

**DATE:** June 5, 2018

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT:** Strategic Plan Update: Building Staff Capacity and Wellness: Supporting Staff Through Their Career Journey

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**RESOURCE**

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## ISSUE

The purpose of this Strategic Plan Update report is to provide the Board of Trustees with an overview of efforts being taken in support of Priority 2, Goal Three: Building Capacity Through a Culture of Collaboration and Distributed Leadership with the outcome that staff who are supported through access to professional development, awareness of career opportunities and development of positive relationships and culture tend to stay with an organization, promote the benefits of working for the organization to others and are more engaged in their work and the goals of the organization.

## BACKGROUND

In 2014, Edmonton Public Schools formally launched its District Strategic Plan for the 2014-2018 term. The District Strategic Plan has three priority areas with supporting goals and outcomes. The plan provides common direction and alignment between the work of the Board of Trustees, the Superintendent of Schools and District staff. The plan serves as the foundation for a District culture of evidence-based decision making, assurance and accountability.

To demonstrate the District's commitment to transparency and accountability, Strategic Plan Update reports were introduced in 2016–2017 as an extension of the Annual Education Results Report (AERR). The reports are intended to provide the Board of Trustees with detailed progress towards the goals and outcomes of our Strategic Plan.

## CURRENT SITUATION

This Strategic Plan Update report reflects the work of schools and central services in support of building staff capacity and wellness and is in direct response to Priority 2 Goal Three of the 2014-2018 District Strategic Plan.

## KEY POINTS

Strategic Plan Update reports, introduced in 2016-2017, provide an extension of the AERR.

The attached report is focused on the District's work in support of building staff capacity and wellness.

## ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I Strategic Plan Update: Building Staff Capacity and Wellness: Supporting Staff Through Their Career Journey

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# Strategic Plan Update:

Building Staff Capacity and  
Wellness: Supporting Staff  
Through Their Career Journey

June 5, 2018

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## INTRODUCTION

The efforts highlighted in this report reflect the District's commitment to high quality teaching, learning and working environments, which are at the heart of student success. On September 30, 2017, our student enrolment was 98,914 students. The number of staff required to support these students on their educational journey? Approximately a Full Time Equivalent of 8,645 staff made of up more than 9,000 employees.

The work to recruit, hire, onboard, support and provide ongoing professional growth and development for a dynamic and diverse workforce of 9,000 plus employees is a complex shared responsibility. The following Strategic Plan update report focuses on the District's efforts in support of this work and reflects Priority 2, Goal Three of the District Strategic Plan: Building Capacity Through a Culture of Collaboration and Distributed Leadership.

Research consistently shows that staff who are supported through access to professional development, awareness of career opportunities and development of positive relationships and culture tend to stay with an organization, promote the benefits of working for the organization to others and are more engaged in their work and the goals of the organization.

This report is framed around the lifecycle of a District employee—starting with when they join Edmonton Public Schools until they exit the organization. The report will highlight the variety of supports in place to build staff capacity and wellness and will highlight how this support is provided in a collaborative way that recognizes the uniqueness of our site-based model.

The District's 9,000 plus staff belong to one of five staff groups. Over their career, staff may move between groups as they pursue different career opportunities.

- Custodial staff—The custodial staff group includes about 700 staff members filling roles as head custodians, custodians, custodial assistants, utility custodians, charge hands, custodial technicians, relief custodians and spare custodians. Staff in this group play an integral part in creating welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy learning and working environments.
- Exempt staff—Exempt staff fill a broad range of roles in areas such as Finance, Human Resources and District Technology, as well as health professional consulting roles in Inclusive Learning, such as occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech language pathologists. Approximately 690 staff fall into the exempt staff group. These roles provide a variety of supports integral to school operations.
- Maintenance staff—Maintenance staff are skilled in a variety of trades such as welding, carpentry, electrical and painting. The approximately 300 maintenance staff play a critical role in maintaining District infrastructure.
- Support staff—Support staff include about 2,300 staff performing a variety of roles such as administrative assistants (AAs), educational assistants (EAs), technicians and food preparers that provide critical support in both schools and central departments.
- Teachers—Teachers provide direct classroom instruction to support the success of District students. They also fill other specialized roles that provide direct support to schools. Approximately 5,800 teachers work with the District.

## NEW STAFF TO THE DISTRICT

The District invests significant time and effort to recruit high quality staff. Our recruiting processes involve multiple stakeholders, provide fair and equitable opportunities to all potential candidates and are structured to select the individuals most suited to a specific role based on key skill and competency requirements. The growth in student enrolment experienced by the District over the past several years, as well as the aging demographics of our current staff, have resulted in recruitment of staff being a key area of focus. As an example, 46.9 per cent of custodians and 43.2 per cent of administrative assistants are age 55 or older. Demographics such as these have necessitated a significant focus on recruitment and training to ensure District needs are met.

Foundational to quality teaching and learning is the role of the certificated teacher. The District works closely with a variety of educational institutions to create awareness of the District as an employer of choice and encourage applications of new teachers. In 2016-2017, the District committed to 1,875 teaching contracts. The number of contracts for 2017-2018 to date is 1,822. In 2016-2017, 289 of these contracts were new continuing contracts and 494 were probationary contracts. In 2017-2018, 362 contracts were new continuing contracts and 491 were probationary contracts. The balance of contracts issued are interim or temporary in nature.

The work to attract and hire new teaching staff is responsive to the various areas of programming and specialization reflected across District classrooms. An excellent example of this specialization is the work to support the recent expansion of the District's early years programming. In 2017-2018, the District added 13 new Pre-Kindergarten sites in North Edmonton. We now have 31 Pre-Kindergarten sites with 1,611 students (October 2017 enrolment). Thirty-two teachers were hired into new contracts to teach in Pre-Kindergarten classrooms.

Equally important is the role substitute teaching staff play within the District. Given the collaborative focus of the District, and opportunities provided through the Classroom Improvement Fund (CIF) and the Equity Fund to support the cost of teacher release time, the demand for supply teachers has continued to increase. In the 2017-2018 school year as of the end of March, there have been 57,052 requests for supply teachers, a 4.5 per cent increase from the same time period in the 2016-2017 school year. As of March 30, 2018, 690 new supply teachers have been activated, bringing the supply roster to 1,620 teachers.

Quality teaching and learning is dependent upon having both great teachers and support staff working together in support of student success. To help identify areas of need, the District analyzes relevant data and this information helps to form the basis for strategies and initiatives. As an example, the shifting dynamics of District classrooms, coupled with increased dollars available through the Equity Fund and CIF, created an need and opportunity to recruit new educational assistants. Recruitment and Staffing held three open houses for potential educational assistants. The most recent session, held over two days with five information sessions, attracted 426 participants interested in employment opportunities with the District.

Supply support and custodial staff also play a vital role in the District by filling in for permanent staff who are absent from work for a variety of reasons including, professional development opportunities, collaborative work, personal leaves, illness and injury. As with substitute teachers, the demand for supply support staff has also continued to increase. As of the end of March 2018, there were 6,261 more jobs compared to the same time period last year, an increase of 20.8 per cent. Increases to supply support staff needs are the result of a variety of factors; including increasingly complex classroom needs, collaborative work, professional development and support for staff wellness. Access to the Classroom Improvement Fund and District Equity Fund allocations have supported the District's ability to provide additional support staff to help meet school needs. As of March 30, 2018, 291 new supply support staff and 70 new custodial staff have been hired.

The District's work to find new and effective ways to recruit staff are applied across all staff groups in our efforts to attract quality employees to meet the employment demands of the organization.

## ENGAGING WITH POST-SECONDARIES

As part of our strategic efforts to attract and retain quality staff, Recruitment and Staffing works closely with our post-secondary partners to hire the most qualified staff to the District. We have developed positive working relationships with the Bredin Institute, Campbell College, Concordia University, King's College, Lethbridge, Norquest, Red Deer and Lakeland Colleges, MacEwan University, Portage College, University of Alberta and Yellowhead Tribal College to support hiring across several staffing groups or areas of expertise.

Some examples of these partnerships are outlined below.

We work closely with the University of Alberta, Concordia University and King's College to influence their graduating teachers to see our District as an employer of choice. Key initiatives that support this include the following:

- Staff from Human Resources attend career fairs and give presentations about the District at various student events.
- During the 2017-2018 school year, schools hosted 916 pre-service teachers from post-secondary institutions. These teachers are supported by a District mentor teacher. Student teachers in a District placement who are identified as being exemplary or a high potential teacher by their mentor teacher can have a formal observation, debrief session and written summary by the school principal. This early identification brings a teacher's application to the attention of District teacher staffing consultants for expedited screening and interviewing.
- Up front probationary contracts are offered to top teaching talent in areas of District need in order to secure them for the following school year. These are contracts that provide an offer of employment prior to the identification of a specific position. Targeted areas of need include specialization in areas such as: second languages, music and teachers who have the skills and abilities to work with students requiring specialized supports and services.

We are working closely with MacEwan University and Norquest College to encourage students from a number of their programs to join our District. To this end, we have undertaken the following initiatives:

- Attended career information sessions targeting students from the Special Needs Educational Assistant Program, Early Learning, Child and Youth Care and Nursing.
- Participated, in conjunction with MacEwan University's Career Development Team, in interview coaching sessions for students from the Special Needs Educational Assistant Program.
- Provided an in-class presentation to second year students of the Therapy Assistants Program. This is in response to the increasing need for Speech Language Pathology Assistants (SLPA) in our Pre-Kindergarten Programs.
- Attended a career fair at Norquest College targeting students from the following programs: Licensed Practical Nurses, Early Learning, Community Support Workers and Administrative Professionals.

To support new teacher preparedness, the District collaborated with the University of Alberta this spring to host three conversations to gain input from teachers, principals and central leaders. These conversations focused on the current state of teacher preparedness, identified gaps in teacher preparedness, if any, and defined improvements that post-secondary institutions can make to prepare beginning teachers for today's classrooms. This input will help inform work the University is undertaking to review their program and will also serve as an important source of feedback for the District to understand how we can better support our new teachers for their careers in the classroom.

## PREPARING STAFF FOR THEIR CAREER WITH THE DISTRICT

Given the number of new staff joining the organization and the research support for the effective onboarding of new staff as a critical success factor in their retention, this has been an area of focus for the District.

Effective onboarding includes items such as:

- Orientation to the organization addressing areas such as key policies, organizational structure, the District Strategic Plan and values, as well as communication tools and core systems.
- Orientation to the role addressing key responsibilities, role specific systems and processes.
- Orientation to the team and other key stakeholders to build relationships that support the collaborative work of the District.

The Human Resources, Career Transitions team coordinates and hosts a full-day District New Staff Orientation which includes a morning *Welcome* session, and an afternoon *Changing the Conversation* session facilitated by the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Unit. This day serves as an opportunity for new staff to receive a formal welcome to the District, network with colleagues, learn more about Edmonton Public Schools and participate in diversity sensitivity training.

By participating in a District Staff Orientation day, a new District employee would acquire the following:

- Review of the District's Mission, Vision, Priorities, Cornerstone Values and Strategic Plan.
- Review of the District's organizational and governance structure, key communication tools and core operating systems.
- Overview of District policies and regulations related to ensuring all staff members contribute to developing a welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy environment for all students and staff.
- Professional learning intended to deepen the employee's understanding of the District's First Nations, Métis, and Inuit student population.
- Training to enhance understanding and awareness around how appropriate language and strategies promote inclusiveness and respect for everyone.
- Overview of the supports, services and benefits employees can access, as well the expectations related to their employment.

To date, during the 2017-2018 school year, 421 staff have participated in one of 12 New Staff Orientation sessions. New staff orientation sessions are offered to new staff on a voluntary basis. New educational assistants, custodians and supply teachers often attend a customized orientation session specific to their role in place of these more general sessions. Feedback from new staff also indicates that a large part of orientation happens in the school environment.

In addition to these broad orientation sessions made available to all staff groups, the District offers role specific orientation for custodians, educational assistants, administrative assistants, teachers and substitute teachers.

- District support staff are provided with a comprehensive orientation to their role within the District at the beginning of their career with Edmonton Public Schools.
- Supply support staff with office duties attend a one-day orientation, followed by opportunities to take District software training.
- Supply educational assistants participate in a five-day orientation, which includes Nonviolent Crisis Intervention training.

- Supply custodial staff participate in two days of orientation followed by two weeks of on-site training. Supply custodial staff are also required to complete the WHMIS course and have the opportunity to apply for the Building Operator Certificate course.

Additionally, the District continues to explore ways to build staff capacity and prepare new staff for the complexities of the classroom. Two examples of this include:

- August 2017, 99 new educational assistants participated in an Educational Assistant Summer Institute hosted collaboratively by Human Resources and Inclusive Learning staff. As well as the five days of regular orientation, these staff had an opportunity to build skills and awareness in subjects such as Emergent Literacy, Self-Regulation and Positive Behaviour Supports.
- August 2017, 36 teachers attended the first full-day District substitute teacher orientation day.

The following chart provides an overview of the orientation sessions held during the current school year.

Staff Group	Orientations as of March 2018	Participants
Administrative Assistants (1 day)	11	31
Custodians (2 days)	6	83
Educational Assistants (5 days)	12 (excluding the Summer Institute)	198
Other: food preparers, lab techs, library techs, hearing interpreters (1/2 day)	10 Included in the Support Staff Orientations	17
Substitute Teachers	1	36

New teachers to the District receive support through the Teacher Induction Program (TIP). In recent years this program was offered only to teachers on probationary contracts. This year, as a result of CIF, three new teacher mentors were added to expand this support to teachers in long-term temporary contracts. Through a collaborative process, TIP welcomes new teachers to the profession and/or Edmonton Public Schools. This mentorship program uses a non-evaluative, collaborative approach that supports the development and growth of teachers and is aligned with the Teaching Quality Standard. Benefits of the program include working alongside an experienced teacher mentor to build and refine skills, accelerated professional learning to provide optimal student learning opportunities and increased confidence and awareness through self-reflection. Currently, 403 teachers are participating in this program and 1,459 mentor visits have taken place.

During the 2017-2018 school year, the TIP Team worked with Research and Data consultants to develop and administer a survey to teachers eligible to participate in TIP. The purpose of the survey was to better understand why beginning teachers were choosing to participate in TIP and their motivation for doing so, the strengths of TIP as well as how to improve it and how teachers develop professionally outside of TIP. Findings from the survey have indicated the following:

- The top reason respondents chose to participate in TIP was because they appreciated the opportunity to have non-evaluative and confidential professional conversations, followed closely by



the enjoyment of collaborating and networking with their colleagues and the opportunity to have a mentor teacher to ask questions and receive feedback to grow in their practice.

- The top reason respondents chose not to participate was they felt they had other supports in their school or catchment, followed by them feeling that they had other commitments and they were experienced teachers.
- Of the three supports offered through the program (mentorship, learning seminars and online resources), the most accessed was mentorship. Participants commented positively about their experience with their mentor. One teacher wrote, “My mentor is an amazing resource and source of encouragement and support. The program, overall, provides valuable information, resources and opportunities for networking that prove invaluable for new teachers or teachers coming from out of district. Although there is always much room for growth, I am already a better teacher due to this great program.”

Mentorship is one of the additional ways new staff in other staff groups are supported. In addition to the mentorship provided to teachers through TIP, mentorship plays a key role in building the capacity of educational assistants, administrative assistants and custodians. To complement staff orientations, the Career Transition mentors (AA, custodial, EA) provide mentorship and coaching to staff who are new to the District and/or new to their roles. The goal of this learning partnership is to enhance learning through best-practice modelling, goal-setting, resource sharing, encouragement and ongoing timely support.

The District has three administrative assistant mentors who support new and existing administrative assistants. In the 2017-2018 school year, the administrative assistant mentors provided 515 job-embedded mentoring sessions at 99 schools.

The District also has three educational assistant mentors. These individuals provide job-embedded support to new and experienced educational assistants. Once new EAs become temporary bi-weekly, they receive an onsite welcome visit from an EA mentor. By the end of March, the EA mentor team completed 84 welcome visits and facilitated 223 mentoring sessions.

The District has two custodial mentor positions whose primary role is to provide mentorship and coaching support to head custodians who are new to their role and responsibilities. To date, 185 mentor visits supported 11 new head custodians, 28 head custodians and 11 other custodial staff.

While there are many programs and supports for new staff offered through Human Resources, effective onboarding needs to be a holistic, phased in, organization-wide approach. Schools and decision units are key partners in ensuring that the District’s deliberate orientation efforts serve as the first step towards new staff being successful in their role. Within the first few months, the goal of the process is to ensure that employees feel welcomed, comfortable, prepared and supported, thereby improving their engagement and reducing the time it takes them to contribute to the organization’s goals.



Data from the 2017 District Feedback Survey indicates that new staff (teachers and educational assistants *with less than two year's experience* with the District) are feeling supported in their professional development and growth, as well as their career development. Staff also feel that formalized coaching and mentoring are effective in enhancing their professional growth.

Question	Educational Assistants	Teachers
Edmonton Public Schools supports employee professional development and growth.	96% agree or strongly agree	97.9 % agree or strongly agree
To what extent do you agree or disagree that formalized coaching and mentoring are effective in enhancing your professional growth?	85.4% agree or strongly agree; while 7.6% don't know/unsure	85% of those who responded to this question agree or strongly agree
Career Development Opportunities are available to me within the District.	88% agree or strongly agree; while 6% don't know/unsure	82.5% agree or strongly agree; while 14.6% don't know/unsure

\*District Feedback Survey 2017: teachers and educational assistants *with less than 2 years experience* with the District

The Career Transitions team is currently leading work to review best practices in employee orientation and exploring ways the District can enhance its approach to orienting staff. A key area of focus is increasing consistency in the new employee experience by leveraging technology to provide more timely access for all new staff to information, resources and the specific supports that are available to new employees.

## EMPLOYEE SUPPORTS

Through our relationship with The Alberta School Employee Benefits Plan (ASEBP), District employees are provided with comprehensive benefits coverage, including general health such as dental, vision and pharmaceutical coverage and extended health coverage for needs such as physiotherapy, massage, ambulance, psychology etc. Additionally, the District, through ASEBP, offers health spending accounts as a flexible complement to regular group benefits, employee and family assistance, loss of life and disability benefits designed to help employees manage their health journey throughout their careers with Edmonton Public Schools.

Through ASEBP, the District's Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) provides a variety of online resources, as well as direct counselling. EFAP assistance comes at no cost to the employee and covers a wide range of supports or topics such as:

- career transition
- financial and legal planning
- childcare and parenting
- grief/bereavement
- stress and anxiety
- family and marital counselling
- career or pre-retirement planning
- life transitions
- nutrition or weight management

EFAP information is shared with new staff in the orientation session and new employee information packages. Through a variety of ongoing communication channels, EFAP services are communicated and promoted to employees throughout the organization. EFAP is also promoted and services are reviewed with District employees if they find themselves in a situation that requires contact with Employee Health Services.

Over the past several years, we have seen increasing awareness of this program, resulting in an increase in use. Utilization rates have increased to 8.53 per cent (796.17 new cases) in 2017 from 6.74 per cent (622.5 new cases) in 2016.

Additionally, staff wellness has been promoted through the Healthy Living Program that has been offered in partnership with ASEBP. This program promotes staff wellness and provides strategies to support individual employee action steps to improve levels of health and wellness. Over the past year, we have gathered feedback relating to this program and are exploring ways to refine it to ensure it is meeting District needs and circumstances.

The District has a dedicated team of service oriented Ability Consultants and Occupational Health and Safety Consultants who make up the Employee Health Services department within Human Resources. The team strives to passionately support and enhance our employees' experience during short-term disability leaves and ensure our District facilities remain a safe and welcome environment for all District staff, students and public. This team supports employees who have been away for medical reasons to facilitate a successful return to work.

In the 2017-2018 school year, the District introduced an Earned Day Off Program for exempt staff. This program provides an opportunity for eligible exempt staff to work extra time every day in order to be able to take a day off. The program works on a three week cycle and is a tactic to support flexibility that will help maintain our competitiveness with other employers and position the District as an employer of choice. While we have not yet completed a formal evaluation of the program, feedback has been positive. In the 2017-2018 school year, vacation bonus and family illness days were replaced with personal days, again providing more flexibility and equity regarding time. Our collective agreements include clauses that provide family illness or family needs leave to support employees further in balancing work and personal needs.

One of the other areas in which the District promotes a healthy and safe working environment is through our administrative regulations. We have developed administrative regulations on Respectful Working Environments, Staff Code of Conduct and Violence in the Workplace that set the expectations for behaviour and outline processes to address any issues that arise. Our team of Staff Relations professionals provide expertise, guidance and advice regarding these processes.

The District has made a commitment to providing a healthy and safe working environment and to exploring ways to promote staff wellness.

As part of the District's work to build our reputation as an employer of choice and to support ongoing recruitment and retention needs, we have developed and begun implementation of a three-year PeopleSoft Roadmap. In 2016-2017, Human Resources initiated collaborative work with Finance and District Technology to build the roadmap. The finalized roadmap was approved by the District Support Team in the spring of 2017. Work commenced in the fall of 2017 and is funded through District surplus dollars.

This work will enhance the candidate and employee experience and will provide the tools and supports expected for an organization of our size and complexity. As this work progresses, it will also build capacity within the Human Resources team, streamline processes for schools and employees, as well as provide access to the data, automation and systems integration required to meet ongoing needs. Once complete, system enhancements will increase functionality, accessibility and streamline processes. The projects in year one will cover five themes: HR Security and Governance, People Update Manager, Business Process Review

(BPR), Recruitment and Staffing, External Applicants and Mobile Capability for Self-Service. During the 2017-2018 year, Human Resources has also worked collaboratively with Finance and District Technology to look at how we integrate across systems such as PeopleSoft, E-Biz and Archibus, as part of an enterprise approach to our work.

## ONGOING DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

The needs of the District continue to evolve, requiring new skills and approaches to support the success of our students. One of the ways we build capacity is through providing staff access to ongoing professional development opportunities.

### Teaching Staff

Teachers have many opportunities to access professional learning. The following is an overview of just some of the ways teachers are supported by the District in their ongoing growth and development:

- In 2016-2017, 90 teachers were granted tuition and/or leave support through the Clause 23 Professional Improvement Program to pursue post-secondary coursework. In 2017-2018, 99 teachers were granted support, for the 2018-2019 school year, 104 teachers have been granted support. Over the past few years, requests for support through the Clause 23 Professional Improvement Program have been primarily for masters programs related to leadership, counselling, literacy, special needs and curriculum. The number of requests for support for leadership programs increased from 16 to 40 between 2015-2016 and 2018-2019.
- In 2016-2017, 45 teachers were provided tuition support through the District's Teacher Development Program to participate in 69 courses. To date in 2017-2018, 78 teachers have been supported to participate in 26 different courses. The courses are related to second languages, mathematics and District priorities (English Language Learners (ELL), special needs, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, Career and Technology Studies (CTS), literacy assessment and diversity).
- Since 2014, the District has provided the Alberta Teachers Association (ATA) with an annual allocation to support the Pilot Project on Staff Development Fund. Through this fund, District teachers have had the opportunity to access support for a broad range of professional learning activities. In 2016-2017, 554 individual teachers and 135 groups of teachers received support through this fund. To date in 2017-2018, 368 individual teacher applications and 136 applications from groups of teachers have been approved for support.
- The District-wide common professional development days introduced in the Pilot Project on the Revised School Calendar, and continued during the recent Memorandum of Agreement, have supported a more coordinated approach to professional development of teachers.
- A significant amount of teacher professional learning takes place through opportunities for collaborative work and professional development offered through a teacher's school and catchment area. Many teachers also participate in a range of professional learning activities offered outside the District.

### Exempt Staff

The District's exempt staff group consists of a variety of diverse roles, resulting in a range of professional development needs.

- To help offer opportunities reflecting this diversity of professional learning need and interest, a pilot program related to tuition and leave support was initiated for exempt staff. In 2016-2017, five exempt staff members were granted tuition and/or leave support. Six exempt staff were granted support in 2017-2018 and eight have been granted support for 2018-2019. The support granted

allowed participating exempt staff to pursue a diverse range of post-secondary coursework specific to their role in the District. This program has been moved out of its pilot phase and will now be available on an ongoing basis to exempt staff. The recent presentation to the Board of Trustees by members of the Exempt Liaison committee highlighted the importance of this program to exempt staff.

- Exempt staff also participate in District professional development activities based on their role, a variety of department organized and supported professional development, as well as relevant out of District professional development opportunities.
- A number of exempt staff members are active participants in the District's Leadership Development Framework.

## **Custodial Staff**

District custodial staff are provided many opportunities for professional growth over the course of their career. The following are examples of the supports that were provided over the last two school years.

- New in 2017 was the Custodial Leadership Preparation Program. As indicated previously, a number of initiatives have been undertaken in support of custodial staff who are new to a leadership role or who are preparing for a leadership role. In collaboration with Local 474, the Custodial Leadership Preparation Program was implemented. Program participants attend a series of sessions and workshops covering a broad range of topics related to the role of head custodian. As well, custodial staff who are new to the head custodian role are supported individually on-site by the custodial mentors and mechanical consultants.
- District custodial staff had opportunities to participate in 28 professional learning sessions in 2016-2017 and 18 to date in 2017-2018.
- In 2016-2017, 38 new custodians and relief custodians completed the Edmonton Public Schools' Building Operator Certificate course. Fifty-one custodians and relief custodians have completed the course this school year or are currently participating in the course.
- In 2016-2017, 20 custodial staff members completed the Power Engineering Certificate course. Twenty-one custodial staff members completed the course this school year.
- Eighteen custodial staff completed the 5th Class Power Engineering Certificate Prep course in 2016-2017. Of those 18, 14 custodial staff passed the Alberta Boiler Safety Association (ABSA) exam. Eighteen custodial staff are currently enrolled in the course this school year.
- Five custodial staff received support from the District to participate in 4th Class Power Engineering training at NAIT in 2016-2017.

## **Support Staff**

District support staff are provided with a variety of learning opportunities throughout their career.

- Depending on their professional learning needs and career path, support staff with office duties have opportunities to access up to 12 sessions of training on District software. In 2016-2017, 606 support staff participated in these sessions. To date in 2017-2018, 313 support staff have participated in the training.
- Through the Lead Administrative Assistant Program, both permanent and newly hired support staff have the opportunity to prepare for the role of lead administrative assistant in a school office. Program participants attend in-class training on District software and learn hands on through a practicum placement in a school office under the guidance of an experienced administrative assistant. In 2016-2017, 30 support staff completed the Lead Administrative Assistant Program. To date in 2017-2018, 17 support staff have participated in the program.

- The Administrative Assistant D/E Program was developed and piloted in 2016-2017 to assist support staff in preparing for intermediate positions in school offices. Thirteen support staff participated in the program in 2016-2017 and 15 have participated to date in 2017-2018.
- The District continues to work collaboratively to deliver professional learning opportunities to educational assistant staff in support of ongoing needs for these roles. In addition to catchment professional learning opportunities, nearly 2,000 educational assistants participated in approximately 30 different sessions this school year.
- Educational assistants are provided the opportunity to complete Nonviolent Crisis Intervention training and can access a number of sessions delivered through central decision units. In 2016-2017, 919 educational assistants completed Nonviolent Crisis Intervention training. To date in 2017-2018, 557 educational assistants have completed the training.

### **Maintenance Staff**

Maintenance staff are another group of staff who encompass a diverse range of roles within Edmonton Public Schools. In addition to comprehensive health and safety training, maintenance staff participate in professional development and trade-specific training that is customized to their particular needs.

## **MENTORING AND COACHING TO DEVELOP CAPACITY ACROSS THE DISTRICT**

Mentoring, both formal and informal, is another means of supporting professional reflection and growth across District staffing areas. One way formal mentoring is supported is through the District's Career Transition Team, consisting of 16 mentors (AA, EA, custodial, teacher) whose core work is to support staff through mentorship and coaching. Members of the team have participated in Level 1 or 2 District coaching and mentoring modules and have benefited greatly by increasing their individual and collective capacity to impact the learning and growth of colleagues through job-embedded mentoring/coaching relationships. The Career Transitions Team mentors have benefited from a common language and framework, enhanced listening and questioning skills, opportunities to practice and continue to learn together, and a reinforced belief that "holding colleagues capable" using a coaching approach is effective. The goal of this learning partnership between the mentee and the mentor is to build staff capacity to create and sustain quality learning and working environments. There are many benefits for mentees, mentors and the District as a whole; through best practice modelling, goal-setting, resource sharing, encouragement and ongoing job-embedded support, staff (new and experienced) can continue to learn, refine their skills and build confidence. For example, experienced staff who take on the role of mentorship (formal or informal) continue to refine their practice as well as learn new skills related to leadership, coaching and mentoring. Mentoring a colleague is an ideal development opportunity for experienced staff who are looking for new challenges and stimulation on their career journey. They experience professional renewal and heightened engagement because of the personal satisfaction and reward that comes from contributing to the growth and maturity of a colleague.

From the 2017 District Feedback Survey the following feedback was received around mentoring as a desirable means of professional growth amongst District staff. The survey asked: “To what extend do you agree or disagree that formalized coaching or mentoring is effective in enhancing your professional growth?”

Staffing group and n size	Agreement	Disagreement	Don't Know/Unsure
All staff (n=4804)	80.68%	10.18%	9.14%
Teacher (n=3332)	83.16%	9.36%	7.47%
Support (n=1049)	77.50%	10.58%	11.92%
Custodial (n=70)	74.29%	12.86%	12.86%
Exempt (n=325)	70.15%	15.69%	14.15%
Maintenance (n=28)	42.86%	21.43%	35.71%

\*District Feedback Survey 2017: formalized coaching or mentoring is effective in enhancing your professional growth

The District’s efforts to support meaningful and relevant staff professional growth extend beyond those opportunities planned and facilitated by Human Resources. Some additional examples of professional growth opportunities for staff within the District are:

- Curriculum and Resource Support (CRS): To date in 2017-2018, CRS has provided 738 professional learning sessions and 2,808 in-class coaching sessions. A total of 5,829 participants attended the various professional learning series and sessions. CRS has also provided a range of additional teacher leadership and mentoring supports. For example, 52 teachers were mentored by CRS staff to present their classroom practices to their peers at the Literacy, Numeracy and Second Languages Best Practices Days in early February and many teachers were supported by CRS consultants to develop and deliver sessions for various catchment and school professional learning days.
- Summer Institute: The 2017 Summer Institute offered 13 different session topics; approximately 350 District teachers and leaders participated in a session. The Summer Institute is a collaborative effort between CRS and Inclusive Learning.
- Action Research: At the catchment, school and classroom level staff are encouraged and supported to learn through action research projects. These projects may reflect the exploration and learning of an individual classroom teacher or may be a collaborative project involving many teachers from across a catchment. The learnings gained from these projects inform quality teaching and learning and are intended to support student success.

## BUILDING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

The District recognizes the value and contribution of each employee and works from the belief that everyone is a leader. To support this belief and provide opportunities for all staff to grow and thrive as leaders, the District implemented the Leadership Development Framework in the spring of 2012 based on adult learning principles.

The framework is built upon the Four Quadrant Model of learning as the foundation to building staff competency in the area of leadership. These four areas of learning are:



Beyond the Four Quadrants, this work is informed by the Principal Quality Standard and also focuses on the following seven key leadership competencies:

- Builds Relationships
- Communicates Effectively
- Engages and Manages Resources
- Envisions the Future
- Mentors and Coaches for Success
- Strives for Excellence
- Understands the Larger Context

One example of the many ways the District engages staff in leadership learning and development is through Leadership Saturdays. These half day sessions focus on conversations centered around leadership topics. The conversations are held using the circle process and enable participants to learn through sharing, listening, considering multiple perspectives and connecting theory to practice. This year the District has collaborated with the University of Alberta to host two Leadership Saturdays, one in October and one in March. These events were attended by nearly 180 District staff.

Developing leaders is a collective responsibility in the District. Formal development opportunities are coordinated by Leadership Development and are offered as modules to all staff groups. Since the fall of 2017, 1,094 participants have attended 55 centrally-offered leadership development modules.

The move into a principal role is both exciting and daunting for new principals. To provide support for staff taking on this critical leadership role, the District has developed a first and second year principal program. This is a monthly program designed to build principal leadership and operational management capacity aligned with the Principal Quality Practice Standard for first and second year principals. This year, 56 principals in total are participating, 29 in the first year cohort and 27 in the second year cohort. Twenty of the 56 principals took up the invitation for coaching with one of three District credentialed International Coaching Federation (ICF) leadership coaches. This, with the coaching and mentoring from Assistant Superintendents, central leaders and mentors in the catchments, provides a network of support for those staff new to the role of principal.



This is the second year of the Aspiring Principal Development Program designed to build readiness for the critical role of the principalship. One cohort of 23 school and central leaders meet monthly to participate in a program focused on the knowledge and skills necessary for leading and managing school communities. Each aspiring principal is partnered with an experienced principal for a three-day job shadow experience and participants are also required to lead a project to improve student learning outcomes aligned with their school or catchment goals. Monthly personal reflections assist aspiring principals to connect their learning and integrate their leadership identity to their current and future roles as school leaders.

Starting in 2017, the District introduced another opportunity for principals to participate in professional development sessions focused on key areas of instructional and operational leadership. Professional learning sessions were offered specifically for principals six times prior to the District Leadership Meeting (DLM). To date, 33 sessions have been provided with 354 principals attending; 138 principals (65 per cent) have attended at least one of these Pre-DLM sessions. Sessions offered reflected a wide range of timely topics requested by principals to enhance their instructional leadership and management competencies.

Feedback from principals indicates a variety of leadership learning for school leaders and teachers are provided at the catchment level, including cohort-based and self-selected sessions and professional development, coaching opportunities, shared leadership and principal mentoring predominately focused on instructional leadership.

In 2018, the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) published an inventory of existing leadership development programs across the province and a literature review of best practices in leadership development. This was an opportunity to explore current research in the area of educational leadership and reflect on our own work and emerging next steps. It also enabled the District to connect with other school jurisdictions around the province in the area of educational leadership development. This work provides access to a depth of information that was not previously available and will support ongoing evolution of our leadership development practices, as well as exploration of collaborative opportunities.

Finally, the newly developed *Leadership Quality Standard* will replace the *Principal Quality Practice Standard* and aligns with the *Teaching Quality Standard* and the *Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard*. On September 1, 2019, the standard will come into effect across Alberta and will apply to all principals, assistant principals and school jurisdiction leaders. These standards highlight the importance of providing instructional leadership and building leadership capacity. Work is underway to examine the implications of these new standards for District staff.

## SUPPORTING TRANSITION FROM THE ORGANIZATION

There comes a point for each employee when they transition out of the District. This happens for a variety of reasons. Some staff move on to new career opportunities with other organizations and take with them the skills, knowledge and experience they gained while working for the District. Other staff have the opportunity to grow professionally through a secondment agreement. Secondments enable staff to have a new career experience without having to resign. During the 2016-2017 school year, the District supported 45 secondments. During the 2017-2018 school year, 29 secondments were supported. These placements are typically one to three year arrangements.

Many staff leave the District when they are ready to step back from the world of work and enter into retirement. In 2016-2017, 177 teachers and 145 business staff retired from the District. In the 2017-2018 school year to date, 129 teachers and 130 business staff have submitted their intention to retire. To support staff in preparation for this important life phase, all District staff contribute to one of two pension plans—the Teacher Retirement Fund or Local Authorities Pension Plan (LAPP). Additionally, the District holds information sessions for staff with the Local Authorities Pension Plan, Canada Pension Plan and ASEBP to support staff with information about retirement benefits and planning ahead for retirement.

To further support the retiring employee and decision unit, the Human Resources Service Centre is currently developing guides for retirement and resignation. These guides will increase consistency in processes and provide additional support to both the employee and the decision unit regarding key activities and timelines. Service Centre staff are available to answer questions staff have about retirement and meet individually with all staff eligible for LAPP benefits to ensure necessary paperwork is completed on a timely basis. While there is currently no formal exit interview process in the District, feedback provided by exiting staff to improve our work environment is appreciated.

Many retired staff will look for ways to stay involved and continue to contribute to education in a different way. The District hires back staff members as supply teachers, custodians or in support roles. Additionally staff are contracted to come back and contribute through special projects or initiatives that require specific professional expertise. Other staff wish to remain engaged with students and volunteer at a District school.

## CONCLUSION

The work to support our staff is continuous and must anticipate the evolving needs of a growing student population and the current context of the employment sector. One way to ensure the District remains nimble and supportive to the needs of staff is through feedback. Each year staff are invited to complete the District Feedback Survey. Feedback from the survey serves as one source of data to help inform the District around how well it is enabling a positive and desirable work environment. The following is a summary of pertinent questions from the 2017 survey that speak directly to the District's efforts in support of staff satisfaction. This data tells us that there are many things the District is doing well and it also provides us with the opportunity to reflect and ask questions so we can understand how to do even better.

District Feedback Survey Question	% Staff Agreement	% Staff Disagreement	% Staff Don't Know/Unsure
District working environments are welcoming	95.06 (n=5,175)	2.44 (n=133)	2.50 (n=136)
District working environments are inclusive	95.02 (n=5,173)	2.00 (n=109)	2.98 (n=162)
District working environments are respectful	94.16 (n=5,126)	3.55 (n=193)	2.30 (n=125)
District working environments are ethical	93.90 (n=5,112)	3.12 (n=170)	2.98 (n=162)
Edmonton Public Schools supports employee professional development and growth	94.01 (n=5,118)	4.70 (n=256)	1.29 (n=70)
I can access professional learning to help me develop my leadership skills	82.24 (n=4,477)	5.25 (n=286)	12.51 (n=681)
The leadership development opportunities I have experienced in the District have helped me become a better leader	65.89 (n=3,587)	7.09 (386)	27.02 (n=1471)
I have the resources and supports I need to do my job effectively	89.05 (n=4,848)	10.19 (n=555)	0.75 (n=41)
My work responsibilities are fair and reasonable	88.19 (n=4,801)	9.81 (n=534)	2.00 (n=109)
My work is valued	89.99 (n=4,899)	6.87 (n=374)	3.14 (n=171)
Edmonton Public Schools is a great place to work	96.12 (n=5,233)	2.24 (n=122)	1.63 (n=89)

\*District Feedback Survey 2017

Through this report, we have highlighted the importance of building staff capacity and wellness and the variety of ways in which the District supports employees throughout their careers. Work in this area is constantly evolving as we remain responsive to the changing needs of the students and families we serve and strive to be viewed as an employer of choice within the Edmonton community.

