

Date	November 25, 2025
To	Board of Trustees
From	Ron Thompson, Superintendent of Schools
Subject	Funds for 2026-2027 Exempt Professional Improvement Program
Originator	Angela Anderson, Chief Human Resources Officer
Resource Staff	Renée Thomson
Reference	Division Strategic Plan

ISSUE

An allocation of funds from the 2026-2027 operating budget is requested to support the Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program. Through this program, exempt staff can access tuition and leave support for post-secondary coursework. 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 exempt staff and sharing knowledge and expertise. The request for a commitment of funds is made well in advance of the distribution of the funds to accommodate application and program admission processes.

RECOMMENDATION

That an allocation of \$140,000 from the 2026-2027 operating budget be approved for the Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program for the purpose of granting professional improvement leaves and tuition support to exempt staff for the 2026-2027 school year.

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 Exempt Staff Professional Improvement 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 exempt staff have the opportunity to apply for tuition and leave support to participate in professional improvement activities that are aligned with Division Strategic Plan 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 few years (Attachment II) are included in this report.

RELATED FACTS

- The program ensures that exempt staff members across the Division have access to opportunities that would serve to enhance their professional capacity and allow them to stay current with industry standards and evidence-based research.
- Support for professional development assists in the attraction of exempt staff to the Division and in the retention of those employees.
- Exempt staff have the opportunity to apply for support in January for courses that take place between July 1, 2026, and August 31, 2027, or in September for courses that take place between December 1, 2026, and August 31, 2027 (Attachment III).
- The application process for this program 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 identified areas of need in the Division. Additional considerations are the anticipated benefits to 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 2025-2026 Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program, requests for support from exempt staff varied as greatly as their roles in the Division.
- Based on the relative strength of the 2025-2026 applications for the January intake, six applicants were granted their full request for support and four applicants were granted partial support. All four applicants for the September intake were granted their full request for support.
- 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 an allocation amount of \$140,000 would be \$4,200, which is three per cent of the total allocation. This has not been a material factor for this program to date because funds have not been fully used.
- 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.

	Funds for Professional Learning - Exempt Staff
Decision Unit Budgets	Funds are allocated for staff professional learning within decision units.
Central Decision Units	Central decision units allocate funds for the delivery of targeted professional learning courses for staff. These include sessions offered through Curriculum and Learning Supports, Specialized Learning Supports, Technology and Information Management and Human Resources, among others.
Professional Improvement Program	Tuition and leave support is available to exempt staff through the Professional Improvement Program for post-secondary coursework aligned with the Division's identified areas of need.
Bursaries and Scholarships	Staff are encouraged to access support through bursary programs and to explore scholarship opportunities through their post-secondary institution and other community organizations.

CONSIDERATIONS and ANALYSIS

Based on the number of applications and the types of requests we have received over the past few years, it is anticipated that maintaining the allocation of funds for this program at the current level would adequately cover the requests for support in 2026-2027. There is a relatively small but growing pool of applicants to the Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program. Fluctuations in the support granted each year are significantly influenced by the nature of the requests for leaves and tuition support, as well as associated allowance and tuition costs.

A selection of statements from staff members who were granted support through the Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program has been included with this report (Attachment IV). Program participants reflected on the benefits of their professional learning and how it has been effectively integrated into their work responsibilities. Post-secondary professional learning, grounded in evidence-based research, is critical to building staff capacity and supporting student learning. We continue to see strong demand for support through the Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program.

NEXT STEPS

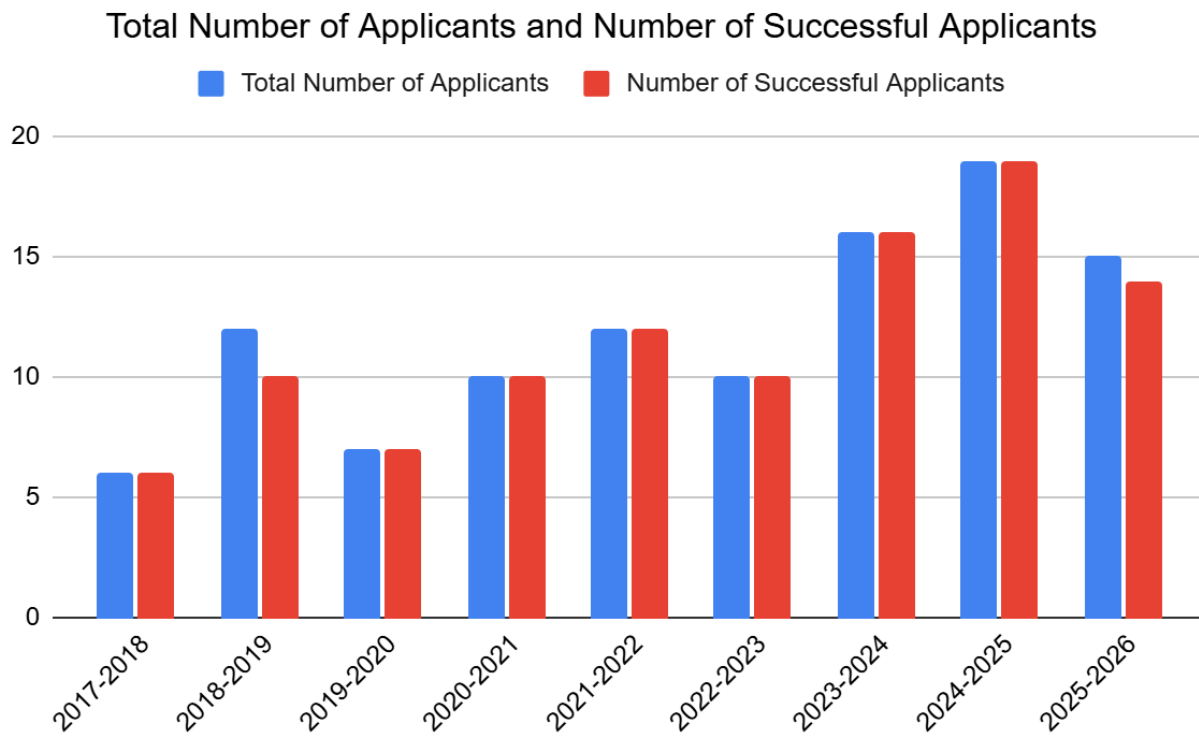
Upon approval of this recommendation, the program timelines for the application intake will be implemented (Attachment III).

ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I	Comparison by Year: Total Number of Applicants and Number of Successful Applicants
ATTACHMENT II	Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program History
ATTACHMENT III	Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program Timelines
ATTACHMENT IV	Selection of Reflective Statements: Benefits of Program Participation

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Comparison of Total Number of Applicants and Number of Successful Applicants		
Year	Total Number of Applicants	Number Successful
2017-2018	6	6
2018-2019	12	10
2019-2020	7	7
2020-2021	10	10
2021-2022	12	12
2022-2023	10	10
2023-2024	16	16
2024-2025	19	19
2025-2026	15	14



EXEMPT STAFF PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM HISTORY

YEAR	APPROVED ALLOCATION	APPROVED TOTAL LEAVE FTE	ACTUAL GRANTED FOR LEAVES	ACTUAL GRANTED FOR TUITION	TOTAL ACTUAL GRANTED FOR LEAVES & TUITION
2017-2018	\$150,000	0.644	\$47,129	\$39,304	\$86,433
2018-2019	\$150,000	0.600	\$47,147	\$52,902	\$100,049
2019-2020	\$150,000	0.440	\$32,699	\$37,730	\$70,429
2020-2021	\$150,000	1.000	\$67,572	\$30,450	\$98,022
2021-2022	\$140,000	0.216	\$19,564	\$58,327	\$77,891
2022-2023	\$140,000	0.00	\$0	\$77,065	\$77,065
2023-2024	\$140,000	0.00	\$0	\$54,830	\$54,830
2024-2025	\$140,000	0.300	\$10,229	\$79,185	\$89,414
2025-2026	\$140,000	0.080	\$4,648	\$60,042	\$64,690

PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM TIMELINE

JANUARY 2026 APPLICATION INTAKE (for courses that take place between July 1, 2026 and August 31, 2027)	Date
Exempt Professional Improvement Program announced on Division Staff News and application package available on Connect	October 31, 2025
Information meeting for interested staff (4:00 - 6:00 p.m., Google Meet)	December 2, 2025
Due date for applications	January 9, 2026
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 a committee of leadership staff 	November 3, 2025 - February 13, 2026
Review of applications	February 4 - 13, 2026
Compile background information with input from assessors	February 17 - March 6, 2026
Recommendation submitted for approval	March 13, 2026
Approval of leaves and tuition support	March 20, 2026
Communication of support granted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Applicants notified; letters and agreements sent to successful applicants ● Posted on Connect 	March 23 - 27, 2026

SEPTEMBER 2026 APPLICATION INTAKE (for courses that take place between December 1, 2026 and August 31, 2027)	Date
Due date for applications	September 18, 2026
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 a committee of leadership staff 	September 18 - October 2, 2026
Review of applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Application packages prepared for committee review ● Review of applications completed 	October 5 - 16, 2026
Compile background information with input from assessors	October 19 – 23, 2026
Recommendation submitted for approval	October 26, 2026
Approval of leaves and tuition support	October 30, 2026
Communication of support granted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Applicants notified; letters and agreements sent to successful applicants ● Posted on Connect 	November 2 - 6, 2026

**Selection of Reflective Statements: Benefits of Program Participation
2024-2025 Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program**

Ping Chung, Business Analyst, Human Resources

MacEwan University - Project Management Certificate

I've gained valuable skills and knowledge while at the same time staying current and up to date on the latest industry best practices, tools, and techniques.

Kim Demarino, Consultant, Labour Relations, Human Resources

NAIT - Certificate in Project Leadership

This comprehensive program has provided a solid framework to complement my practical experience, equipping me with valuable skills, tools, and techniques to enhance my capabilities. My commitment is to continuous growth as an HR Professional and to serve the Division effectively. The knowledge acquired through this series is directly transferable to my current responsibilities and will be practical in many other areas as well. By enhancing my skill set in the area of project management I will be able to apply a new skill that will in the end improve my effectiveness and build on Division Priority 1 - Build on outstanding learning opportunities for all students.

Nicole Hnatiuk, Occupational Therapy Consultant, Specialized Learning Supports

Boston University - Post-Professional Doctor of Occupational Therapy

Participation in the PIP deepened my knowledge of neurodiversity-affirming practice and its application in the classroom. This will translate to more engaging, inclusive, and effective learning experiences for my students. Additionally, the knowledge and insights I gained will allow me to support colleagues through professional collaboration more confidently and shared learning, contributing to a culture of continuous improvement in the Division.

Evan Keith, Speech Language Pathology Consultant, Specialized Learning Supports

University of Toronto - Advanced Literary Practices Certificate

After only a few sessions of the Advanced Literacy Practices course, I was implementing what I learned both when coaching/collaborating with educators and when working more directly with students. Examples include sharing more current research around phonological awareness with teachers (e.g., phonemic awareness > rhyming), weaving text and phonics into speech sound sessions, providing new materials to SLAs and sharing assessment tools and research with the SLPs on my team. I've already been connecting with an SLP who is not taking the course, and we have talked about a possible collaboration/Community of Practice with some SLPs and the Reading Specialists. After taking the course, I feel better equipped to explain the bridge(s) between speech, language and literacy and to advocate for the role of SLPs in literacy, as well as dig deeper with teachers in order to better support students who struggle with reading and writing.

Carolyn Sparrow, Speech Language Pathology Consultant, Specialized Learning Supports

Rocky Mountain University of Health Professionals - Doctor of Speech Language Pathology

During the 2024-25 school year, I accessed tuition support from the Division as I completed my Doctor of Speech-Language Pathology. Completing this program has allowed me the opportunity to research how best I

can support all staff as we collaborate to support children with language and language learning disorders. As many language disorders are considered to be hidden disorders, knowing how to better recognize and support these students alongside all other students in the classroom supports student success and staff satisfaction.

Mei Sun, Accountant Senior - Payroll, Financial Services

NAIT - Leadership Development Certificate

The Leading Self certificate courses have equipped me with a greater capacity for sound decision-making in high-pressure situations, improved my skills in managing priorities efficiently, and cultivated a more innovative mindset when addressing challenges. Consequently, I am better positioned to offer enhanced support to schools.

Alex Tonsi, Athletic Trainer, Ross Sheppard School

West Virginia University - Master of Science in Sport Coaching

My graduate coursework has enabled me to develop a critical understanding of the complexities and nuances involved in instruction, leadership, motivation, and communication. Completing coursework in the fields of motor skill acquisition, sport psychology, and the ethics of coaching has enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of how an interconnected, comprehensive knowledge base can best support students and staff in their holistic development and overall well-being. Through acquiring knowledge and critically reflecting on how it influences my position within the Division, I am excited to apply and share the knowledge I have gained with both staff and students, in hopes of continuing to develop beneficial learning opportunities and enhance physical and mental health. In the short term, the utilization of evidence-based recommendations enhances my ability to instruct students thoughtfully, thereby improving their experience through creating positive associations with exercise, activity, and overall well-being. In the long term, I hope to share knowledge with staff members to support continuous growth and meet the diverse needs of students in a physical activity context.

Tashi Malik, Human Resources Consultant, Human Resources

Canadian HR Academy - Certified Talent Management Practitioner Program (CTMP Designation)

Thank you to the Division for approving my Certified Talent Management Practitioner (CTMP) program application. The CTMP program is invaluable, providing participants with the tools and strategic thinking needed to enhance people management. My improved understanding of talent analytics will allow for more data-driven advice, enabling quicker responses to managers' staffing needs. Long term, the CTMP program will help me become a more strategic HR professional, as my expertise in talent management will enable me to build and enhance my professional value within the Division.