

DATE: December 8, 2020

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Funds for 2021-2022 Professional Improvement Program - Teacher Certificated Staff

ORIGINATOR: Angela Anderson, Chief Human Resources Officer, Human Resources

RESOURCE STAFF: Trish Kolotyluk, Renée Thomson

REFERENCE: Teachers' Collective Agreement - September 1, 2016 to August 31, 2018, Clause 9

ISSUE

An allocation of funds from the 2021-2022 operating budget is requested to support the Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff, through which teachers would be able to 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 our Division's model of professional learning. 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 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 also in direct support of Division Priority 2, Goal 3, which states that throughout their careers, all staff members are to be "provided opportunities to enhance their professional capacity and leadership within a culture of collaboration." This program is grounded in our Division's cornerstone values of accountability, collaboration, equity and integrity.

Through this program, teachers have the opportunity to apply for tuition and leave support to undertake 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 that may be allocated for the Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff is “3/4 of 1% of the annual grid costs, calculated as of the preceding November 30”.
- 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 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 2020-2021 Professional Improvement Program, support was granted primarily for courses and programs of study in the areas of leadership, counselling/mental health, curriculum, literacy, inclusion and mathematics.
- 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 2020-2021 Professional Improvement Program was 2.9 per cent.
- In order to facilitate application, review and approval processes for the Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff, it is necessary that they be initiated a year in advance of the period of support (Attachment III).
- In addition to the support available through the Professional Improvement Program, tuition support for coursework related to core subject areas, second languages and selected priorities established by Edmonton Public Schools will continue to be available to teachers through the Teacher Development Program.
- The Teachers’ Collective Agreement also includes a commitment of Division funds to Edmonton Public Teachers Local 37 of the Alberta Teachers’ Association to administer and distribute funds in support of professional development activities or resources related to teachers’ individual professional growth plans. Edmonton Public Schools will provide \$875,000 in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 to Local 37 in support of the Teacher Development Fund.
- Access to and support for professional development has been a significant bargaining issue in negotiations with the Alberta Teachers’ Association.
- Teachers are encouraged to access support through the provincial government’s bursary programs in the areas of mathematics and second language education, and to explore scholarship opportunities through their post-secondary institution and other community organizations.

RECOMMENDATION

That an allocation of \$1,200,000 from the 2021-2022 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 2021-2022 school year.

OPTIONS

Based on the information provided in this report, the following options are considered most appropriate:

1. The allocation of funds for 2021-2022 is decreased to \$1,200,000.
2. The allocation of funds for 2021-2022 remains at \$1,300,000

CONSIDERATIONS and ANALYSIS

The Professional Improvement Program is grounded in all four cornerstone values; however, the cornerstone value of collaboration is most evident in program participants' descriptions of how they are sharing their learning and experience with colleagues within their schools, catchments and communities of practice. Our culture of collaboration is also evident in how Professional Improvement Program participants are leveraging school and catchment professional development activities to build capacity and develop shared understandings. 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 professional development sessions and targeted direct supports to schools. As well, staff in both informal and formal leadership roles explain how they are using their learning from post-secondary studies to inform how they guide and support staff and students in their schools.

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 through the Professional Improvement Program results in benefits that extend beyond those individual teachers and their students. Professional Improvement Program participants go on to 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 and to continuously improve. Overarching this is our shared responsibility to support our students to achieve to 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. Many participants reflect on the positive impact a deeper understanding of subject content and refinement of their teaching practices has had on their ability to meet the increasingly complex needs of students.

For the past several years, the number of teachers hired to the Division has increased to keep pace with our growing student enrolment. This resulted in a consistent increase in the number of applications for support through the Professional Improvement Program over several years. As a comparison, in 2014-2015, 70 certificated staff requested support through this program, while in 2019-2020, there were 144 requests for support. In 2020-2021, however, there was a shift in this upward trend with 110 applications for support received (Attachment I).

The number of teachers who request and receive support through this program is small relative to the total number of teachers in the Division. The chart below compares the total number of teachers over the past four years, the total number of Professional Improvement Program applicants and the number of applicants who were granted support. 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, build capacity amongst their colleagues and work collaboratively towards the common goal of supporting the academic success and wellness of our students.

Comparison of Total Number of Teachers and Number of Successful Applicants

Year	Number of Teachers	Number of Applicants	Number of Successful Applicants	Percentage of Teachers Supported
2017-2018	5518	103	99	1.79%
2018-2019	5737	137	104	1.81%
2019-2020	5832	144	112	1.92%
2020-2021	5614	110	94	1.67%

Of the 110 requests for support through this program in 2020-2021, based on the relative strength of the applications, 42 applicants were granted the support they requested and were eligible to receive, 52 were granted partial support and 16 were not granted support.

Over the past decade, the gap between the maximum possible allocation and the approved allocation has widened. In 2011-2012, the approved allocation of \$1,200,000 was 41 per cent of the maximum possible allocation. The approved allocation of \$1,300,000 for 2020-2021 was 34 per cent of the maximum possible allocation (Attachment II).

The Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff is one of several ways that professional learning is supported for Division staff. The chart below 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.
Decision Units	Several central decision units allocate funds for the delivery of targeted professional learning courses and sessions for Division staff. These include sessions offered through Instructional Supports, Technology and Information Management and Human Resources.
Division Programs: Teacher Development Program and Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff	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.

Alberta Teachers' Association	Support is available to teachers through the Teacher Development Fund for a range of professional learning activities.
Bursaries and Scholarships	Bursaries and scholarships may be available through the ATA, government of Alberta, universities, businesses and other organizations.

We acknowledge the importance of supporting post-secondary professional learning for our teacher certificated staff. We also acknowledge that the economic situation anticipated for the 2021-2022 school year will continue to be challenging. Maintaining the allocation of funds for this program near the current level would continue to allow a number of teacher certificated staff to develop a deeper understanding of educational theories and practice, curricula and subject content that is aligned with Division initiatives and will ensure that we continue to build in-house expertise to support our Division's model of professional learning. In consideration of our challenging economic circumstances and decreased number of applications for the current school year, this recommendation is for a small reduction in the allocation of funds for this program.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval of this recommendation, the program timeline will be followed (Attachment III).

ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

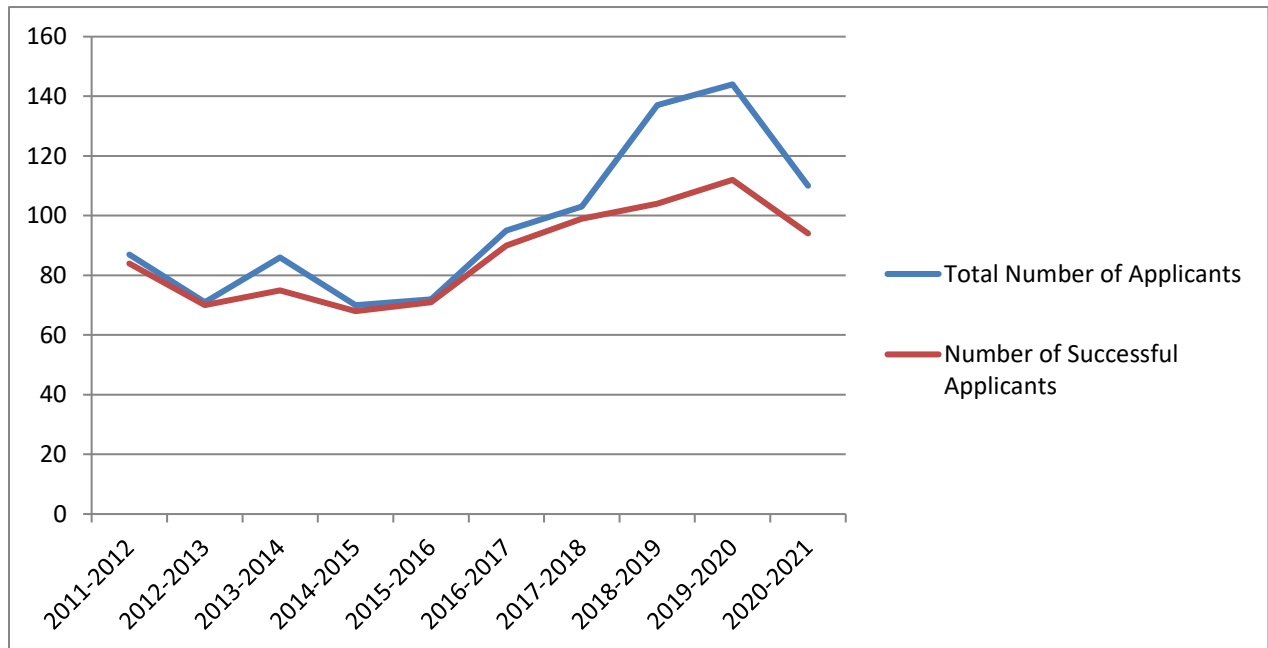
ATTACHMENT I	Comparison by Year: Total Number of Teacher Certificated Applicants and Number of Successful Applicants
ATTACHMENT II	Professional Improvement Program History
ATTACHMENT III	2021-2022 Professional Improvement Program Timeline
ATTACHMENT IV	Selection of Reflective Statements: Benefits of Program Participation
ATTACHMENT V	Comparison by Year: Number of Teachers and Number of Teacher Certificated Applicants

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**PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
COMPARISON BY YEAR: TOTAL NUMBER OF TEACHER
CERTIFICATED APPLICANTS AND NUMBER OF
SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS**

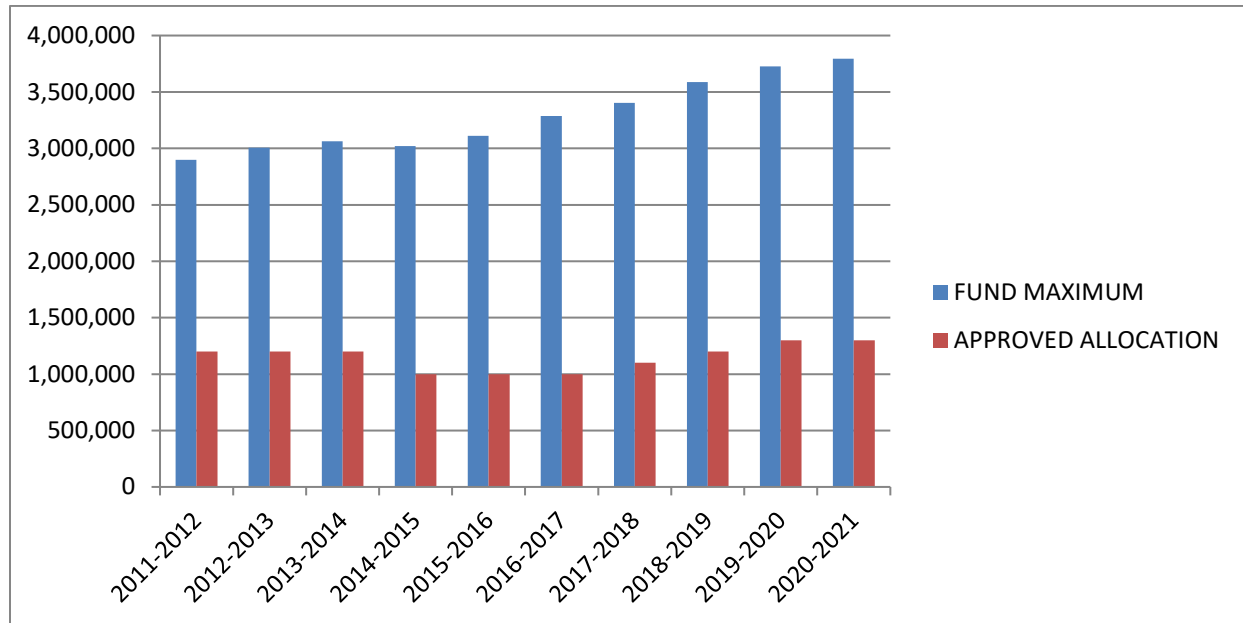
YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICANTS	NUMBER SUCCESSFUL
2011-2012	87	84
2012-2013	71	70
2013-2014	86	75
2014-2015	70	68
2015-2016	72	71
2016-2017	95	90
2017-2018	103	99
2018-2019	137	104
2019-2020	144	112
2020-2021	110	94

**COMPARISON BY YEAR: TOTAL NUMBER OF TEACHER CERTIFICATED 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
2011-2012	2,899,830	1,200,000	41%	15.65	768,459	316,283	1,084,742
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

COMPARISON BY YEAR: FUND MAXIMUM AND APPROVED ALLOCATION

2020-2021 PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM TIMELINE

Activity	Date
Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff and application package communicated to Division teachers and made available online	October 30
Information meetings for interested staff (4:00 - 6:00 p.m. Google Meet)	November 17, 23
Obtain data to calculate maximums as per 9.2.8 of the Teachers’ Collective Agreement	November 30
Due date for applications	January 8
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 11 - 29
Review of applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application packages prepared for committee review • Committee workshop conducted • Review of applications completed 	January 11 - February 8 February 9 February 16
Compile background information and committee input	February 17 - March 2
Recommendation to the Superintendent	March 3
Approval of leaves and tuition support by the Superintendent	March 10
Communication of support granted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters and agreements sent to successful applicants • TM to Board • Division News announcement 	March 15 - 19 March 24 March 26

**Selection of Reflective Statements: Benefits of Program Participation
2019-2020 Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff**

Twyla Armagost, Acting for Assistant Principal

University of Alberta - Master of Education in Elementary Education with a specialization in Curriculum and Pedagogy - Early Learning Cohort

"I found this new learning to be very powerful and it has certainly increased my understanding of the intricacies involved in attempting to create truly inclusive schools, classrooms, and teaching practices...[I]t has provided me with specific insights that will strengthen my educational practice and skill set as a future leader with Edmonton Public Schools."

Andrea Gleddie, Teacher

University of Alberta - Master of Education in Secondary Education

"I've gained knowledge and understanding in school curriculum as well as how best to implement it into my classroom. I'm looking forward to connecting theory to practice and putting my learning into action...in Mathematics in particular."

Rebecca Ho, Teacher

City University of Seattle - Master of Arts in Counselling

"Studying the theoretical knowledge and skills has informed my teaching every day as I see the lessons I have learned in class in real life situations. In the short term I have been working on providing a trauma-informed classroom and using mediation techniques to help ground my students. In the long term, I can see my education allowing me to implement this knowledge on a school wide level, creating programs and structures that ensure a safe and positive wellness environment for all."

Marie Kleckner, Teacher

University of Alberta - Master of Education in Educational Studies

"I have learned a lot about First Nations, Metis, and Inuit education, deepening my understanding and appreciation for the complexities faced by marginalized populations in education. Overall, my understanding of the education system, leadership styles, and of current research has shifted my teaching practice, and my own leadership style within the school system. Although I am not in a formal leadership position, I am a leader within my school and amongst my colleagues. In the long term, I do see myself in a more formal leadership role. When this time comes, I know I will be a much different leader based on my experiences in the MES program."

Stéphanie La France, Teacher

University of Alberta - Master of Education in Secondary Education with a specialization in Mathematics

"Within the BEd programme, a student learns the immediately applicable and foundational knowledge and skills required for teaching; however, the masters programme provides a space for further growth in professional identity and the development or strengthening of teaching and learning philosophies which form the basis for quality education. It is the masters programme that enables deep (often ideological) reflection on what education could be; it empowers professionals to explore what they dream for a better education system. This is a vital step in the continued improvement and shifting of perspectives. I found this to be the case particularly in mathematics."

Kelcey Letersky, Teacher - Counsellor

University of Alberta - Master of Education in Educational Psychology with a specialization in School Counselling

I believe that I am capable of providing more effective, evidence-based support and interventions for students, teachers, and families than I was before I began the program. This means that individual students are better able to succeed in school and life, changing their lives for the better, as well as improving the school community as a whole. I also think that my training positions me to be a better support to staff in my school, not only in terms of providing strategies for helping students but also in providing personal, professional support and education. This, in turn, improves the quality of teaching in our school and the rest of the Division.

Andrea Lowe Davis, Teacher

University of Alberta - Master of Education in Educational Psychology with a specialization in School Counselling

"The MEd in School Counselling program has already and will continue to benefit my professional development, students, their families, colleagues, school, community and the District, as it fills a need in EPSB for mental health supports that is essential to student success."

Brett Ludwig, Teacher

University of Portland - Master of Education with a specialization in Educational Leadership

"I will absolutely be a better ESL teacher in the future as a result of my studies. By taking night classes, I am able to test out what I learned the next day in class. I've been able to develop lesson plans using best practices and backed by sound research. I have presented to my staff at the end of each course, what I learned, and how they can incorporate that into their subject areas. I've been able to further help the district, by meeting with ESL consultants and sharing my learning. I look forward to continuing to share what I learn in my second year with my staff, consultants and communities of practice. At the end of the day, I hope what I share will benefit ESL students across the district."

Melissa F. Maduro, Teacher

University of Portland - Master of Education with a specialization in Educational Leadership

"The courses I completed and activities I have been involved in have been invaluable in substantially increasing my knowledge about the multitude of intricacies involved in becoming a successful leader who can create a culture of efficacy and collaboration within a school, cohort, catchment and community."

Kylie Marshall, Teacher

Memorial University - Master of Education in Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Studies with a specialization in Language and Literacy Studies

"My understandings regarding lesson delivery, planning, and student success has changed greatly. Through critical inquiry, I have been exposed to theories and research that supports planning and administering lessons to teach early literacy to my students in a way that is applicable, differentiated and meaningful. I've gained a greater capacity to collaborate with my catchment group and support my colleagues to plan Tier II interventions and address specific needs to strive for equity for all our students. As I continue my studies, I believe the students in my classroom will develop stronger reading and writing skills. I will become better equipped to address, plan for, and assess the reading gaps within my classroom and successfully implement supports to promote equity for all students."

Kevin McBean, Teacher

University of Alberta - Master of Education in Secondary Education

"Much of what I learned has shaped my daily teaching practice - both in the pedagogical theories that underlie my approach to education as well as in practical activities that I have borrowed from my courses and adapted for use in my classroom. I know that I am a better teacher because of this. I have also been grateful for the encouragement I received from my colleagues to share what I have learned in formal presentations and informal conversations. I look forward to taking on more formal leadership roles and continuing to share."

Tess O'Shaughnessy, Teacher

Kent State University - Master of Music in Music Education

"Rather than guessing at what might work, I am trying research-proven techniques, and it is making a huge difference in my ability to reach the great variety of students that I teach."

Megan Paran, Consultant

University of Alberta - Master of Education in Elementary Education with a focus on early learning and Indigenous ways of being and knowing

"As I have continued to learn and engage in my own co-constructed curriculum-making alongside educators, children and families, I share my reflections and wonders with educators striving to shape their own practices. This has occurred across the landscapes of school places, instructional leadership opportunities, across Inclusive Learning teams, and allowed me to deepen my relationships, the competency I am most strongly connected to."

Elisha Pinter, Consultant

University of Alberta - Master of Education in Educational Studies

"My specific focus on spatial reasoning in mathematics has allowed me to embed my knowledge into numerous professional learning sessions and series for teachers within the Division. As well, sharing my learning journey with my colleagues has led to rich conversations, greater depth of exploration of our own mathematical understanding and critical analysis of the professional learning opportunities we currently offer. I believe the information and access to research I have gained and shared with colleagues will help to provide more targeted supports for teachers and administrators."

Karen Plant, Consultant - Technology

University of Portland - Master of Education with a specialization in Educational Leadership

"No one could have predicted the immense, worldwide uptake of technology for "emergency remote teaching." My masters course work greatly impacted my approach to leading the 6000 plus educators to online schooling. I took pride in the fact that my team looked to me to guide parts of our response because of my current coursework and research experience."

Alexis Renwick, Consultant - Education and Behaviour

University of Calgary - Master of Education in Interdisciplinary Studies with a specialization in Educating Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

"Over the course of the year, I have learned new ways of programming to meet the educational needs of an autistic child, and am confident in passing on this learning to teachers who are looking for creative and new ways to meet the needs of their students. I have learned new ways of bringing parents and school teams together to support the short and long term goals of the individual child. I feel empowered to ask questions, invite collaboration, and to work with all ranges of stakeholders to

ensure success for each child, and to promote the amazing opportunities that neurodiversity has to offer.”

Jodie Schwartz, Teacher

University of Calgary - Master of Education in Interdisciplinary Studies with specializations in Collaborative Creativity and Design Thinking for Innovation

“I cannot begin to explain the benefits from this program for my work this year. Not only was it a help in my classrooms with creating opportunities for students to think their way through dilemmas and hypotheses, but it has given me, and therefore, my students the ability to pivot into this new world of covid learning. We have worked together to create opportunity within the constraints of online learning and to apply those constraints as simply a part of our new reality. We learned and grew together and I have a deep respect for the work my students were able to do.”

Jason Smith, Teacher

City University of Seattle - Master of Education in Educational Leadership

“What it all really comes down to is, how will this work help the students of EPSB succeed? I feel more prepared to lead groups of people, whether it be a class of students, a basketball team, the student services department, or a school. I'm confident that I will be able to help all of those that I lead to reach their potential and achieve success (in whatever way that looks like for them).”

Kim St. Amand, Department Head

University of Alberta - Master of Education in Educational Policy Studies with a specialization in Educational Administration and Leadership

“I have been able to build greater capacity in the areas of supporting staff and strengthening opportunities that promote student growth. The benefits gained through the Professional Improvement Program have grown beyond the initial investment towards my academic advancement as I have been able to, in turn, equip and build capacity in others.”

Quinton Stotz, Teacher

Concordia University - Montreal - Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics

“I feel that I have the theoretical foundation to assist my school and division in supporting, creating, and implementing language programs that embody the communities they serve. This knowledge is important given the diversity of language education at Edmonton Public Schools, which includes bilingual language education, ESL, French immersion, heritage language education, indigenous language education, and second language programs.”