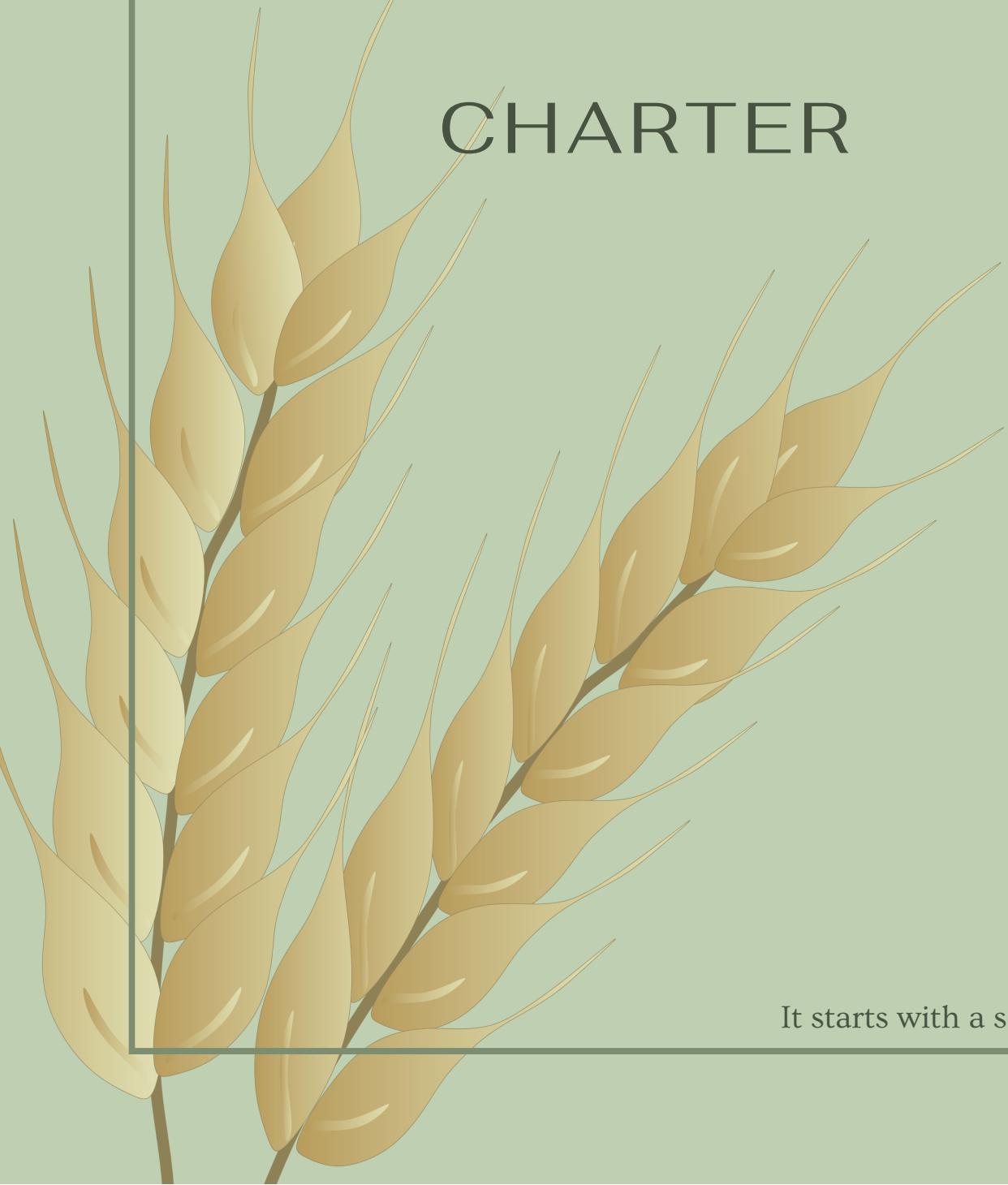
NEW HUMBLE COMMUNITY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

CHARTER



It starts with a seed...

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OUR PHILOSOPHY

It starts with a seed.

What does it take to grow from a tiny seed to a towering tree? A handful of grain to a field of wheat? Seeds must be planted, tended to, and nourished. The seed of an idea - the idea of education - must grow until it is able to perform the vital function of preparing us to understand the whole process of life. And life is more than merely an occupation or a job; life is something extraordinarily wide and profound. How does this tiny seed of an idea grow until its roots and branches can fulfill this amazing function? We believe it takes more than a classroom to truly educate our children for life. Our branches are experience and intelligence. Our roots are reflection and critical thinking. And this takes us to innovation, so that we will continue to grow and to thrive; so that we can appreciate and contribute in meaningful and powerful ways to life. How do we do this? By planting seeds.

Vision:
Fostering the growth of each individual student through innovative academics, stewardship and agriculture literacy.

Mission:
To provide our students with a unique educational environment that:
- expands learning through innovative agricultural and experiential land management education; - fosters a joy of learning and instills curiosity and confidence;
- fully supports and engages their needs, abilities, and growth;
- develops opportunities for genuine collaboration and self-reflection; and
- is guided by compassionate, hands-on, creative educators who will represent and impart these skills and values in all students.

Guiding Principles:
At New Humble Community School, we believe:
- students can use the lens of agriculture, stewardship, and experiential learning to make meaningful connections that lead to success in education and in all areas of life;
- all students can maximize their diverse abilities and gifts in through this comprehensive and specialized approach;
- teachers with an understanding of agricultural literacy are informed about the complexity and interconnectedness of learning and teaching.
- teachers will develop and encourage respect, empathy, reciprocity, and cooperation. - parents, guardians, and community members are integral partners in children's education and all have a role to play in this unique and vibrant school.
- school administration should monitor and implement the growing weight of evidence about the positive impact of learning outdoors;
- our students will develop the skills, resilience, and values to ensure that they grow to be accountable and contributing citizens of local and global communities.

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MEASURABLE GOALS, MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

Goal: to foster improved learning outcomes through growth, stewardship, and innovation.

Outcomes:
1) students will recognize and understand agricultural literacy
• Utilizing charter developed tests and teacher observations of comprehension of basic definitions and examples of agricultural literacy for each grade level.
• Student progress reports, which will include examples of both traditional and kinesthetic learning relating to agricultural literacy.
2) students will demonstrate problem solving through adaptability, resilience, and critical thinking
• Students will use learning journals in various ways, such as self-reflection and appraisal of student-led research projects and their own portfolios. These may be based around creating, observing, and improving experiments and projects related to agriculture and environment.
• Teacher observations and inquiries, including in-classroom, outdoor, and in workshops with industry experts.
3) students will understand the value of goals and outcomes
• Self-reflection and teacher observations and guidance to help set achievable and challenging goals at the appropriate level, with focus on experiential learning.
• IPPs will be used to help students and families fully engage with this outcome.
4) students will achieve academic success while displaying leadership
• Standardized provincial assessments, rubrics, and samples of student work will be used to evaluate continuous learning of students.
• Teacher observations of regular and inter-class activities and projects will enhance and inspire leadership in students.

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MEASURABLE GOALS, MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

Some or all of the following formative and summative assessment techniques will be employed:
1) self reflection and appraisal
2) samples of student work
3) teacher observations and inquiries (both in the classroom and in outdoor learning activities)
4) charter developed tests
5) rubrics
6) standardized provincial assessments
7) regular student progress reports
8) student portfolios (based around agricultural and environmental projects)
9) students Individual Program Plans (IPPs); and
10) contracts or independent study records

These outcomes and their instruments of assessment are not fixed or firm. They will be continually reviewed and improved as teaching and learning progress at the school.
Students at New Humble Community School will benefit from core curricular concepts and measurable goals being reinforced by experiential learning experiences. As a result, students will achieve improved knowledge retention as well as a deeper understanding. By expanding students' knowledge of agriculture and environmental stewardship, students will develop a deeper understanding of concepts and the ability to transfer learnings from one context to another.

SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE AND INTENDED STUDENTS

Significant difference

New Humble Community School will be significantly different from programs offered at other public schools. At New Humble Community School, it is through the lens of agriculture, stewardship, and experiential learning that we will provide a unique, vibrant, and successful foundation of education. Our focus on hands-on and outdoor learning will allow students to construct and represent knowledge in a variety of meaningful and powerful ways. We believe that the greatest successes are nurtured and encouraged early and continuously. While there are many and varied course options available at other schools, they are limited by their specificity. A student who might gain knowledge and proficiency in irrigated crop production or swine production, etc. is not the same as an elementary learner who will achieve a comprehensive and interconnected understanding of land management, environment, and sustainability. Students will grow a strong foundation of compassionate stewardship and the continual pursuit of excellence, which they will carry with them as they become responsible and successful members of society.

Intended students

New Humble Community School will serve students with a passion for agriculture and environmental stewardship, along with displaying an unwavering commitment to the teaching philosophy and program.

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

Experiential and Agricultural Education: The Evidence

Experiential Education: a teaching philosophy that informs many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with students in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities. [1]

Agricultural Education: Agricultural education teaches students about agriculture, food and natural resources. Through these subjects, agricultural educators teach students a wide variety of skills, including science, math, communications, leadership, management, and technology. [2]

Agricultural literacy: While the definition is continually evolving, in reference to the goals of this potential charter the definition we are using is : An agriculturally literate person would understand the food and fiber system and this would include its history and its current economic, social and environmental significance. [3]

The New Humble Community strongly believes that their children need a classroom environment that embraces learning that is out-of-doors, hands-on, and includes instruction about local industry, local history, and local environmental issues. Put into technical terms this equates to an education founded on the principles of experiential education and is focused on agricultural education. Why is this seen as beneficial? How would either of these approaches enhance education? According to the Association for Experiential Learning, the experiential approach in education imparts students with the ability to successfully apply what they learn in the classroom in practical settings, and that this is a fundamental goal of education. In a classroom setting the experiential approach builds relationship skills, critical thinking, and self-confidence as well as curriculum-based knowledge and skill growth. [4] Experiential education allows for improved cognitive ability in a given subject matter as seen in a study published in the International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education [5] where 5th grade children showed marked improvement in cognitive ability in Mathematics where experiential learning was employed. Similar results were seen in a study published by Bradford et al. (2019) [6] in which experiential learning techniques were compared with direct instruction on student knowledge of agriculture. Here researchers concluded that students who were part of the experiential learning group gained greater knowledge than students who received only contextualized lecture. They were also able to conclude that experiential learning is attributed to an increase in test scores, particularly because of the added value experiential learning contributes by providing students deeper understanding and richer experiences.

1 https://www.aee.org/what-is-ee
2 https://www.naae.org/whatisaged/
3 https://www.agliteracy.org/research/defining.cfm
4 http://learnthroughexperience.org/blog/what-is-experiential-education/
5 https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1211297.pdf
6 http://jae-online.org/attachments/article/2259/60.3.6.final.pdf

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

What about agricultural education and its place in a rural school? In 1995 Frick, Birkenholz, & Machtmes[7] conducted a study of both urban and rural high school students' knowledge and perception of agriculture. In the areas of plants in agriculture and agricultural policy, knowledge was low for both groups, suggesting that growing up in a rural setting does not necessarily equate to being agriculturally literate. Similar results were seen in a study published by Meischen and Trexler (2003).[8] The study group were 5th graders living in rural areas. Researchers found that students possessed some basic knowledge of animal products within agriculture, however key areas were lacking. For example, students knew that meat food products come from animals, but they were not as aware of other products that animals produce for human use. The students did not understand the size and scope of modern agriculture, but most had a very basic understanding of the process that meat travels from farm to consumer. The language these students used to describe the benchmarks was not the language experts deemed necessary. Again, growing up in a rural environment does not mean that rural students possess enough agricultural knowledge to be deemed as being agriculturally literate. Frick, Birkenholz, & Machtmes (1995) asserted that graduates of secondary school systems should not be considered to have received a "well-rounded education" if they lack an understanding and appreciation of the significance of agriculture in their daily lives. The study went on to suggest part of the solution could be to encourage teachers in elementary and secondary schools to develop a greater understanding of the importance and significance of agriculture. Note the age group they felt was worth targeting to set the stage for this "well-rounded education" is at the elementary and secondary school level. Teachers themselves feel agricultural education is important as discovered by Knobloch, Ball, and Allen (2007).[9] In their study teachers reported they felt an importance of learning about agriculture because they "live in a rural area" and they felt that it was important for students to be connected to the lives and livelihoods that are a large part of their schools and communities. Teachers also indicated a benefit to learning about agriculture that connected students to the bigger world. They indicated that the concepts students learn will teach them to be the future stewards of the environment. Finally, some teachers indicated that agriculture taught students a sense of connectedness to life.

Given the importance of agricultural education in the ability of individuals to make informed choices as adults in choosing career paths, as consumers, and as stewards of the environment, the New Humble Community cannot emphasize enough how much this subject is needed in it's classrooms. We are aware that Alberta Education already provides curriculum tied material, however as shown by Knobloch, Ball and Allen (2007) teachers' own perceptions and knowledge of the subject can prevent them from "looking for" those curricular ties and from teaching the subject altogether. We strongly feel that this subject matter deserves more attention. We also feel that the best way to deliver agricultural learning material is through experiential learning, a sentiment that is also found in a very interesting study published in 1911 by Benjamin Marshall Davis out of Miami University.[10]According to Marshall the teachers who had the most success in introducing agricultural education into the classroom employed self activity on the part of the pupils. This included budding, grafting, pruning, milk testing, collection of weeds, insects and even soil testing. Truly, experiential learning is a remarkably effective teaching tool as shown by the likes of John Dewy and David Kolb, and be used more extensively in other subject areas beyond agricultural education, and could benefit New Humble Students in any core subject.

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7 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/255660275_Rural_And_Urban_Inner_City_High_School_Student_Knowledge_And_Perception_Of_Agriculture
8 http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/summary?doi=10.1.1.508.570
9 http://www.jae-online.org/attachments/article/160/Knobloch_etal_48_3_25-36.pdf
10 https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/454062

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

We are also aware of a stunning lack of available research in rural education in general, as pointed out by Dr. Wallin in the document Rural education: A review of Provincial and Territorial Initiatives (2009).[11] Dr. Wallin acknowledged that rural schools find ways to innovate by partnering with local experts and working with the concept of community in order to provide the best education possible. The New Humble Community is certainly no different and looks to build on those statements with a unique charter that will educate its students about the community they are in (agricultural community both locally and globally). Mr. Benjamin Marshall Davis (1911) expressed in his study a need at the time for a "re direction" in rural education, acknowledging a need in rural schools that is distinct from urban settings. He expressed that a key part of that re direction should be agricultural education. While his recommendation is now over 100 years old, the fact that rural students have different needs than urban students has not changed. Geographic location affects student knowledge, previous experiences and ways of life and each of these play a critical role in how students learn (Ortleib, Cheek, & Earl 2008).[12] The New Humble Community looks to be a part of much needed research into those unique needs by opening a rural charter in our community.

11 https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/reports/rural_ed/rural_ed_final.pdf
12 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234748194_How_Geographic_Location_Plays_a_Role_within_Instruction_Venturing_into_both_Rural_and_Urban_Elementary_Schools

INNOVATIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES

Traditional classrooms are designed for visual and auditory learners. While this might cover a vast majority of students in the classroom, there will still be some who are left behind, struggling to grasp concepts. Some students learn better by doing or are kinesthetic learners. This is not a new style of learning, in fact Dewey (1938 as cited in Knobloch, Ball, & Allen, 2007) philosophized that learning is best done is real-life conditions. This is why at New Humble Community School; we strive to go one step further and seek to address all learning styles in a more equitable manner. According to Alberta Education (2008), "planning for the diverse learning needs of students involves making informed decisions about content, materials and resources, instructional strategies, and assessment and evaluation procedures" (p. 19). Through the use of hands-on or kinesthetic learning, we believe that each and every student's learning experience will be enhanced. Simply stated, the goal is to have all student's achievement increase with the support and implementation of "learning by doing". Not only will we capture the students that find it challenging to learn well in a typical environment, but it will support and improve all the students.

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INNOVATIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES

Due to the unique nature of the agricultural program, NHCS has an opportunity to implement non-traditional pedagogical approaches to education. Knobloch, Ball, and Allen (2007) noted that not only does agricultural education provide "an authentic learning context for students", it is easily transferred and applied to student's daily lives (p. 33). Agricultural education can be directly connected to real life experiences and lessons that involve hands-on learning (Knobloch, Ball. & Allen, 2007). Educational and learning research has supported the theory "that learning is most meaningful when it is situated in authentic environments and when students can interact with or inquire into rather than be instructed into material" (Mabie & Baker; Wehlage et al. as cited in Knobloch, Ball, & Allen, 2007, p. 33). A variety of additional instructional methods with the potential to enhance learning include, but are not limited to the following:

- 1. Experiential learning- please see below
- 2. Educational workshops with leading industry experts- this includes large group presentations, small group instruction, and the potential for one-on-one individualized education.
- 3. Multi-grade projects- students of differing age and grade levels will form cohort groups and work together on communal projects to enhance learning, leadership skills, and foster inclusivity
- 4. Individualized Program Plans (IPPs) to meet the unique needs of individual students (an example of differentiated instruction)
- 5. Educational field trips relevant to agricultural industries and environmental stewardship- demonstrations to gain first-hand experience and knowledge while under the supervision of experienced professionals
- 6. Independent student research projects- project-based learning
- 7. Tiered lesson planning- an educational approach which provides the students with "different paths toward understanding a particular concept" (Adams & Pierce, 2006, p. 5). Students can take whichever path most appropriately appeals to them and their individual learning style and arrive at the same conceptual understanding and essential (task) understanding as the rest of the class (Adams & Pierce, 2006).
- 8. Learning Journals- monitor progress and have students evaluate themselves
- 9. Sensory, graphic, and interactive scaffold learning to support and eventually allow students to become independent thinkers and learners.
- 10. Teacher-centered instruction- traditional pedagogical approach but tailored to our alternative programming. The Government of Alberta (2020) offers free resources "to help teachers integrate agriculture into the curriculum" (Agricultural education- Lesson plans). These lesson plans are organized by grade level and are directly connected to the appropriate Science and Social Studies programs of study (Government of Alberta, 2020).
- 11. Hybrid style of learning- blending the individual teacher's personality and passion with student needs and curricular goals
- 12. STEM learning- please see below

INNOVATIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES

Experiential Learning

The primary pedagogical approach will be through the use of experiential learning. Research conducted by Skelly and Bradley (2000), concluded that the act of hands-on or experiential learning/ active participation resulted in a more meaningful educational experience. Additionally, with respect to school gardens, Skelly and Bradley (2000) noted that while teachers agreed on the value of experiential learning, they struggled to make connections to the required curricula. In order to mitigate this problem, NHCS will provide a plethora of resources, which are directly connected to the Alberta approved curriculum, for teachers to freely access as needed. These include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Government of Alberta Agricultural Education Lesson Plans https://www.alberta.ca/agricultural education-lesson-plans.aspx
2. Agriculture in the Classroom Canada (AITC) Curriculum Linked Resources https://aitc-canada.ca/en ca/for-educators/curriculum-linked-resources
3. Classroom Agriculture Program https://classroomagriculture.com/Portal/Project/classroomagriculturepro gram/pages/Home.html 4. National Agriculture in the Classroom* https://www.agclassroom.org/teacher/index.cfm
5. American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture* https://www.agfoundation.org/what-is-ag literacy

*These are American resources, and may not directly align with Alberta's approved curricula, however, they could prove useful, nonetheless.

INNOVATIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES

Experiential Learning

STEM

In recent years, the concept of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics education, also referred to as STEM by the United States National Science Foundation in the early 21st century, has become quite popular within the educational realm (Smith, Rayfield, & McKim, 2015). According to contemporary research, agricultural education is considered to be "a viable platform for teaching STEM concepts, because these courses deliver abstract concepts in an applied context, which is shown to increase student understanding" (Clark, Parr, Peake, & Flanders; Stone as cited in Smith, Rayfield, & McKim, 2015).

Concerns surrounding those student's (those who may be at-risk or low achieving) ability to understand have been raised and discussed in current research (Boaler; Kieran; Woodward & Montague as cited in Smith, Rayfield & McKim, 2015). Additional research conducted by Stone; Woodward and Montague (as cited in Smith, Rayfield, & McKim, 2015) have further reiterated that the abstractness of STEM related concepts could impede some student's understanding. With this in mind, educators at New Humble Community School will be advised to use this method in the appropriate and optimal context, with the possibility of partnering STEM learning with supplementary instructional methods. Additionally, much like how there will be agricultural resources provided for teachers, the same will be done for STEM learning. These include, but are not limited to the following:

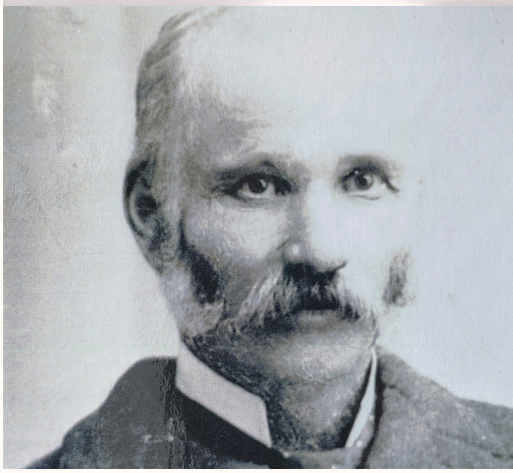
1. Mindfuel (n.d.) is a Canadian educational (K-12) resource which supplies teachers with rigorously tested resources to incorporate STEM learning into their classrooms. https://mindfuel.ca/
2. STEM Learning Lab (2020) is a Calgary, Alberta based learning center which provides professional development for teachers to further cultivate their understanding and competencies within STEM and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) (See Figure 1). https://stemlearninglab.com/
3. Government of Canada STEM Teacher resources https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/013.nsf/eng/00002.html 4. Let's Talk Science https://letstalkscience.ca/

OUR HISTORY

There has been a school with the name of Humble in our location since 1900, when a local man named Thomas Humble donated the land.

"Humbles donated that piece of land and it was called Humble School. There were four expert axemen living here at that time... And when they built the school there was one at each corner, these four axemen." - History of Leduc County No 25.

There have been three successive school buildings, and Humble Schools have been part of five school divisions. There are current students whose parents and grandparents both attended the school. The support and strength of the surrounding community has always been, and continues to be, the greatest reason for our success and growth.



Respecting and acknowledging our history, while moving forward, continuously improving, and encouraging innovation can be a balancing act, but it's one that mirrors the realities of agriculture and stewardship. Perpetual growth is the very basis of education, and indeed life.

Today, as a public charter school in Alberta, we are proud of our legacy, and excited about moving forward and contributing to excellence in education in our province

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