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| <b>Date</b>           | November 25, 2025   |
| <b>To</b>             | Board of Trustees   |
| <b>From</b>           | Ron Thompson, Superintendent of Schools   |
| <b>Subject</b>        | Funds for Professional Improvement Program - Teacher Certificated Staff 2026-2027 and 2027-2028   |
| <b>Originator</b>     | Angela Anderson, Chief Human Resources Officer  |
| <b>Resource Staff</b> | Renée Thomson   |
| <b>References</b>     | <a href="#">Division Strategic Plan</a><br><a href="#">Teachers' Collective Agreement-September 1, 2020 to August 31, 2024, Clause 9)</a> |

## ISSUE

An allocation of funds from the 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 operating budgets is requested to support the Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff. This two-year funding commitment is necessary to continue a trial process that offers teachers the flexibility of applying for either one or two years of program support.

Through the Professional Improvement Program, teachers can access tuition and leave support for post-secondary coursework as per clause 9 of the Teachers' Collective Agreement. A commitment 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.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That an allocation of \$1,350,000 from the 2026-2027 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 2026-2027 school year.
2. That a commitment of support not exceeding 50 per cent of the 2026-2027 allocation amount be approved for the 2027-2028 Professional Improvement Program - Teacher Certificated Staff applications. A formal request for an allocation of funds from the 2027-2028 operating budget will be brought to the Board of Trustees in the fall of 2026.

## 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, fulfillment, 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 the number 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.

A trial two-year application option was implemented for 2025-2026/2026-2027. This allowed teachers to submit requests for either one or two years of support within one application.

On November 26, 2024, at a public Board Meeting, the Board of Trustees approved an allocation of \$1,300,000 from the 2025-2026 operating budget to fund the Professional Improvement Program - Teacher Certificated Staff. These approved funds are supporting professional improvement leaves and tuition support for teachers in the 2025-2026 school year. The Board of Trustees also committed to an allocation of funds from the 2026-2027 operating budget to support the second year of the trial two-year application process. The commitment of funds for 2026-2027 could not exceed 50 per cent of the 2025-2026 allocation amount and is provisional based on final budget approval in 2025-2026. Continuing this trial will allow the Division to fully assess the impact and effectiveness of a two-year application process.

#### 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, a leave for professional improvement may be granted to a teacher.
  - Clause 9.2.7 specifies that tuition support for professional improvement may be granted, upon application, to a teacher on a 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”.
- In 2025-2026, the approved allocation of \$1,300,000 for this program was 31 per cent of the maximum possible allocation, compared to 32 per cent of the maximum for the previous year (Attachment II).
- 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 include 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 for support granted through this program. The commitment is for one year of active service in the Division for each year of tuition support and three years of active service for a full-time leave with an allowance. Part-time leaves are prorated accordingly.
- We received 137 applications for support through the 2025-2026/2026-2027 Professional Improvement Program - Teacher Certificated Staff. Eighty-one applications were for support in 2025-2026 only. Fifty-six applications were for support in both 2025-2026 and 2026-2027. One application was for support in 2026-2027 only.
- Based on the relative strength of the 2025-2026 applications, 37 applicants were granted the support they requested and were eligible to receive and 79 were granted partial support. Support was not recommended for 21 applicants.
- Based on the relative strength of the 2026-2027 applications, 12 applicants were provisionally granted the support they requested and were eligible to receive, 28 were provisionally granted partial support, and seven were not recommended for support.
- The majority of applications for support in 2025-2026 were for programs of study related to counseling, mental health and trauma-informed education, as well as leadership and inclusive learning. Support was also requested for programs related to literacy, mathematics, social justice, diversity and equity, as well as curriculum studies, science and technology.
- 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 2025-2026 Professional Improvement Program was \$39,000, which is three per cent of the total allocation amount.
- The Division is committed to supporting professional learning for staff in a number of ways. The chart below outlines sources of support for professional learning.

|   | <b>Funds for Professional Learning - Teacher Certificated Staff</b>   |
|---|---|
| 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. |

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| 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 and 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.  |

### 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 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 staff capacity. Overarching this is our shared responsibility to ensure that our students 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. Post-secondary studies that align with our Strategic Plan and areas of need have resulted in significant benefits across the Division. Attachment IV highlights reflective statements from staff who have participated in the Professional Improvement Program. Participants reflected on the positive impact a deeper understanding of topics related to Indigenous ways of learning, diversity, equity, anti-racism and reconciliation has had on their instructional practices. They spoke about creating culturally responsive classrooms and school communities that prioritize student well-being and promote a strong sense of belonging. Several program participants explained how the integration of new instructional strategies and perspectives, learned through their post-secondary studies, enhanced student engagement and learning outcomes. Many program participants also shared their learning with colleagues and collaborated on thoughtful changes to promote educational excellence.

The Professional Improvement Program is grounded in all four Division values. In the program participants' reflective statements, teachers frequently describe sharing their learning and experience with colleagues. Program participants leverage school and catchment professional development activities to collaboratively build capacity and foster shared understanding. Program participants who are consultants within the Division describe the ripple effect of their learning that occurs when they share their knowledge, skills and experience across the Division through sessions and targeted supports. As well, staff in both informal and formal leadership roles describe how they are using their learning to inspire 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 Division has steadily increased its teaching staff over the past several years in an effort to keep pace with our growing student population. Attachment I shows a 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. As the number of teaching staff continues to grow, we anticipate a corresponding increase in demand for the Professional Improvement Program. A modest increase in the program's funding allocation will both proactively address our expected staff expansion and allow us to stay ahead of rising post-secondary tuition costs.

Post-secondary professional learning, grounded in evidence-based research, is essential for building staff capacity and supporting student learning. A modest increase in the allocation of funds for 2026-2027 will allow the Division to continue to support teacher certificated staff to develop a deeper understanding of educational theories and practice, curricula and subject content in support of Division students.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

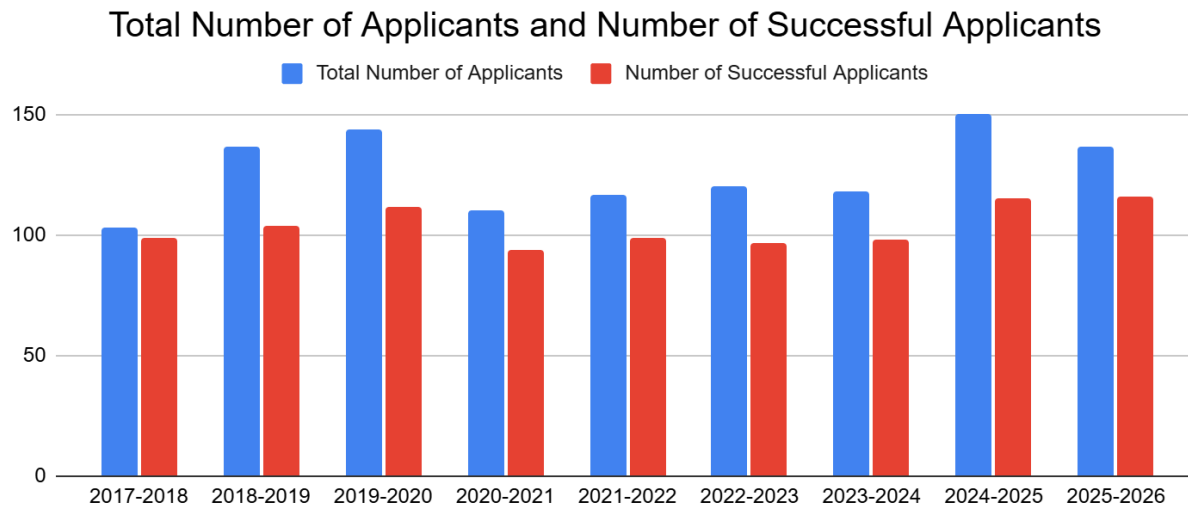
Upon approval of this recommendation, the program timelines for the application intake will be implemented (Attachment III).

#### **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 | Professional Improvement Program Timeline   |
| ATTACHMENT IV  | Selection of Reflective Statements: Benefits of Program Participation                                   |

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| Comparison of Total Number of Teachers and Number of Successful Applicants |                                  |                            |                                 |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Year   | Number of Teachers<br>(Sept. 30) | Total 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%                            |
| 2021-2022  | 5647                             | 117                        | 99                              | 1.75%                            |
| 2022-2023  | 5591                             | 120                        | 97                              | 1.73%                            |
| 2023-2024  | 5806                             | 118                        | 97                              | 1.67%                            |
| 2024-2025  | 6001                             | 150                        | 115                             | 1.92%                            |
| 2025-2026  | 6261                             | 137                        | 116                             | 1.85%                            |

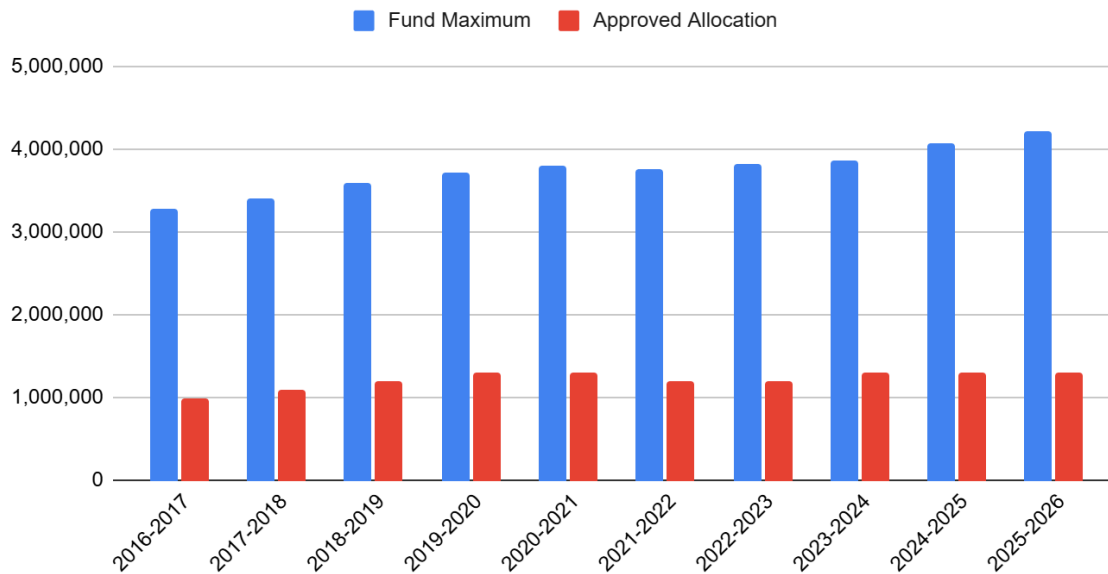


## Professional Improvement Program History

| YEAR      | FUND<br>MAXIMUM<br>AS PER<br>CLAUSE<br>9.2.8 | APPROVED<br>ALLOCATION | % OF<br>MAXIMUM | APPROVED<br>TOTAL LEAVE<br>FTE | ACTUAL \$<br>GRANTED<br>FOR LEAVES | ACTUAL \$<br>GRANTED<br>FOR TUITION | TOTAL<br>ACTUAL \$<br>GRANTED<br>FOR LEAVES<br>& TUITION |
|-----------|--|------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 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  |
| 2024-2025 | 4,071,363                                    | 1,300,000              | 32%             | 6.451                          | 514,008                            | 747,250                             | 1,261,258  |
| 2025-2026 | 4,222,075                                    | 1,300,000              | 31%             | 7.470                          | 479,882                            | 780,000                             | 1,259,882  |

An allocation of funds in the amount of \$650,000 was provisionally approved for 2026-2027 applicants who submitted two-year applications.

## Fund Maximum and Approved Allocation



### PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM TIMELINE

| <b>2025-2026 Activities</b>  | <b>Dates</b>                 |
|--|------------------------------|
| Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff (2026-2027/2027-2028) announced on Division Staff News and application available on Connect  | Oct. 31, 2025                |
| Information meetings for interested staff (4:00 - 6:00 p.m. Google Meet)   | Nov. 18 and 24, 2025         |
| Obtain data to calculate maximums as per Clause 9.2.8 of the Teachers' Collective Agreement  | Nov. 30, 2025                |
| Due date for applications  | Jan. 9, 2026                 |
| Processing of applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receipt of applications confirmed</li> <li>• Background information compiled (previous leaves, degrees, grid placement, years of service, summary of request, projected costs)</li> <li>• Applications prepared for review by a committee of leadership staff</li> </ul> | Nov. 3, 2025 – Feb. 13, 2026 |
| Review of applications   | Feb. 5 – 13, 2026            |
| Compile background information with input from assessors   | Feb. 17 – Mar. 6, 2026       |
| Recommendation submitted for approval  | Mar. 13, 2026                |
| Approval of leaves and tuition support   | Mar. 20, 2026                |
| Communication of support granted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants notified; letters and agreements sent to successful applicants</li> <li>• Posted on Connect</li> </ul>  | Mar. 23 - 27, 2026           |

## **Selection of Reflective Statements: Benefits of Program Participation 2024-2025 Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff**

**Youssra Badr**, Diversity Education Consultant, Strategic Division Supports

*City University - Master of Counselling*

It will enable me to provide more comprehensive professional learning, mentorship, and consultation bridging mental health, equity, and education. I will be able to better support leaders and teachers with the growing mental health needs of our student population, while continuing to address this work through an equity and inclusion lens.

**Tenielle Bennett**, Teacher, Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour School

*University of Alberta - Master of Education*

I will be better equipped to mentor colleagues, support divisional goals around equity and reconciliation, and develop resources that reflect Indigenous and Métis world views while serving all learners. By strengthening my ability to weave research, cultural knowledge, and pedagogy together, I will help foster classrooms where students feel seen, valued, and empowered to succeed.

**Trish Chow**, Teacher, Soraya Hafez School

*University of Calgary - Master of Education*

The immediate benefit is my ability to provide dynamic and differentiated literacy programming that meets the diverse needs of my students, including those with complex needs and English Language Learners. This expertise has positioned me for mentorship and leadership roles allowing me to share my knowledge and support my colleagues in cultivating strong literacy instruction and fostering inclusive learning environments. I have implemented foundational literacy strategies to address achievement gaps and cultivate a love for reading, writing, speaking and listening. My studies, particularly in transcultural and critical literacies, has empowered me to better support culturally and linguistically diverse populations by understanding and incorporating their unique social and cultural factors into literacy learning.

**Tanasha Clare**, Teacher, David Thomas King School

*Yorkville University - Master of Education*

In my current role as a teacher, the program has provided me with a broader understanding of how effective leadership positively influences school culture, instructional practices, and student outcomes. I have been able to apply this learning directly in my classroom and professional community—through leading collaborative initiatives, mentoring colleagues, and contributing meaningfully to school-wide planning. The knowledge I have gained around curriculum leadership, data-informed decision-making, and inclusive practices has deepened my impact as an educator and strengthened my ability to support both student achievement and staff development.

**Ly Dao-Gray**, Teacher, Jasper Place School

*University of Alberta - Master of Education*

This program has provided me with evidence-based strategies, tools, and frameworks that I actively apply to support students both in the classroom and in a counselling setting. These skills have strengthened my ability to create inclusive, supportive learning environments and to respond effectively to the diverse emotional and social needs of students. This learning has directly enhanced my daily interactions with students, allowing me to build stronger relationships and foster resilience. My continued commitment to professional growth in school counselling will contribute to a more comprehensive and preventative approach to student support within Edmonton Public Schools. I am dedicated to using this knowledge to not only improve my own practice but also to contribute to a broader culture of mental wellness across the Division.

**Kym Francis**, Teacher, Bannerman School

*University of Alberta - Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Psychology*

I have gained a wealth of strategies and techniques for supporting struggling readers and writers. I have a deeper understanding of the role of morphology in reading and writing, and how this knowledge can be used to support students' literacy development. This insight will help me identify and address the specific challenges faced by struggling readers and writers, ensuring that they receive the targeted interventions they need to succeed. Understanding the developmental stages and cognitive needs of children helps me to implement more effective instructional strategies that support student growth and academic success, particularly in their formative years.

**Philip Girgis**, Teacher, Crestwood School

*University of Alberta - Master of Education*

I have gained a deeper awareness of the subtle ways trauma can manifest in young people, allowing me to respond with more empathy, effectiveness, and professionalism. The coursework has equipped me with new strategies and tools to foster safe, inclusive, and supportive classroom environments. I now have several practices I can turn to that enhance emotional regulation and build resilience among students. Additionally, this program has provided me with the skills and confidence to share trauma-sensitive practices with colleagues. I have had the opportunity to share some of my learning with my colleagues, and I look forward to continuing this work into the future so that we can work towards a more compassionate and responsive school culture.

**Amanda Jones**, Teacher, Ormsby School

*Queen's University - Professional Master of Education*

My literacy courses have enhanced my knowledge of the current research and excellent resources that support the recent shifts in the pedagogy for literacy. These best practices can be used for neurotypical, neurodivergent and English as an Additional Language students. I am able to present and model concrete examples of how to help students be more successful.

**Priya Khan**, Assistant Principal, Meyokumin School

*University of Alberta - Master of Education*

My coursework and research have deepened my ability to lead with vision, foster professional collaboration, and respond to the increasingly diverse needs of our students and families. By engaging with evidence-based practices and current research, I have been able to bring forward strategies that encourage collaboration, shared responsibility, and collective efficacy. This has strengthened my ability to embody Visionary Leadership by co-creating clear, values-driven directions with staff, and to nurture trust and resilience within our school community.

**Ashleigh Murasiranwa**, Teacher, Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour School

*Yorkville University - Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology*

I've been able to apply what I'm learning directly into my classroom—whether it's recognizing signs of anxiety in students, using more effective communication strategies, or adapting lessons to better support neurodiverse learners. The coursework around trauma-informed practice, culturally responsive counselling, and the development of resilience has helped me build stronger, more trusting relationships with students, families, and colleagues. I'm more intentional in how I create a safe and inclusive space for all learners, and I feel better equipped to support students who are struggling. Ultimately, the program is giving me the tools to not only respond to student needs more effectively, but to also contribute meaningfully to our school community and support Division priorities like mental health, equity, and student success. I'm excited about the positive ripple effect this journey is already having in my classroom—and across the broader school community.

**Lisa Lei**, Teacher, Strathcona School

*University of Waterloo - Master of Mathematics for Teachers*

Over the past year, I have completed additional coursework focused on the teaching of math, which has deepened my content knowledge and refined my instructional strategies. This professional development enhances my ability to deliver engaging and effective math instruction in the classroom. Furthermore, it enables me to better support and mentor students in our math club as they prepare for future contests, fostering a culture of mathematical curiosity and achievement. These improvements contribute to stronger student outcomes, enrich the school's academic environment, and support the school division's commitment to high-quality, forward-thinking math education.

**Marija Murray**, Teacher, Braemar School

*University of Alberta - Master of Education*

Upon successfully completing the Reading Science Certificate program, I have emerged as a specialist in the science of reading research. This expertise will substantially enhance my abilities in my present position. I will continue to foster collaboration with Literacy Consultants within SLS and CLS, and actively engage in co-creating professional development sessions that disseminate the latest research-based insights to create greater teacher capacity. Moreover, I envision that this new knowledge will enable me to cultivate a shared language and comprehensive understanding within our EAL cohort regarding the processes by which English Language Learners develop literacy skills.

**Jillian Pasieka**, Teacher, Jasper Place School

*University of Alberta - Master of Education*

Pursuing the Master's in Education Policy with a specialization in Social Justice and International Education (SJI) at the University of Alberta represents a pivotal step in deepening my understanding of the complex structures shaping educational access, equity, and justice in Canada and globally. This program offered a unique and transformative lens to critically engage with and challenge the prevailing norms within educational systems—norms that often reinforce historical inequities and systemic oppression.

**Jillian Pidcock**, Teacher, Julia Kiniski School

*University of Alberta - Master of Education*

My research focussed on how to enhance teacher confidence in delivering Indigenous content in the K-3 Science classroom. This research gave me a better understanding of how to move forward, supporting both myself and other teachers through this difficult work. The themes that emerged from my research were: flipping the narrative, embracing the unknown, and the role of collaborative learning. I have already implemented numerous transformative changes in my practice and school.

**Erin Regnier**, Assistant Principal, Argyll Centre/Metro Continuing Education

*University of Alberta - Master of Education*

Participating in the Professional Improvement Program has meaningfully deepened my capacity as a school leader, particularly in the areas of equity, relational leadership, and community-building within online and alternative education contexts. Through coursework, research, and engagement with colleagues across the province, I have expanded my understanding of how to foster inclusive, student-centred learning environments aligned with Division priorities.

**Candice Short**, Teacher-Counsellor, Elder Dr. Francis Whiskeyjack School

*Kelowna College of Professional Counselling - Diploma of Applied Psychology and Counselling*

Completing the Diploma of Counselling program significantly enhanced my ability to support the mental health and well-being of students and staff, directly aligning with the Division's strategic plan. It allowed me to acquire evidence-based counselling techniques, including cognitive-behavioural and solution-focused

therapies, which are essential for providing effective and timely support. The training will enable me to help improve student outcomes by better identifying and responding to students' emotional needs, reduce barriers to learning, improve classroom behaviour, and foster a more positive and inclusive school environment.

**Teri Stowe**, Department Head, Metro/McNally School

*University of Alberta - Master of Education*

My research focus of supporting beginning teachers has given me a new lens on leadership. I now see myself as a bridge between experience and fresh perspective, and I'm committed to fostering a culture where novice teachers feel seen, supported, and empowered to grow. This work is already influencing how I contribute to mentorship and induction efforts within my school. Overall, this program has helped me become more reflective, collaborative, and strategic in my role as an educator.

**Christina Woodbridge**, Curriculum Coordinator, Victoria School

*Athabasca University - Open Applied Studies, Inclusive Learning*

The course has enhanced my ability to recognize and explain the characteristics, diagnostic processes, and theorized etiologies of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). I am now better equipped to identify and understand the diverse ways ASD presents across students and the impact it can have on learning, behavior, and social-emotional development. I have also learned how to critically evaluate and apply evidence-based practices and interventions, supporting individualized and effective planning for students with ASD. I now have a stronger foundation to guide conversations around communication strategies, social-emotional supports, assistive technologies, and long-term transition planning, including pathways to adulthood.

**Michael Zhang**, Interchange

*University of British Columbia - Master of Educational Technology*

I explored case studies on the use of simulations, data collection tools, and interactive platforms to promote deep conceptual understanding in STEM subjects. This has immediate application to Edmonton Public Schools' priority of improving student achievement in numeracy and scientific literacy. These practices not only engage learners more effectively, but also create more inclusive entry points for diverse learners, including English Language Learners and students requiring differentiated support. I am increasingly equipped to contribute to professional development initiatives around digital assessment and technology-integrated pedagogy. This aligns with Edmonton Public Schools' enhancing pathways for student success vision, by ensuring teachers are prepared to use technology as a tool for inclusion, equity, and innovation.