

December 8, 2022

Mr. Shane Getson, MLA
#18, 4708 Lac Ste. Anne Trail North
P.O. Box 248
Onoway, AB T0E 1V0

Dear Mr. Getson:

At the recent Career Education Task Force engagement session for the Alberta School Board Association, we had the opportunity to discuss career education and innovative learning opportunities for students. I want to take this opportunity to provide you with additional information about Career Pathways at Edmonton Public Schools. Career Pathways has been a Division priority over the last ten years and is a systemic approach to building career literacy.

The goal of [Career Pathways](#) is to provide students with a broad range of learning opportunities to prepare them for their next steps in life whether that be post-secondary, the world of work or involvement in their community; they are able to transition from high school to a life of dignity and fulfillment. Students develop a curiosity about the world around them and grow skills and competencies through rigorous and relevant projects, activities, and experiences connected to curricular outcomes. From Kindergarten through Grade 12, there are initiatives at every grade level to encourage transferable skills students need for the future. Career Pathways fosters growth and success for every student by supporting their journey from early learning through high school completion and beyond, and enhances public education through communication, engagement and partnerships.

Career Pathways spans across all of our Division schools and encompasses a number of innovative approaches and initiatives. Beginning in elementary school, students engage in a range of instructional approaches that challenge students to tackle real-world problems and connect students to the world beyond the classroom through their learning. Some of these approaches include:

- **Design thinking:** a creative process used in the field of design and engineering for solving problems and is a way for students to engage in real-world learning that utilizes the competencies needed in the world of work.
- **Project-Based Learning:** involves engaging students in authentic project work where they are collaboratively or independently solving problems as a means of learning curricular content deeply.
- **Inquiry Approach:** challenges students to ask questions that drive learning, exploration, and instruction. Students participate in authentic learning experiences in rich, collaborative environments, using competencies such as problem-solving, managing information and communication.

Edmonton Public Schools provides a wide array of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) related learning opportunities across grade levels. Some examples of this include:

- The Student Spaceflight Experiments Program (SSEP), a program run through the National Center for Earth and Space Science Education and the Arthur C. Clarke Institute for Space Education. This year, 900 Division students from Grade 6 to Grade 9 are designing and proposing microgravity experiments and participating in a formal, two-step proposal review and selection process similar to what scientists participate in to apply for research grants and funding. One experiment from Edmonton Public Schools will be sent to the International Space Station to be carried out by an astronaut! SSEP allows students to authentically immerse themselves in meaningful and authentic hands-on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) experiences and through the support of post-secondary mentors, students interact with research scientists to gain valuable feedback and insight into possible careers.
- A growing number of schools are developing makerspaces and/or portable maker carts. All recently opened schools have makerspaces. In addition to the materials and equipment schools may have, the Division has a wide variety of [Makerspace kits](#) that schools can access to support the integration of STEM-based learning into the curriculum. Using the kits helps teachers engage students in curricular-based projects that inspire them to collaborate, problem-solve, invent, tinker, explore, and discover using a variety of tools and materials. Makerspace activities challenge students to engage in the design process, to develop critical, computational and creative thinking skills, and to collaborate and communicate. Consultants provide professional learning sessions and offer coaching to support their use.
- Google Expeditions kits are available to schools to help students build understanding of and have experience with augmented reality.
- Thousands of students across the Division participate in [Hour of Code](#), an annual opportunity for teachers across the world to engage their students in coding.
- Edmonton Public Schools' Community Marketplace organizes teacher-facilitated interactions between community members and students. Sessions are designed as hands-on explorations of specific career pathways that are intended to link to curriculum, help students connect what they are learning in the classroom to the world around them, and expose them to a variety of future possibilities. A wide variety of STEM-related sessions are offered through the [Community Marketplace](#). Community Marketplace is very popular; 200 learning opportunities have been requested by schools so far this year.
- Augmented and virtual reality experiences are being offered through the use of [zSpace](#) which combines elements of Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality to create lifelike experiences that are immersive and interactive. Units are being used at high schools across the Division to support learning in the following courses:
 - Automotive Service Technician
 - Community Care
 - Health Care Services
 - STEM alternative program at W.P. Wagner School

Edmonton Public Schools Board of Trustees is pleased to have approved a new Division [STEM](#) alternative program that began in the 2012–2022 school year. W.P Wagner (Grade 10 to Grade 12) and Thelma Chalifoux (Grade 7 to Grade 9) schools will offer the immersive STEM alternative program to students

from Grade 7 to Grade 12. Hillcrest School (Grade 7 to Grade 9) and Elmwood School (Kindergarten to Grade 6) will offer the STEM alternative program to students beginning in the 2023–2024 school year.

Campus EPSB

Specific to high school, [Campus EPSB](#) is designed to provide students with another way to earn high school credits and industry credentials, get ahead of their studies or prepare for post-secondary. Campus EPSB semestered opportunities allow students to travel to another high school and immerse themselves in a career pathway of their interest for three to four blocks of the day.

One example of a Campus EPSB course is Introduction to Electrical and Pipe Trades, where students attend the course at an industry site to gain skills in various aspects of the pipe trades, including plumbing, steam fitting, pipe fitting, gas fitting, B-pressure welding and sprinkler fitting. Students will also gain skills in various aspects of the exciting electrical trade. This course will be offered in collaboration with [The Educational Partnership Foundation](#) (TEPF), a not-for-profit organization that partners with world class trades training facilities and journey person instructors to provide exciting opportunities in the trades. In this opportunity, students attend training at the Electrical Industry Training Centres of Alberta and the Alberta Pipe Trades College.

Another exciting opportunity enabled through Campus EPSB is the Aviation course. Offered at one of our Division high schools, this course allows students to explore careers related to aviation, including ground support, operations, maintenance and travel and tourism. Students who take the Aviation course participate in ground school, train in a flight simulator, gain drone experience, take comprehensive industry exams, and participate in industry mentorship opportunities.

In total, there are nine different Campus EPSB courses offered across Division high schools or at industry sites with a plan to continue to expand Campus EPSB opportunities for students.

We are also pleased to offer dual credit, dual enrolled learning opportunities for students to earn high school credits that support graduation requirements while also earning credits toward a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree while still in high school. Students across our high schools are able to access dual credit opportunities as part of the Campus EPSB framework.

Because we know that goal-setting is critical to good career planning, Edmonton Public Schools utilizes myBlueprint, an online, interactive education and career planning tool that includes e-portfolios, goal-setting and career exploration for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. This tool is available to every student in the Division and allows them to learn about their interests, related pathways and occupations, and to begin to set goals and consider their own career planning. So far this year more than 40,000 students have logged into myBlueprint.

While we are exceptionally proud of our range of excellent learning opportunities for our students, we have to acknowledge there are barriers that prevent us from being able to fully realize the type of opportunities we would like to provide for our students. Some of these barriers include:

- Under the new funding framework, Alberta Education no longer provides Tier 5 Credit Enrolment Unit (CEU) funding, which means there is no longer targeted, sustainable funding for dual enrolled, dual credit courses. Provincial start-up and enhancement grant dollars are available for school authorities, but the use of these funds is limited to only supporting new dual credit opportunities or for supplies, equipment and resources. The loss of targeted dual credit funding means that the

burden of supporting the ongoing delivery of dual credit courses, including tuition cost and coordination now must be absorbed by school divisions.

- As you may be aware, our school division faces significant challenges related to school space, particularly for high schools. Our vision, as previously mentioned in this letter, is to provide specialized career-focused programming across all Division high schools. This means that if a student's high school does not have a specialized facility, such as an industrial kitchen, and their career aspirations or passions include this pathway, they would need to take a Culinary Arts course at another high school. When a high school is full, it reduces or eliminates the ability of students to enroll in a school other than their designated school to access specialized facilities that support career-related programming.
- In order to provide the types of specialized programming needed to fully embrace career education, our high schools need staff that are both certificated and licensed journeypersons. Finding qualified candidates to deliver and sustain these important programs is challenging.

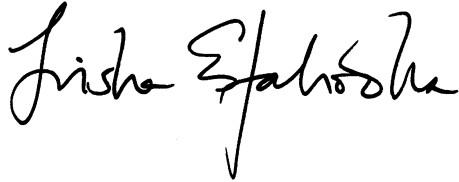
There are a number of solutions that would assist school divisions such as Edmonton Public Schools in providing specialized programming related to career education, including:

- Funding support to provide programming on an alternative schedule, such as evenings and weekends, to increase access to Division sites with specialized equipment and facilities. Additionally, provincial funding to provide more high school spaces for both current and future high school students is also strongly needed.
- Reinstatement of targeted and sustainable funding to support dual enrolled, dual credit courses. The provision of sustainable funding for dual enrolled courses would enable us to provide and expand dual credit programming that meets both student interests and addresses labour market demands. One example would be the educational assistant pathway. Edmonton Public Schools, not unlike other school authorities across the province, is experiencing a shortage of qualified educational assistants. With sustainable dual credit funding, our Division could work with a post-secondary institution to provide the educational assistant program to students interested in this pathway. This would provide our students with a seamless transition into a career, reduce the burden of post-secondary costs for students, and address the shortage of qualified educational assistants many school divisions are experiencing.
- Enhanced access to certificated staff who are also licensed journeypersons; this could be enabled through provincial fast-tracking of credentials.
- Funding for specialized facilities such as a Skills Centre. This model would see a dedicated space with specialized facilities and staff to provide a broad range of apprenticeship pathways programming to students. A model such as this would increase access to specialized facilities and programming and facilitate access to dual credit apprenticeship programs for students. Industry partnerships could be pursued which would provide mentoring, connections to industry and potential job opportunities for students.

Our Board continues to be concerned with the expansion of charter schools. The funding of collegiate and charters is only benefiting some children, not all, in the way that public schools can. The approach must be equitable. As a Board, we continue to advocate for investing in a system that improves access to an increasing number of students.

We appreciated the opportunity to engage with the Career Education Task Force, and would welcome the opportunity to talk with you further about the exciting work of Edmonton Public Schools, our focus on Career Pathways and our support for a strong public education system. We look forward to engaging in a further conversation .

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Trisha Estabrooks". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Trisha Estabrooks
Board Chair
Edmonton Public Schools

- c. Adriana LaGrange, Minister, Alberta Education
- Marilyn Dennis, President, Alberta School Boards Association
- Dr. Vivian Abboud, Chief Executive Officer, Alberta School Boards Association
- Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools, Edmonton Public Schools