



This international action research partnerships was designed to build the capacity for the Alberta Teachers' Association's efforts to advocate for schools and lead educational change and development with teachers, school leaders and students at the centre of change (not the far side of empire). The Alberta-Iceland partnership in particular involves three Alberta rural school principals, teachers and students working side by side, and developing new networks of learning, with three rural and remote Icelandic schools over a three year action research model to engage in activities focused on a central research question: "What Makes a Great School for All?".

The first year of this partnership in 2018/2019 was spent engaging student and teacher voices (among others) to identify 'What?' makes a great school for all. In year one, the rural Alberta and Iceland partner schools identified a need to address growing mental health and anxiety issues of their student populations through deeper connections with nature and sport.

The second year of this action research project 2019/2020 now involves ongoing reflection(s) and action research on 'So What?' difference the work is making to the life of the rural school and school community, and the third year will involve a discussion of 'Now What?' should take place to evolve, sustain or transition from the international research partnership work.



Fox Creek School – Northern Gateway Public Schools

At Fox Creek School (a rural Kindergarten to Grade 12 school in Northern Alberta) the teachers, school leaders and students have explored first hand how Icelandic schools focus on creating flexible, bright and open learning spaces with a variety of furnishings available for student learning.

To this end, our small Alberta rural school is working to design learning spaces to provide students with their best opportunity to grow, mature, and learn from childhood to young adulthood. In doing so, all students have access to chrome books, computer labs, library learning commons, and virtual reality learning tools.

Students in the younger grades have access to diverse classrooms, technology, maker space rooms, and sensory break rooms. Junior high and high school students have access to an industrial education shop, food lab, an Alberta Health Services (AHS) funded CHAMP mentoring program providing mental health support to all students, as well as a learning commons that allow for independent and small group learning.

Fox Creek school grounds include playground equipment providing experiences for students of varying ages and an engaging outdoor classroom. Much like Iceland, we strive to create a close-knit connection within our small town, kindergarten to grade twelve school and community. A strong student support structure, along with strong relationships with our students, parents, community and staff, allows Fox Creek to meet the needs of every student and nurture the

students to be the very best they can be. Given the strong commitment from staff and community, Fox Creek is able to provide diverse learning opportunities for every student who attends this small rural school.

The Alberta-Iceland (ALICE) International Action Research Project offers Fox Creek students a once in a lifetime opportunity to immerse themselves in the culture and lifestyle of a different country where equity is a foundational part of the fabric of Icelandic society. The students not only learn about Icelandic traditions, language and culture, this experience enables the participants to build life-long friendships, develop new skills in living and working closely with people from different cultures and discover more about themselves as they face new challenges. Resiliency, self development, awareness and having to confront challenges outside their comfort zone builds students' self confidence, maturity and social poise. As teachers and school leaders, it continues to be an amazing project with students to see how our school community can grow and in turn demonstrate independence and responsibility to create a great school for all. Northern Gateway Public School Jurisdiction has been fully engaged and supportive in all of these endeavors of learning, travel, action research and partnership.