

MAKING THE GRADE

THE FRASER REPORT

ON HIGH SCHOOLS



EDITOR: STEVE JENKINSON 403-235-7580 FAX: 403-235-7379

WWW.CALGARYHERALD.COM

SUNDAY, JUNE 14, 2009

Ernest Manning movin' on up

SARAH MCGINNIS
CALGARY HERALD

“We seek the best,” proclaims a bold green decorative street sign in the Ernest Manning High School main office.

With the southwest public school’s continued rise on the Fraser Institute Report Card for Alberta High Schools during the past 10 years, the signpost appears to be working.

The Fraser Institute found Ernest Manning and 25 other Alberta high schools have seen consistent improvement in the annual rankings since the first report card was issued in 1999.

During the past decade, Ernest Manning has more than doubled its Fraser Institute rating, from 2.8 (out of 10) to 6.1 and now ranks 139th out of 283 Alberta high schools.

Rising exam results do not surprise Grade 12 students Mikaela Cochrane and Bradon Willms.

But both say they chose to attend Ernest Manning because they could try a broad range of courses instead of feeling pressure to pick a specialty program at another school.

“I never even looked at the rankings . . . I hadn’t even heard of it,” admits Willms.

Principal Matt Christison said academic performance has improved, while drop-out rates have been cut in half.

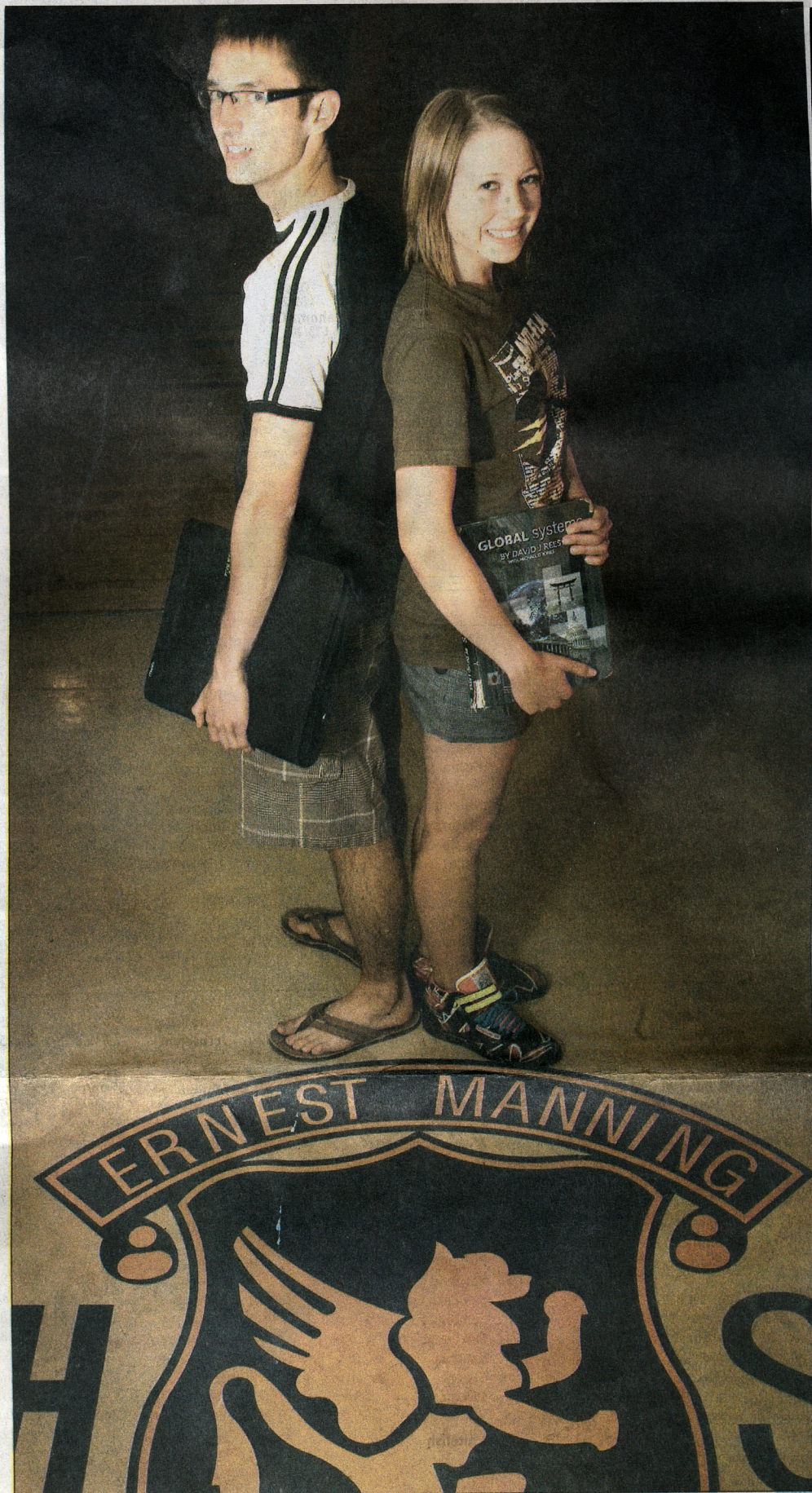
More than half of the school’s students are taking higher level courses and writing more diploma exams than ever before.

Christison attributes the results to staff who have personalized instruction and encouraged students.

“It’s about not giving up on students,” he said.

“It’s not only head learning, it’s also hand learning and heart learning. It’s knowing who people are and how they can succeed.”

At Manning, the school



Leah Hennel, Calgary Herald

Ernest Manning Grade 12 students Bradon Willms, left, and Mikaela Cochrane say they chose the school because of the broad range of courses it offers.

ceed.”

At Manning, the school has established a wellness centre with mental health workers and community groups stationed inside the building to boost access for youth.

Staff also work with students to ensure they can follow their passions in addition to academics, said fine and performing arts teacher Robin McIntyre.

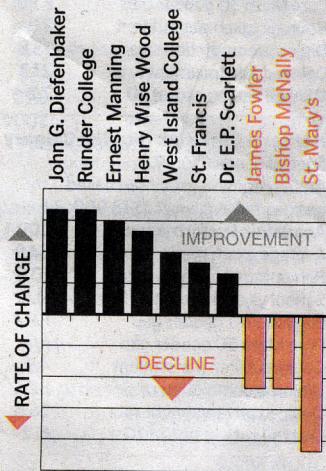
However, some teachers say they still battle the perception theirs is not as academic an environment as some other schools.

“I do have to sometimes defend Manning and I do it quite passionately,” said Christine Leonard, chemistry teacher and an Ernest Manning graduate.

“They are looking at those numbers (in the rankings) and making a decision on whether or not to come here. But once they come to Manning they never want to leave.”

chose the school because of

Calgary School trends



*Rate of Change: Calgary schools which have shown statistically significant improvement or decline on overall Fraser Institute rating over the 10 years.
Source: Fraser Report

Manning isn't the only Calgary school climbing the Fraser Institute's academic ladder.

Three other Calgary Board of Education schools