

As nature intended

At Strathcona-Tweedsmuir School, outdoor learning at the foot of the Rockies is as much a part of school life as academia

At Strathcona-Tweedsmuir School (STS), a few miles south of Calgary in Alberta, Canada, the temperature in winter can drop as low as -35°C . But that doesn't deter pupils and teachers at this 51-year-old co-educational independent school from pursuing a commitment to outdoor learning. "Our students, of all ages, are immersed in our natural surroundings," says Carol Grant-Watt, Head of School. "Teachers integrate learning opportunities within our innovative indoor facilities, as well as our expansive outdoor campus. They work collaboratively to create engaging experiences that align with the curriculum, while leaving space for inquiry, exploration and deep learning."

STS was founded in 1971 as a union of three schools, the oldest dating back to 1905. As Southern Alberta's first full International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, it welcomes children from kindergarten to Year 12 and has 740 students. The 220-acre campus includes a new, award-winning arts and innovation building; modern, purpose-built science labs for hands-on experiences; a beautiful library; extensive athletics facilities; trails; and a pond.

With STS's motto, *Nil nisi optimum* ("Nothing but our best"), in mind, entry requirements are "rigorous but accessible". Students are admitted who can flourish there, and there is a well-supported financial assistance programme. In addition to the commitment to outdoor learning, community and the wide-ranging ethos of the IB, the school offers more than 90 extracurricular subjects and prepares students for the future by incorporating innovation, design thinking and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and maths) into lessons. *Flourish 2031*, STS's newly launched ten-year strategic plan, honours this strong foundation of academic excellence, innovation and a vibrant, engaged community. It also forges a path celebrating growth, inclusion, renewal and the school's natural environment.

When summarising the school's philosophy, Grant-Watt cites Queen Elizabeth II's inspiration. "We nurture our students to live lives of purpose through service, working hard and believing in grit, rigour and teamwork," she says. "We have deep respect and admiration for The Queen because of her commitment to duty and the tremendous sacrifices she has made to be a role model. It is incredible to consider what Her Majesty has seen and done during her remarkable reign. Alongside her global perspective, we share her values of humility, kindness and perseverance."

STS participates in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme and is particularly proud of its public speaking and debate offering. "From an early age, our students learn how to communicate their ideas effectively, which serves them well throughout life," says Grant-Watt. "Public speaking skills nurture a confidence and ability to think on your feet, deal with unusual situations and interact with diverse audiences. This foundation ties into our approach to design thinking, which provides students with the ability to problem solve, be creative, adapt and pivot, and stand strong with resilience when facing challenges. Our students graduate knowing they have the skills to manoeuvre through life's complex journey and pursue their passions."

With a steadfast focus on developing good humans, thought-leaders and global citizens, STS pursues a bold future. "We are looking at environmental sustainability, smart farming and working with First Nations communities, not just in terms of truth and reconciliation, but in adopting some of their outlook," says Grant-Watt. "Through our well-rounded offerings, we want our students to flourish in all areas and be inspired to make a difference in the world. We take that responsibility seriously."

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