

DATE: November 28, 2023

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Funds for the 2024-2025 Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff

ORIGINATOR: Angela Anderson, Chief Human Resources Officer

RESOURCE STAFF: Trish Kolotyluk, Renée Thomson

REFERENCE: Teachers’ Collective Agreement-September 1, 2018 to August 31, 2020, Clause 9

ISSUE

An allocation of funds from the 2024-2025 operating budget is requested to support the Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff. Through this program, teachers can access tuition and leave support for post-secondary coursework as per clause 9 of the Teachers’ Collective Agreement. An allocation of funds to support this program is an investment that will benefit our Division in several ways, including improving student achievement, building capacity in our teaching staff and sharing knowledge and expertise through professional learning opportunities. The request for a commitment of funds is made well in advance of the distribution of the funds to accommodate application and university admission processes.

BACKGROUND

Edmonton Public Schools recognizes that professional development for staff is a critical aspect in supporting successful outcomes for students, as well as for succession planning. The Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff is in direct support of [Board Policy GE.BP - Organization for Instruction](#), which states that “effective teachers who have strong knowledge of pedagogy and subject content knowledge, make a significant difference to student learning and achievement.” The program is aligned with the [Division Strategic Plan](#) and is grounded in our values of accountability, collaboration, equity and integrity. The program is also in direct support of our Division’s vision of “Enhancing pathways for student success”, as well as our mission, which states that “Our commitment to high-quality public education serves the community and empowers each student to live a life of dignity, fulfilment, empathy and possibility.”

Through this program, Division teachers have the opportunity to apply for tuition and leave support to participate in professional improvement activities that are aligned with Division Priorities and areas of need. A comparison of successful applicants by year (Attachment I), as well as a synopsis of funds and support granted over the past 10 years (Attachment II) are included in this report.

RELATED FACTS

- The Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff is guided by clause 9 of the Teachers' Collective Agreement.

- Clause 9.2.2 outlines the conditions under which, upon application, leave for professional improvement may be granted to a teacher for a school year or portion of the year.
- Clause 9.2.7 specifies that tuition support for professional improvement may be granted, upon application, to a teacher on continuing contract and with two or more years of service with Edmonton Public Schools.
- Clause 9.2.8 states the maximum amount the Division may allocate for the Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff as “3/4 of 1% of the annual grid costs, calculated as of the preceding November 30”.
- Through this program, teacher certificated staff have the opportunity to apply for support for courses that take place between July 1, 2024, and August 31, 2025 (Attachment III).
- The Professional Improvement Program application process is rigorous. Assessment of applications is completed by a committee of Division leadership staff who consider the alignment of the applicants’ proposed professional improvement plans with Division Priorities and identified programming needs. Additional considerations are the anticipated benefits to learners, the school and the Division, as well as connections to the applicants’ professional growth plans and career goals.
- Successful applicants agree to a return of service to Edmonton Public Schools of one year for tuition support and three years for a full-time leave with an allowance; part-time leaves are prorated accordingly.
- For the 2023-2024 Professional Improvement Program, support was granted primarily for programs of study related to counseling/trauma informed education, leadership and inclusive learning. Support was also granted for programs related to curriculum studies and specific subject areas, including literacy, mathematics and science.
- Of the 118 requests for support through this program in 2023-2024, based on the relative strength of the applications, 13 applicants were granted the support they requested and were eligible to receive, 84 were granted partial support and 21 were not granted support. Gaps in alignment of the applications with Division priorities identified through the assessment process, combined with limited years of experience with the Division, accounted for the majority of the 21 applications that were not recommended for support. Seventy-four of the 118 (63 per cent) were first time applicants, while 44 (37 per cent) submitted applications in previous years.
- In 2023-2024, the approved allocation of \$1,300,000 for this program was 34 per cent of the maximum possible allocation, compared to 31 per cent of the maximum for the previous year (Attachment II).
- It has been an administrative practice to maintain a holdback of a portion of the allocation to address potential increases to leave allowance costs and tuition fees in the next academic year, as well as potential fluctuations in the exchange rate for tuition fees paid to international post-secondary institutions. The holdback for the 2023-2024 Professional Improvement Program was 3.5 per cent.
- In the 2024-2025 school year, Human Resources will draft an application process that will allow applicants to request support for either one or two years. Human Resources and Financial Services have discussed budget options that could accommodate a two-year funding cycle. Funding granted to applicants for the second year would be tentative based on final budget approval.
- The Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff is one of several ways that professional learning is supported for Division staff. The following chart outlines sources of support for professional learning.

Funds for Professional Learning	Details
School Budgets	Funds are allocated for staff professional learning within schools and catchments.
Central Decision Units	Central decision units allocate funds for the delivery of targeted professional learning activities for staff. These include sessions offered through Curriculum and Learning Supports, Specialized Learning Supports, Technology and Information Management and Human Resources, among others.
Division Programs: Teacher Development Program and Professional Improvement Program	Tuition support is available to teachers for post-secondary coursework related to core subjects and second languages, as well as for courses related to specific Division priorities through the Teacher Development Program. Tuition and leave support is available to teachers through the Professional Improvement Program for post-secondary coursework aligned with the Division’s Strategic Plan.
Teacher Development Fund (administered through the ATA)	Through the Teachers’ Collective Agreement the Division has committed funds to Edmonton Public Teachers Local 37 of the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) to administer and distribute funds in support of professional development activities or resources related to teachers’ individual professional growth plans.
Bursaries and Scholarships	Teachers are encouraged to access support through the provincial government’s bursary programs and to explore scholarship opportunities through their post-secondary institution and other community organizations.

RECOMMENDATION

That an allocation of \$1,300,000 from the 2024-2025 operating budget be approved for the Professional Improvement Program - Teacher Certificated Staff for the purpose of granting professional improvement leaves and tuition support to teachers for the 2024-2025 school year.

CONSIDERATIONS and ANALYSIS

Student achievement is positively impacted by teacher professional learning and the application of new skills and knowledge within classrooms and school communities. Our investment in teachers to complete in-depth post-secondary studies is in direct support of the Division’s commitment to provide high-quality public education and results in benefits that extend beyond those individual teachers and their students. Professional Improvement Program participants share their knowledge and expertise with colleagues through a wide range of professional learning opportunities, including sessions held on designated professional development days, communities of practice, collaboration with colleagues, coaching and mentoring and post-secondary coursework. Through this comprehensive model of professional learning, our Division is focused on working together to build capacity. Overarching this is our shared responsibility to support our students to achieve their fullest learning potential within an environment that supports their health and wellness.

The in-depth learning acquired from post-secondary studies is a key tenet of the Division’s professional learning model. Focused study in university programs, that are aligned with our Strategic Plan and areas of need, results in significant benefits across the Division. A selection of reflective statements from staff

who were supported through the Professional Improvement Program highlight this in Attachment IV. Several program participants explain that the integration of new strategies and perspectives, learned through their post-secondary studies, results in improved student academic success and wellness. Several participants reflect on the positive impact a deeper understanding of topics related to equity, diversity and Indigenous perspectives has had on their teaching practices and on their ability to meet the complex needs of students.

The Professional Improvement Program is grounded in all four Division values. The value of collaboration, however, is most evident in program participants’ descriptions of how they are sharing their learning and experience with colleagues. Professional Improvement Program participants are leveraging school and catchment professional development activities to build capacity and develop shared understanding. Those program participants who are consultants within the Division describe the ripple effect of learning that occurs when they share their knowledge, skills and experience with a broad audience across the Division through sessions and targeted direct supports to schools. As well, staff in both informal and formal leadership roles describe how they are using their learning from post-secondary studies to inform how they guide and support staff and students.

The number of teachers who request and receive support through this program is small relative to the total number of teachers in the Division. As we continue to build capacity by supporting a small number of teaching staff each year to participate in post-secondary studies aligned with our Division’s Strategic Plan, those teachers, in turn, work collaboratively with colleagues to support the academic success and wellness of our students. The chart below shows a five-year comparison of the number of teachers working in the Division, the number of Professional Improvement Program applicants and the number of applicants who were granted support.

Comparison of Total Number of Teachers and Number of Successful Applicants

Year	Number of Teachers (Sept. 30)	Number of Applicants	Number of Successful Applicants	Percentage of Teachers Supported
2018-2019	5673	137	104	1.83%
2019-2020	5788	144	112	1.94%
2020-2021	5607	110	94	1.68%
2021-2022	5647	117	99	1.75%
2022-2023	5591	120	97	1.73%
2023-2024	5806	118	97	1.67%

Over the past few years, there has been a fairly consistent number of applications for support through the Professional Improvement Program (Attachment I). Our teachers have accessed professional learning, including university coursework, to best respond to the complex needs of our students.

Post-secondary professional learning is critical to building staff capacity and supporting student learning. In 2021-2022, in response to a challenging economy, the allocation of funds for this program was reduced by \$100,000 (7.7 per cent) over the previous year. The allocation remained at the reduced level for the 2022-2023 school year (Attachment II). The allocation was increased to \$1,300,000 for 2023-2024. Maintaining the funding for this program at \$1,300,000 for 2024-2025 will help to offset increasing tuition costs to allow teacher certificated staff to develop a deeper understanding of

educational theories and practice, curricula and subject content in support of Division students. For these reasons, this option is considered most appropriate.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval of this recommendation, the program timelines for the application intake will be implemented (Attachment III).

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT I	Total Number of Applicants and Number of Successful Applicants
ATTACHMENT II	Professional Improvement Program History
ATTACHMENT III	Professional Improvement Program Timeline
ATTACHMENT IV	Selection of Reflective Statements: Benefits of Program Participation

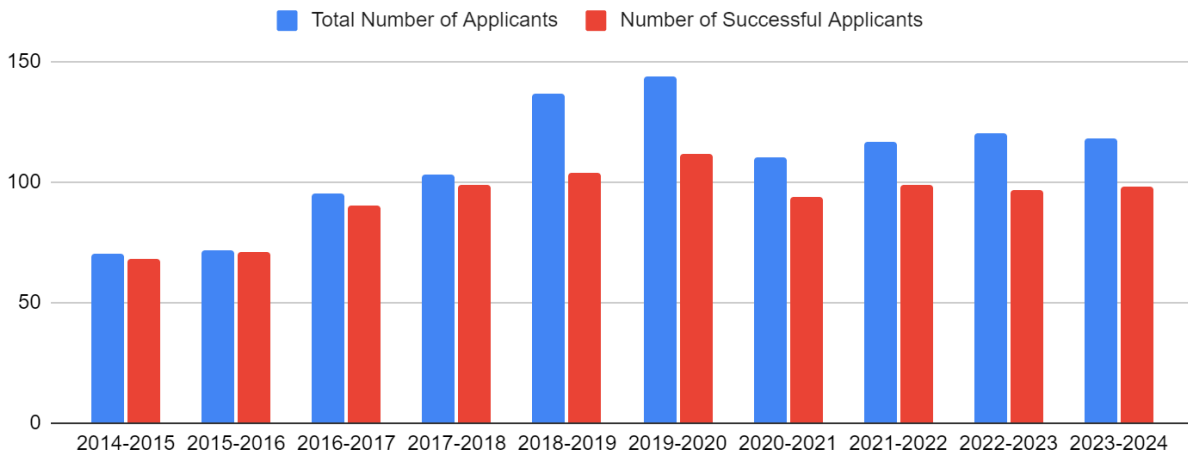
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PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM - TEACHER CERTIFICATED STAFF

Total Number of Applicants and Number of Successful Applicants

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICANTS	NUMBER SUCCESSFUL
2013-2014	86	75
2014-2015	70	68
2015-2016	72	71
2016-2017	95	90
2017-2018	103	99
2018-2019	137	104
2019-2020	144	112
2020-2021	110	94
2021-2022	117	99
2022-2023	120	97
2023-2024	118	97

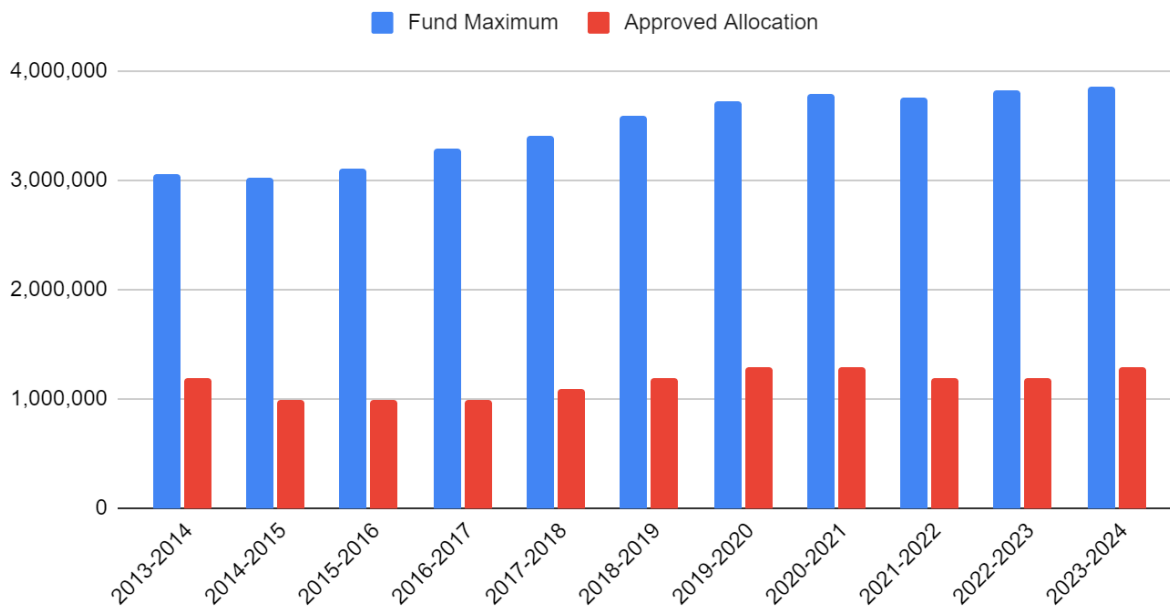
Total Number of Applicants and Number of Successful Applicants



Professional Improvement Program History

YEAR	FUND MAXIMUM AS PER CLAUSE 9.2.8	APPROVED ALLOCATION	% OF MAXIMUM	APPROVED TOTAL LEAVE FTE	ACTUAL \$ GRANTED FOR LEAVES	ACTUAL \$ GRANTED FOR TUITION	TOTAL ACTUAL \$ GRANTED FOR LEAVES & TUITION
2012-2013	3,005,090	1,200,000	40%	12.48	785,786	296,530	1,082,316
2013-2014	3,062,822	1,200,000	39%	11.56	706,110	354,758	1,060,868
2014-2015	3,019,266	1,000,000	33%	7.20	517,762	367,680	885,442
2015-2016	3,111,487	1,000,000	32%	8.026	561,457	400,757	962,214
2016-2017	3,286,102	1,000,000	30%	9.40	577,248	371,809	949,057
2017-2018	3,402,751	1,100,000	32%	7.818	521,808	545,100	1,066,908
2018-2019	3,587,437	1,200,000	33%	8.09	589,115	581,762	1,170,877
2019-2020	3,725,511	1,300,000	35%	11.072	679,106	584,120	1,263,226
2020-2021	3,795,407	1,300,000	34%	8.478	621,109	641,150	1,262,259
2021-2022	3,754,228	1,200,000	32%	9.079	515,900	651,700	1,167,600
2022-2023	3,828,254	1,200,000	31%	10.117	492,070	680,170	1,172,240
2023-2024	3,859,977	1,300,000	34%	6.325	474,546	780,000	1,254,546

Fund Maximum and Approved Allocation



2024-2025 PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM TIMELINE

Activity	Date
Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff announced on Division Staff News and application available on Connect	October 31
Information meetings for interested staff (4:00 - 6:00 p.m. Google Meet)	November 21 and 27
Obtain data to calculate maximums as per Clause 9.2.8 of the Teachers' Collective Agreement	November 30
Due date for applications	January 12
Processing of applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Receipt of applications confirmed ● Background information compiled (previous leaves, degrees, grid placement, years of service, summary of request, projected costs) ● Applications prepared for review by committee of leadership staff 	January 15 – February 2
Review of applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Application packages prepared for committee review ● Committee workshop conducted ● Review of applications completed 	January 15 – February 7 February 8 February 15
Compile background information with input from assessors	February 12 – March 8
Recommendation submitted for approval	March 11
Approval of leaves and tuition support	March 18
Communication of support granted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Applicants notified; letters and agreements sent to successful applicants ● TM to Board ● Division Staff News announcement 	March 19 - 22 April 3 April 5

Selection of Reflective Statements: Benefits of Program Participation 2022-2023 Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff

Janice Pinnock, Diversity Education Consultant, Specialized Learning Supports

Western University – Master in Professional Education in the Field of Equity, Diversity and Social Justice

“Pursuing a Master's in Equity, Justice, and Diversity has offered me a transformative educational experience that has equipped me with critical knowledge, skills, and perspectives essential for fostering an inclusive and equitable organization. [...] I have learned how better to support our understanding of oppressed groups and build capacity for antiracism and equity in our Division. This program's benefits to myself as an educator and Division employee has been unparalleled.”

Jillian Marino, Principal, Vimy Ridge Academy

Yorkville University – Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology

“...[My] engagement in coursework in crisis, trauma, and understanding group counselling techniques provides me skills and strategies in restorative practices in working with youth when relationships go awry. Schools with staff capacity in trauma-informed practices are able to remove barriers to learning for all students and improve ways of regulating and de-escalating emotional circumstances. Often group sessions can reduce suspensions and expulsions for students when facilitated with effective strategies and skilled processes.”

Kistin Auger-Supernault, Teacher, Prince Charles School

University of Alberta – Master of Education in Educational Psychology, School Counselling

“I have gained valuable skills and knowledge in school counseling, allowing me to provide more effective counseling services and support student well-being and academic success, especially when working with Indigenous students in my current school context. [...] The advanced training equips me to address a wide range of student challenges, promoting positive mental health, social-emotional growth, intergenerational healing, and academic achievement.”

Alyssa Mayer, Teacher, Roberta MacAdams School

University of Alberta – Master of Education in Elementary Education

“My commitment to Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing promotes intertwined curricula, reinforce authentic assessment, and ensure the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual dimensions of children are prioritized. [...] Every day, alongside children, I work to learn, acknowledge and incorporate the innumerable gifts and teachings offered by Indigenous friends, professors, elders and knowledge keepers in my life. Furthermore, as the First Nations, Métis and Inuit representative for my school, I feel I can competently and confidently share resources and recommendations.

Tara Copeman, Principal, Bannerman School

University of Alberta – Master of Education in Educational Studies, Special Education

“The learning I have gained has informed my practice as an educational leader, and I have been able to bring research-informed practice into my school by providing professional development to my staff. It has also given me tools and protocols to objectively re-evaluate the effectiveness of current literacy instruction and intervention practices in my school and the division, and a path forward to improving student learning and achievement. Our literacy achievement has drastically improved, and much of it is a

direct result of the direction I have taken with school staff PD based on my acquired knowledge from my studies.”

Hayley Simard, Teacher, Delwood School

University of Alberta – Master of Education in Educational Studies

“My final research assignment focused on best practices that support the inclusion of all students within an immersive second-language classroom. Through this research, students working below grade level in language acquisition will gain the support they require when teachers build a repertoire of resources, strategies, and procedures that may scaffold language learning for [second language learning].”

Kathryn Spaidal, Teacher, M. E. LaZerte School

Columbia College – Master of Education in Trauma-Informed Education

“Being able to expand my knowledge allowed me to further support my students, and give them a safe space to learn and grow. [...] I was able to learn about social emotional development, and activities to help our kids gain the skills needed to be resilient, pick up on social cues, develop coping strategies and gain a better understanding of themselves.”

Sherri Humphrys - Principal, Julia Kiniski School

University of Portland - Doctor of Education in Learning and Leading

“The coursework provided a foundation of knowledge about leadership that has changed how I lead. My dissertation focus was leading for organizational well-being through the lens of principal self-awareness. [...] I work to apply the learnings in my own practice within my own school community. My intent is to share the learnings and perhaps influence the practice of others.”

Alexandra Stewart - Teacher, Dr. Donald Massey School

University of British Columbia - Master of Education in Special Education

“I learned that inclusion is for all. Inclusive classrooms are not just classrooms that include individuals with disabilities. They are classrooms that meet the needs of all learners – each of whom is unique. Inclusive classrooms are trauma-informed, strength-based and culturally responsive spaces that respond to the diversity of the students. I came to this program to learn how to include students with disabilities but instead learned how to include everyone.”

Lindsay Garanis, Curriculum Coordinator, Constable Daniel Woodall School

Western University – Master in Professional Education in the Field of Equity, Diversity and Social Justice

“...I have worked with colleagues to build capacity to hold conversations about race, Indigenous education, the introduction of an elementary school GSA, how educators can move along in their journey of supporting students who identify under the LGBTQ2S+ umbrella and understanding District's policies about anti-racism and equity, sexual orientation and gender and sexual health.”

David Tran, Assistant Principal, Esther Starkman School

University of Alberta – Master of Education in Educational Studies

“By gaining a comprehensive grasp of anti-racist strategies and practices, I have been able to model them for my colleagues and students, fostering a culture of inclusivity and empathy within my school community. [...] This inclusive environment is crucial for fostering academic success and emotional well-being, especially for racialized minority students. [...] I facilitated monthly anti-racism sessions for the W.P. Wagner catchment principals, collaborated with various school leaders across division levels on

a four-part anti-racism student conference focused on anti-racism education and student leadership, and presented a successful anti-racism workshop at ULEAD 2023 for various school administrators and leaders from across Canada.”

Elle McClary, Teacher, Academy at King Edward

University of Alberta – Master of Education in Educational Psychology, Special Education

“I have been able to apply my learning on a daily basis to support struggling adolescent readers, in small groups, as they begin to acquire the foundational reading skills they are missing. [...] [My] course work has allowed me to become familiar with the current state of reading and reading research, benchmark assessment tools, instructional practices and programs, and progress monitoring tools to support responsive teaching. [...] One of the most important things I have taken away from this year is being able to share my learnings with staff through professional development presentations, in class modeling, and observations.”

Natalie Webster, Teacher, Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour School

University of Ottawa – Master of Education in Studies in Teaching and Learning

“Students in my classroom are learning about anti-racism in a developmentally appropriate and curricularly relevant way. [...] I incorporated Indigenous perspectives throughout the year in the content I was teaching and also prioritized a holistic, project-based approach that aligns with the key tenets of some Indigenous pedagogies. [...] I am excited to share what I have learned with my colleagues. [...] I am looking forward to leading some professional, foundational learning at my school around incorporating Indigenous perspectives into the classroom.