



EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Highlights of  
**CAREER PATHWAYS  
STAKEHOLDER  
FEEDBACK**

*Revised December 10, 2014*

# Highlights of Career Pathways Stakeholder Feedback

## Background

This report provides a summary of highlights from Edmonton Public Schools' Career Pathways Symposium, held in Edmonton on October 30, 2014. More than 300 members of the community (parents, external stakeholders, students, and staff) participated in the full day event. At the Symposium, Edmonton Public Schools staff presented the conceptual model for Career Pathways to participants, who were then invited to provide their thoughts and feedback on aspects of the model. This report also reflects feedback from the October 1, 2014 Edmonton Public Schools District Leadership Meeting (DLM), where almost 300 school principals and Central Services leaders discussed the model.

It was important for Edmonton Public Schools to solicit feedback from the various stakeholders because implementation of the model will need to be a collaborative endeavor to ensure mutually beneficial outcomes. Two overarching outcomes of the Career Pathways model are:

- building structures, direction, supports and opportunities for students, enabling them to complete high school with clear plans and possibilities for their futures, whether that be post-secondary studies, apprenticeship training, community living, or the world of work and,
- ensuring all students have the ability to implement, revise and adapt their plans throughout their lives in response to a rapidly changing world.

Symposium feedback was overwhelmingly positive with a few areas needing further clarification or constructive direction for the work ahead. We gathered approximately 1,500 pages of feedback. Analysis of feedback resulted in the identification of a number of themes, which are summarized in this report according to stakeholder groups, key topics and ideas.

## Participation

Attendees expressed a genuine enthusiasm for Edmonton Public Schools' willingness to present such an innovative model and excitement for the benefits they believed would result for students. The Symposium also resulted in the District having a long list of stakeholders wishing to become more involved, including those interested in further dialogue and consultation. There was a general consensus that the voices of students in the room were very appreciated and that we should continue to include them as the model rolls out.

## The Conceptual Model

There was widespread support for the model representing all students from kindergarten through to high school completion. Financial literacy, the social entrepreneurial emphasis, and opportunities for mentorship were highly supported aspects of the model. It was important for participants that the model be flexible enough to include all students and provide multiple opportunities and pathways for students to explore. Some felt the linear nature of the model didn't provide sufficiently for the variety of pathways available to students or for the flexibility students need in a rapidly changing world. As development of initiatives within the Career Pathways model progress, it is our intention to include

enhanced experiential opportunities for students, allowing them increased flexibility to develop their competencies. Overall, there was widespread support for having educators, students, parents, and external stakeholders working together and engaging in ongoing collaborative efforts in the best interests of students.

The biggest concern about the model was with the word “commitment” in representing the final stage of the model. Participants felt that it was too ‘scary,’ too ‘controlled’ or too ‘linear’ and that it did not speak to the reality of possible pathways. Many felt “readiness” would better reflect this aspect of the model as it would speak to being ready for the next steps that students may take as they transition from high school.

There were several requests to reconsider the title of the project, feeling ‘Career’ Pathways is perhaps too narrow or limiting. Through initiatives Edmonton Public Schools will undertake, we will ensure our definition and approach to careers is inclusive and reflects a broad perspective, providing students, regardless of their abilities and challenges, with flexibility for an uncertain future.

### **Equity**

Participants in the Symposium stressed the importance of developing equity of access and involvement for students regardless of demographics, socioeconomic status, ability level and aptitude, cultural background, existing school resources, and level of parental involvement.

### **Outcomes, Indicators and Measurements**

There was a general consensus that it would be important for us to know how we will measure and demonstrate success of implementing the model, and for us to ensure a broad definition of success for students. Participants identified numerous other ‘attributes’ of the successful post-high school student. Many suggestions revolved around notions related to competencies such as resilience including the ability to take risks, be adaptable and learn from failure, the ability to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity, the qualities of compassion and empathy, physical - mental - emotional - spiritual wellness, social awareness, persistence or grit, curiosity, and work ethic.

### **Educators**

Educators expressed great excitement about the possibilities the model provides. However, it is important to educators that the model be implemented slowly with sufficient support to ensure its success. They also felt they would need support in terms of identified staff positions to coordinate partnerships with business. Educators recommended we complete an inventory of initiatives already present in schools that are aligned with the model, making it easier to learn from one another and collaborate on initiatives. Educators also stressed it would be important to connect and embed Career Pathways initiatives with the existing curricular outcomes and competencies as outlined in the *Ministerial Order on Student Learning*.

### **Parents**

Parents felt the implementation of the Career Pathways model would give kids hope, keep doors open, and decrease anxiety about the future. They reported excitement in what their children would learn and

in “being able to see (their) child in the model.” They believed teachers would be able to integrate career discussions into class activities in ways they may not have considered in the past. It was important to parents that they be involved and stay informed so they can continue to track their child(ren)’s progress and be better able to support them on their journey(s).

### **External Stakeholders**

External stakeholders were highly supportive of the model and were eager to see it move forward. They want to be involved and said they’re ready to help out in a variety of ways. They praised the District for having the courage to begin such a forward thinking model for change and for inviting so many stakeholders into the conversation.

There was strong support for schools reaching out to industry and for industry reaching out to schools in order to collectively support our youth. Strong communication was stressed as essential for partnerships to work well. Development of a database of potential partnerships and supports for building partnerships coordinated through Central Services was viewed as a necessity, as was support and training for partners who are not used to working with children in a classroom setting. Careful development of partnerships to ensure alignment with the District’s Cornerstone Values will be essential in creating mutually beneficial relationships.

### **Students**

Students said how much they valued having mentors in their lives as well as equity of access and resources for all students. They also noted that increased flexibility of opportunity for them to make choices throughout school and for their futures was important to them. Students were very happy to be involved in the Symposium so their voices could be heard. They valued opportunities to give back to the local and global community while building fundamental skills, such as leadership, teamwork, and the ability to take risks and learn from mistakes. Some students said their parents would benefit from education alongside them and that teachers could serve as advocates if students felt their parents pushed them toward careers they didn’t feel fit them.

One area of our current school model students believed needed to change and improve to align with Career Pathways is the Career and Life Management (CALM) curriculum.

### **Feedback Related to Curricula and Programming**

In addition to educators, many other stakeholders noted the importance of identifying and sharing the initiatives going on in schools that already align with the Career Pathways model. Not seeing the initiative as an add-on for teachers, but rather integrating and embedding it into existing curriculum would enhance implementation of the model and relieve potential stress for teachers. Many ideas for exposing students to career pathways possibilities and developing skills and competencies were shared throughout the day. Career crawls, mini internships, volunteer experiences, career camps, shadow opportunities, supervised student clubs, lunch time talks, field trip experiences, genius hours, and alternate learning days were just some of the suggestions we heard.

## **Communication and Collaboration**

Communication and collaboration between all stakeholders will be essential for maximum success of this initiative. Opportunities to involve all stakeholders in ongoing conversation and to build strong relationships with one another was seen as desirable by the vast majority of participants. A need for a district communications team or committee was expressed in order to develop a strong communication plan to share information regarding progress, further development of the model, and opportunities for involvement. The importance of celebrating along the way, by sharing successes and learning from failures, was strongly communicated.

Developing a common understanding of terminology of the model will be important for a shared understanding of the work. Terms like career, entrepreneurship, success, resiliency, and financial literacy, as well as the competencies of an educated Albertan, will need to be clearly defined.

Communicating student growth and development of student portfolios, including provisions for goal setting, reflection, shifts/changes in focus will be important in order to demonstrate success of individual students as well as the model in general.

## **Actions Arising from the Symposium**

Within 45 days (by December 15, 2014):

1. All feedback from the Symposium (1,500 pages) analyzed, with themes and recommendations identified.
2. The visual representation of the model revised to reflect feedback from participants, e.g., the term “commitment” changed to “readiness,” and the final section of the model, covering Grades 10 - 12, adjusted to point slightly upward. Networking was also added as an essential element for success, post high school.
3. The District has allocated human and financial resources to support the development and implementation of the Career Pathways Model, including support for release time of school and central staff to work on various components of the Model. Kathy Muhlethaler, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, has been assigned to lead this work. A communications team has been created and will begin to develop a communications plan to keep all stakeholders apprised of developments related to Career Pathways.
4. The District has held preliminary discussions with The Learning Partnership and BMO about a pilot of the *Entrepreneurial Adventure Program*. Communication has gone out to elementary schools to allow them to express interest in piloting the program at the Grade 3 or 4 level beginning in January 2015. Thirteen classrooms will pilot this program between January and June.
5. School principals have received a survey about programs and initiatives in their schools now that relate to Career Pathways.
6. A database of Symposium participants created to involve all stakeholder groups in ongoing work. This database will be expanded upon as additional stakeholders have been identified.
7. All Symposium participants have received an email update about the Career Pathways Model, including a revised visual representation of the Model.

Within 90 days (by January 31, 2015):

8. Information sessions scheduled for principals and teachers in January about implementation of the Career Technology Foundations (CTF) curriculum, for Grades 5 to 9, in September 2015. A small committee of principals, teachers and a representative from Alberta Education created to plan and organize these sessions.
9. A high school committee established and a high school principal meeting held to discuss future direction for high school programming and implementation including dual credit strategies, RAP, CALM curriculum, work experience etc. Future meetings will involve collaboration with stakeholders.
10. Meetings with additional scholars and experts from Advanced Education and post-secondary institutions will continue.

Within 150 days (by March 31, 2015):

11. Mini-symposiums scheduled to share the Career Pathways Model with stakeholder groups who will be instrumental in providing specialized supports for First Nations, Metis and Inuit (FNMI) students, English Language Learners (ELL) and students with diverse and exceptional needs.
12. The overarching Career Pathways Advisory Council and Career Pathways District Steering Committee established. The Council will include members representing all stakeholder groups, including the Board of Trustees while the Steering Committee will include members from schools and central departments. The Council membership and terms of reference will be shared with Symposium participants.
13. Committees created to focus on different aspects of the model and provide recommendations and leadership for moving forward with implementation.
14. A comprehensive project plan (3 - 5 years) developed to implement the various components of the Career Pathways Model. The project plan will include key performance indicators, an evaluation framework, and identification of ongoing resources needed to carry out the plan. The request for ongoing resources will be considered by Trustees during the spring planning/budget process for the 2015-2016 school year.
15. Following the development of the project plan, a comprehensive communications plan for Career Pathways developed, which will include preliminary resources for further sharing and developing the model with all stakeholders and in all schools.