

DATE: December 11, 2018

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Strategic Plan Update: Success Beyond Schooling

ORIGINATOR: Nancy Petersen, Managing Director, Strategic District Supports

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 the efforts being taken in support of the District Strategic Plan, which is unified by Career Pathways. Student growth and success is fostered through meaningful and engaging learning opportunities. Flexible and responsive learning spaces support student-centered learning activities that connect curricular outcomes to the competencies and skills necessary to prepare students for their futures. The support and involvement of community partners across all divisions provides meaning and relevance to curricular learning. Through these relationships, Career Pathway plans are strengthened to support transition to the world of work or post-secondary learning.

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 Career Pathways and the data collected from the recent Career Pathways Symposium.

KEY POINTS

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

The attached report is focused on Career Pathways.

ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I Strategic Plan Update: Success Beyond Schooling

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Strategic Plan Update:

Success Beyond Schooling: Career Pathways

December 11, 2018

INTRODUCTION

In October 2014, the first Career Pathways Symposium was held. A broad range of stakeholders including staff, students, parents, community and industry partners were invited to engage in a conversation to help shape Career Pathways and provide feedback gathered on the Career Pathways model. The feedback gathered formed the creation and implementation of a plan that shaped the work over the next four years.

Since 2014 Career Pathways has come to life across District schools. Career Pathways is about supporting all students from early learning through to high school completion and beyond. Career Pathways engages students in meaningful and relevant learning opportunities that reduce barriers and open doors. Students develop a curiosity about the world around them through rigorous and relevant projects, activities and experiences that also make important connections to potential Career Pathways. These learning experiences elicit enduring understandings which in turn, help students to become competent, successful, and contributing citizens.

In October 2018, a second Career Pathways Symposium was held. Preparing students for the future is a collective responsibility. The October 2018 Symposium was an important opportunity to honour the voices and engage our stakeholders; staff, students, parents and community partners, in setting the vision for Career Pathways over the next four years in support of the three priority areas of the District's Strategic Plan:

Priority 1 Student Growth and Success

Foster growth and success for every student by supporting their journey from early learning through high school completion and beyond.

Priority 2 Learning and Working Environments

Provide welcoming, high quality learning and working environments.

Priority 3 Communication, Engagement and Partnerships

Enhance public engagement through communication, engagement and partnerships.

Career Pathways embodies the District Strategic Plan. Student growth and success is fostered through meaningful and engaging learning opportunities. Flexible and responsive learning spaces support student-centered learning activities that connect curricular outcomes to the competencies and skills necessary to prepare students for their futures. The support and involvement of community partners across all divisions provides meaning and relevance to curricular learning. Through these relationships, Career Pathway plans are strengthened to support transition to community living, the world of work or post-secondary learning.

2018 CAREER PATHWAYS SYMPOSIUM

On October 24, 2018, 403 stakeholders participated in the Career Pathways Symposium; participants included 256 District staff, 17 family members, 62 students and 68 business representatives and members of the community. In total, 107 schools were represented at the symposium. The purpose of the symposium was to build upon the energy and direction of the work to date and to engage stakeholders in a meaningful conversation about preparing our students for the future. The data collected will help to inform the vision of Career Pathways over the next four years.

The day started with a keynote address to create shared momentum and synergy to serve as the catalyst for the conversations to follow. Following the keynote, participants engaged in two of four focus group sessions. The table below reflects the topics and the number of participants for each session:

Session Topic	Session 1	Session 2
Developing Awareness in Kindergarten to Grade 4	37	35
Shaping Understanding in Grades 5 to 9	113	117
Building Readiness in Grades 10 to 12	109	108
Creating Supportive Learning Environments	123	122

Participants selected sessions of personal interest and were grouped to assigned tables where they were asked to respond to questions pertinent to the session topic. Each table was strategically organized to include a range of stakeholders (District staff, parents, students and community members) to support a rich and diverse conversation. A note taker and a facilitator were assigned to each table. Below is a sampling of questions that participants responded to. A complete list of questions is available [here](#).

Sample Questions:

- Describe or tell a story about a time you had a learning experience that you felt was relevant or meaningful.
- How might families, businesses and community organizations be involved in helping students experience relevant and meaningful learning opportunities?
- Tell us a story about when/how you started to understand how your strengths and interests could be connected to possible career pathways.
- Based on what we have talked about what are some different ways schools can help students in Grades 5-9 to make connections between their strengths and interests and possible career pathways?
- How does your learning environment support and enhance development of “engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit?”

To close the day, participants were inspired by a facilitated panel conversation. The panel engaged in a rich and thought provoking dialogue on preparing our students for the future.

WHAT DOES OUR DATA TELL US

Feedback from each of the focus group sessions was themed using a qualitative data analysis tool. This tool categorized the data based on the frequency of similar comments. From the data, themes for each session emerged and have been identified as:

Topic: Developing Awareness (Kindergarten - Grade 4)

- *Partnerships and Connections*
“Different partnerships can help students realize that life is not linear, just take one step at a time.” Participants spoke about engaging businesses and community organizations, but also spoke about the importance of engaging families and parents to share their passions and expertise.
- *Programming in General*
Participants spoke about the need to have “an alignment between curriculum and student strengths.” As well, there is the need to further teachers’ development to build understanding on “how to intentionally connect learning and teaching students about their success.” A number of participants were hopeful that the new curriculum would help address this need as it “may naturally lend itself to project (based learning) and exploration.”
- *Exploration as a Path*
Participants recalled instances in which they were able to explore their passions, interests and strengths. One participant stated that “starting where students are at is a huge piece in developing (students’) identity,” with another mentioning the importance of “allowing students to choose their learning experience to figure out what their strengths are.”
- *Authentic Experiences*
“You cannot just show students all the list of jobs. You need to engage in experiences to help them understand their strengths. Then they can build an awareness of what they like.” Participants spoke of instances in which they were able to increase the authenticity of learning through project-based learning and partnerships with the community.
- *Exposures as a Result of Parental Influence*
One participant mentioned that their child has a “very narrow view of what careers could be (i.e., the only example their child has is the careers of the participant and their husband) and would love to see this change in curriculum to broaden ideas.” Additionally, an educator wondered how to “help parents understand (different Career Pathways), especially parents who are new to Canada.”

Topic: Shaping Understanding (Grades 5 - 9)

- *Exploration as a Path*
Multiple respondents mentioned that opportunities to “give back to the community” helped to shape their career paths. Comments encouraged exposure to “all aspects of the job” and an emphasis on openness when exploring career paths.
- *Partnerships and Connections*
Respondents generally affirmed that partnerships and connections are always worth pursuing: “When you bring people in from the community, it’s so much more authentic and it expands our capacity to provide authentic opportunities.”

- *Programming in General*
Participants in the breakout sessions underscored the importance of sharing new ideas, opportunities and experiences for students through school programming. Some District staff pointed out that access to information about careers is critical in order to communicate with parents, and that timing is critical, as “during the summer, only some families can find or afford opportunities.”
- *Embedded Programming*
Participants spoke of the need to incorporate opportunities to “help students look at career options,” “explore,” and gain “work experience” during school hours. Comments identified existing tools, initiatives, and partnerships that helped satisfy this need, including myBlueprint, Community Marketplace, Campus EPSB, Career Technology Foundation (CTF), Inquiring Minds and Entrepreneurial Adventures.
- *Personal Experiences*
“It’s important to try things along the way and see if you’re really interested in them.” Participants spoke of the need for choice and “personal connections” to create “meaningful” and “engaging” learning experiences.

Topic: Building Readiness (Grades 10 - 12)

- *Exploration as a Path*
Participants described varied career paths, emphasizing openness “What you do today, will not necessarily be what you will be doing in 20 years. Let life experience evolve and materialize” and being guided by interest “Just follow what you’re into until it becomes the thing that you do”.
- *Partnerships and Connections*
Breakout session discussions touched on the promise of “strong partnerships” with external organizations and stressed the importance of increased communication and removing barriers for increased exposure to career options for students.
- *Programming in General*
Multiple respondents reported a high uptake of myBlueprint in schools and considered Community Marketplace as a promising development. Staff indicated an interest in increasing opportunities for career exploration in school programming and “integrating Career Pathways into core subjects,” while citing a lack of time as a significant challenge.
- *Exposure in General*
Participants described the benefits of opening up “opportunities for students to ‘test out’ things.” Multiple responses also encouraged “listening to the voices of the kids about what they might want to do and learn.” One student expressed some uncertainty about “what the world has to offer,” noting that “everything we learn is in a controlled environment.” Another student indicated that some uncertainty may exist because “students are being directed to look at possibilities that don’t yet exist.”
- *Exposures as a Result of Parental Influence*
Participants outlined the need for “fighting stereotypes” based on parental knowledge and expectations, especially with the privileging of post-secondary education over trades and “academics” over “experiences.” Parents in the breakout sessions signaled that they are in a “relearning stage,” while District staff who are parents developed “empathy and understanding for other parents.”

Creating Environments (all grades)

- *Inclusive Practices*
“Universal design is crucial, varied seating, different ways to relay information, various types of settings.” Participants spoke of the need to have flexible spaces and flexible seating to “meet the needs of students” and help students “feel more connected to their space.”
- *Authentic Experiences*
“Connection to nature is a huge part of the design and impact of the school.” A number of participants spoke of spaces that “bring the outdoors in.”
- *Programming in General*
“The connection between creativity is more organic; (there needs to be) space that provide(s) opportunities for problem-solving; if you can be more creative, the engagement and the work quality increases.”
- *Competencies in General*
“Students are going into a world (with) teamwork and collaboration, so they need these opportunities.” Participants spoke of environments such as “open spaces” and clubs that “bring more students together, for sharing, collaborating, (and) engaging.”
- *Exploration as a Path*
“Open up more opportunities for everyone - space they can learn, explore, try new things, express their thinking.” Participants spoke of spaces that allowed for “freedom,” “choice,” “imagination,” “creativity” and “calculated risk taking.” As one participant said, “opportunities to play (...) gives a more meaningful experience.”

The comprehensive feedback summary report can be found [here](#).

A closer look at the five themes above identified in each session, has resulted in the identification of the following four Career Pathways Guiding Principles. These principles represent the common ideas that emerged from the voice of participants across all session.

Career Pathways Guiding Principles



The Guiding Principles reflect the District’s commitment to fostering growth and success for all students, enhancing partnerships, creating welcoming and engaging learning environments and supporting community involvement and engagement.

Moving forward, the Guiding Principles will foster the conditions necessary to fulfill the District’s Vision—Success: One Student at a Time.

NEXT STEPS

- Centered around the Guiding Principles, schools and central decision units (DUs) will be engaged to inform the development of a multi-year Career Pathways K-12 plan.
- The new provincial curriculum will be reviewed to identify connections between Career Pathways and learning outcomes across subjects. Professional learning opportunities and resources will be provided to support teachers and schools.
- Schools and central DUs will be engaged to create Guiding Principle Tip Sheets. Examples of information in Tip Sheets could include (but may not be limited to):
 - Expanded explanation of the Guiding Principles
 - Supporting research
 - Examples of evidence based high impact instructional practices
- The Career Pathways communications strategy will be enhanced and updated to reflect the 2018-2022 plan.
- Trustees will be provided with an information sheet to help promote awareness and understanding of Career Pathways when communicating with parents, schools and community stakeholders.