



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Spruce View finishes successful first year in high school flexibility project

**For Immediate Release, May 27, 2014:** Spruce View launched its High School Flexibility and Enhancement Project just last September, but they are already enjoying evidence of its success.

The project is part of Alberta Education's High School Redesign initiative, and Spruce View was required to obtain government approval for their project. The 'flex program' began with a change to classroom timetabling, as Spruce View moved from four 85 minute classes per day to five 68 minutes, with the extra class devoted to 'flex time'. They created a common learning area for students to gather during flex time, but most often students are spending that time with specific teachers in their classrooms.

"You can walk into any high school class during flex time and find a group of students working on a variety of subjects – some even working with a different teacher than the one who teaches them the actual class," said Principal Danica Martin. "The entire approach is about supporting students as they work towards their own learning goals, and our whole high school teaching team is available to help students during that time. The students choose where they want to focus their attention during flex time – we don't assign them. They have taken total ownership of this program, and it has created a significant change in the culture of collaboration and academic achievement throughout our entire school and throughout the entire day."

Spruce View is a K-12 school and, although the flex program is directed towards high school, the increased student engagement is also impacting younger grades. Their success is evident through student feedback, achievement data and attendance rates. For example, a student survey indicates a significant number of students feel less stress around their core subjects, because of the extra teacher time and attention available to them. Students report their experience in the classroom has improved, that they are enjoying school more and feeling more connected with their teachers.

"Our students are taking ownership of their learning and making the connection between hard work and achievement. They are using the block of flex time each day to complete homework, work one-to-one with teachers, or work together on group projects, with a priority to master their learning all along the way. We have some older students mentoring younger students, and they are making all of these choices themselves," said Martin.

"There are still the same number of school minutes in the day, but we are providing a more effective use of that time. The flex project requires a major philosophical shift in teaching practice, but it was actually our teachers who suggested we become involved in the project. They had visited some schools where this was underway and they came back on fire. They wanted to help students achieve better success and, after we consulted with our students, parents and staff, that original enthusiasm went on to ignite the entire school."

For grade 12 student, Kaylee Stigings, the flex project has set her up for success. "I work a lot on Chemistry and Math directly with my teacher and it has helped a lot. I'm way more ready to write my diploma exams that I would have been without the program."

Spruce View didn't have to travel far to explore the High School Flexibility Project in action, as Olds High School was one of the original schools to pilot the program five years ago. Since then, hundreds of individuals, schools and divisions have toured Olds High to learn more about their successful approach to high school redesign. The school's achievement data – from the results of provincial testing to their rate of high school completion – top the charts. Nearly 100 Alberta schools are now involved in the flex project, with more expected to be approved for next year.

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