January 14, 2014

Dear Parents/Guardians of Grade 4 Students,

The Grade 4 students at the Connect Charter School will be participating in a unique program called **FRIENDS For Life** as a supplement to the Alberta Health curriculum. Students at Connect Charter have participated in this program previously as part of a pilot project with Alberta Health Services, which provided training for the teachers involved in the implementation of the program. We are excited about the new, updated program and workbooks this year however, it did mean a delay in the start of the program in our classrooms. FRIENDS For Life helps children cope with feelings of anger, worry and sadness by building resilience and self-esteem through teaching cognitive skills and emotional awareness. The FRIENDS program was developed in Australia and has been used in schools around the world to promote personal development concepts such as problem-solving, self-esteem, resiliency and social skills used to build positive relationships with peers and adults. These concepts align with the following outcomes in the Grade 4 Alberta Health and Life Skills curriculum: Wellness Choices – Safety and Responsibility; Relationship Choices – Understanding and Expressing Feelings, Interactions; Life Learning Choices – Life Roles and Career Development. For further links to the curriculum please refer to the attached Grade 4 Health Curriculum Specific Outcomes document.

The FRIENDS program consists of 10 sessions but has been adapted to accommodate our school timetable and to allow teachers to continue to build on the skills learned in each session. The concepts and skills are taught through small and large group activities, discussion, workbook activities, games and/or storybooks. The workbooks are an important part of the program to help reinforce the concepts taught at school and for sharing the information with parents at home. **Each student will only be provided with one workbook so it is important that these are returned to school and are not lost or misplaced.** Parents have an opportunity to support their children at home and learn more about the FRIENDS program through the home activities in the student workbooks and by referring to the Parent Information handout on your child’s class website. If you wish to have a paper copy of this handout please ask your child’s teacher. If you have any questions about the program, please do not hesitate to contact your child’s teacher or Shannon Mitchell-Flek, School Counsellor at 403-282-2890 ext. 233.

Thank you for your support of this amazing program!

The Grade 4 Team