

DATE: November 29, 2022

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Funds for the 2023-2024 Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff

ORIGINATOR: Angela Anderson, Chief Human Resources Officer

RESOURCE STAFF: Trish Kolotyluk, Renée Thomson

REFERENCE: Teachers' Collective Agreement-September 1, 2018 to August 31, 2020, Clause 9

ISSUE

An allocation of funds from the 2023-2024 operating budget is requested to support the Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff. Through this program, teachers can access tuition and leave support for post-secondary coursework as per clause 9 of the Teachers' Collective Agreement. An allocation of funds to support this program is an investment that will benefit our Division in several ways, including improving student achievement, building capacity in our teaching staff and sharing knowledge and expertise through professional learning opportunities. The request for a commitment of funds is made well in advance of the distribution of the funds to accommodate application and university admission processes.

BACKGROUND

Edmonton Public Schools recognizes that professional development for staff is a critical aspect in supporting successful outcomes for students, as well as for succession planning. The Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff is in direct support of [Board Policy GE.BP - Organization for Instruction](#), which states that “effective teachers who have strong knowledge of pedagogy and subject content knowledge, make a significant difference to student learning and achievement.” The program is aligned with the [Division Strategic Plan](#) and is grounded in our values of accountability, collaboration, equity and integrity. The program is also in direct support of our Division's vision of “Enhancing pathways for student success”, as well as our mission, which states that “Our commitment to high-quality public education serves the community and empowers each student to live a life of dignity, fulfilment, empathy and possibility.”

Through this program, Division teachers have the opportunity to apply for tuition and leave support to participate in professional improvement activities that are aligned with Division priorities and areas of need. A comparison of successful applicants by year (Attachment I), as well as a synopsis of funds and support granted over the past 10 years (Attachment II) are included in this report.

RELATED FACTS

- The Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff is guided by clause 9 of the Teachers' Collective Agreement.

- Clause 9.2.2 outlines the conditions under which, upon application, leave for professional improvement may be granted to a teacher for a school year or portion of the year.
- Clause 9.2.7 specifies that tuition support for professional improvement may be granted, upon application, to a teacher on continuing contract and with two or more years of service with Edmonton Public Schools.
- Clause 9.2.8 states the maximum amount the Division may allocate for the Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff as “3/4 of 1% of the annual grid costs, calculated as of the preceding November 30”.
- Through this program, teacher certificated staff have the opportunity to apply for support for courses that take place between July 1, 2023, and August 31, 2024 (Attachment III).
- The Professional Improvement Program application process is rigorous. Assessment of applications is completed by a committee of Division leadership staff who consider the alignment of applicants’ proposed professional improvement plans with Division priorities and identified programming needs. Additional considerations are the anticipated benefits to learners, the school and the Division, as well as connections to the applicants’ professional growth plans and career goals.
- Successful applicants agree to a return of service to Edmonton Public Schools of one year for tuition support and three years for a full-time leave with an allowance; part-time leaves are prorated accordingly.
- For the 2022-2023 Professional Improvement Program, support was granted primarily for courses and programs of study in the areas of leadership, counselling/mental health, inclusion and diversity. More teaching staff accessed coursework related to wellness and mental health than in previous years.
- Of the 120 requests for support through this program in 2022-2023, based on the relative strength of the applications, 36 applicants were granted the support they requested and were eligible to receive, 61 were granted partial support and 23 were not granted support. Seventy-six of the 120 (63 per cent) were first time applicants, while 44 (37 per cent) submitted applications in previous years.
- It has been an administrative practice to maintain a holdback of a portion of the allocation to address potential increases to leave allowance costs and tuition fees in the next academic year, as well as potential fluctuations in the exchange rate for tuition fees paid to international post-secondary institutions. The holdback for the 2022-2023 Professional Improvement Program was 2.7 per cent.
- The Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff is one of several ways that professional learning is supported for Division staff. The chart below outlines sources of support for professional learning.

| Funds for Professional Learning | Details |
|---------------------------------|--|
| School Budgets | Funds are allocated for staff professional learning within schools and catchments. |
| Central Decision Units | Central decision units allocate funds for the delivery of targeted professional learning courses and sessions for staff. These include sessions offered through Instructional Supports, Technology and Information Management and Human Resources, among others. |

| | |
|--|---|
| Division Programs: Teacher Development Program and Professional Improvement Program | Tuition support is available to teachers for post-secondary coursework related to core subjects and second languages, as well as for courses related to specific Division priorities through the Teacher Development Program. Tuition and leave support is available to teachers through the Professional Improvement Program for post-secondary coursework aligned with the Division Strategic Plan. |
| Teacher Development Fund (administered through the ATA) | The Teachers' Collective Agreement includes a commitment of Division funds to Edmonton Public Teachers Local 37 of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) to administer and distribute funds in support of professional development activities or resources related to teachers' individual professional growth plans. |
| Bursaries and Scholarships | Teachers are encouraged to access support through the provincial government's bursary programs and to explore scholarship opportunities through their post-secondary institution and other community organizations. |

RECOMMENDATION

That an allocation of \$1,300,000 from the 2023-2024 operating budget be approved for the Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff for the purpose of granting professional improvement leaves and tuition support to teachers for the 2023-2024 school year.

OPTIONS

Based on the information provided in this report, the following options are considered most appropriate:

1. The allocation of funds for 2023-2024 is increased to \$1,300,000.
2. The allocation of funds for 2023-2024 remains at \$1,200,000.

CONSIDERATIONS and ANALYSIS

Student achievement is positively impacted by teacher professional learning and the application of new skills and knowledge within classrooms and school communities. Our investment in teachers to complete in-depth post-secondary studies is in direct support of the Division's commitment to provide high-quality public education and results in benefits that extend beyond those individual teachers and their students. Professional Improvement Program participants share their knowledge and expertise with colleagues through a wide range of professional learning opportunities, including sessions held on designated professional development days, communities of practice, collaboration with colleagues, coaching and mentoring and post-secondary coursework. Through this comprehensive model of professional learning, our Division is focused on working together to build capacity. Overarching this is our shared responsibility to support our students to achieve to their fullest learning potential within an environment that supports their health and wellness.

The in-depth learning acquired from post-secondary studies is a key tenet of the Division's professional learning model. Focused study in university programs, that are aligned with our Strategic Plan and areas of need, results in significant benefits across the Division. A selection of reflective statements from staff who were supported through the Professional Improvement Program highlight this in Attachment IV. Several program participants explain that the integration of new strategies and perspectives, learned through their post-secondary studies, results in improved student academic success and wellness. Many

participants reflect on the positive impact a deeper understanding of subject content and refinement of their teaching practices has had on their ability to meet the increasingly complex needs of students.

The Professional Improvement Program is grounded in all four Division values. The value of collaboration, however, is most evident in program participants' descriptions of how they are sharing their learning and experience with colleagues. Professional Improvement Program participants are leveraging school and catchment professional development activities to build capacity and develop shared understanding. Those program participants who are consultants within the Division describe the ripple effect of learning that occurs when they share their knowledge, skills and experience with a broad audience across the Division through sessions and targeted direct supports to schools. As well, staff in both informal and formal leadership roles describe how they are using their learning from post-secondary studies to inform how they guide and support staff and students.

Over the past decade, the gap between the maximum possible allocation and the approved allocation has widened. In 2012-2013, the approved allocation of \$1,200,000 was 40 per cent of the maximum possible allocation (Attachment II). An approved allocation of \$1,300,000 for 2023-2024 would be approximately 34 per cent of the maximum possible allocation, while an allocation of \$1,200,000 would be approximately 31 per cent of the maximum.

The number of teachers who request and receive support through this program is small relative to the total number of teachers in the Division. As we continue to build capacity by supporting a small number of teaching staff each year to participate in post-secondary studies aligned with our Division Strategic Plan, those teachers, in turn, work collaboratively with colleagues to support the academic success and wellness of our students. The chart below shows a five-year comparison of the number of teachers working in the Division, the number of Professional Improvement Program applicants and the number of applicants who were granted support.

Comparison of Total Number of Teachers and Number of Successful Applicants

| Year | Number of Teachers (Sept. 30) | Number of Applicants | Number of Successful Applicants | Percentage of Teachers Supported |
|-----------|----------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2018-2019 | 5673 | 137 | 104 | 1.83% |
| 2019-2020 | 5788 | 144 | 112 | 1.94% |
| 2020-2021 | 5607 | 110 | 94 | 1.68% |
| 2021-2022 | 5647 | 117 | 99 | 1.75% |
| 2022-2023 | 5591 | 120 | 97 | 1.73% |

For several years, the number of teachers hired to the Division increased to keep pace with our growing student enrolment. This resulted in a fairly consistent number of applications for support through the Professional Improvement Program (Attachment I). Recent years have seen fluctuations in our teacher hiring patterns as our Division pivoted to online learning through a pandemic and then back to in-person learning. Through these changes, our teachers have accessed professional learning, including university coursework, to best respond to the complex needs of our students.

Post-secondary professional learning is critical to building staff capacity and supporting student learning. In 2021-2022, in response to a challenging economy, the allocation of funds for this program was

reduced by \$100,000 (7.7 per cent) over the previous year. The allocation remained at the reduced level for the 2022-2023 school year (Attachment II). An allocation of \$1,300,000 for the 2023-2024 Professional Improvement Program would help to offset increasing tuition costs and would allow a greater number of teacher certificated staff to develop a deeper understanding of educational theories and practice, curricula and subject content in support of Division students. For these reasons, Option 1 is considered most appropriate.

NEXT STEPS

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

ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

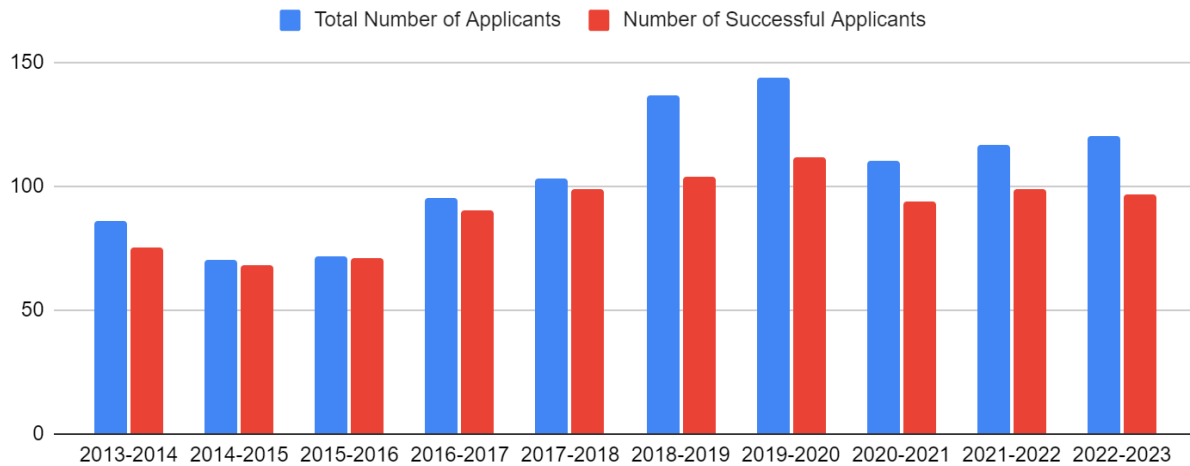
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|----------------|---|
| ATTACHMENT I | Total Number of Applicants and Number of Successful Applicants |
| ATTACHMENT II | Professional Improvement Program History |
| ATTACHMENT III | Professional Improvement Program Timeline |
| ATTACHMENT IV | Selection of Reflective Statements: Benefits of Program Participation |

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Total Number of Applicants and Number of Successful Applicants

| YEAR | TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICANTS | NUMBER SUCCESSFUL |
|-----------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| 2013-2014 | 86 | 75 |
| 2014-2015 | 70 | 68 |
| 2015-2016 | 72 | 71 |
| 2016-2017 | 95 | 90 |
| 2017-2018 | 103 | 99 |
| 2018-2019 | 137 | 104 |
| 2019-2020 | 144 | 112 |
| 2020-2021 | 110 | 94 |
| 2021-2022 | 117 | 99 |
| 2022-2023 | 120 | 97 |

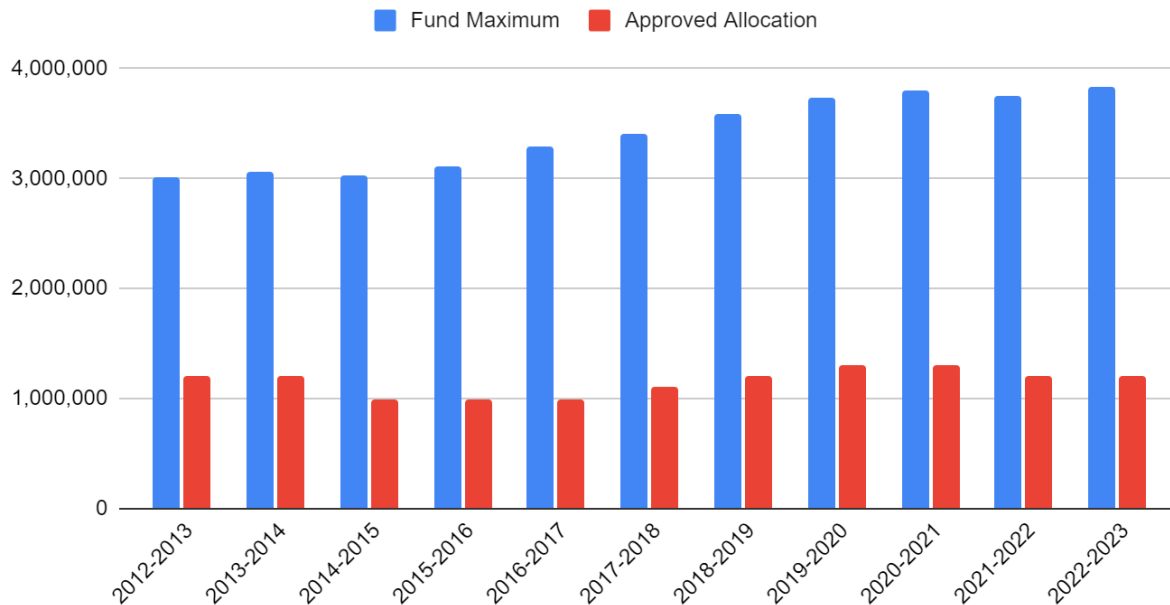
Total Number of Applicants and Number of Successful Applicants



Professional Improvement Program History

| YEAR | FUND MAXIMUM AS PER CLAUSE 9.2.8 | APPROVED ALLOCATION | % OF MAXIMUM | APPROVED TOTAL LEAVE FTE | ACTUAL \$ GRANTED FOR LEAVES | ACTUAL \$ GRANTED FOR TUITION | TOTAL ACTUAL \$ GRANTED FOR LEAVES & TUITION |
|-----------|--|------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 2012-2013 | 3,005,090 | 1,200,000 | 40% | 12.48 | 785,786 | 296,530 | 1,082,316 |
| 2013-2014 | 3,062,822 | 1,200,000 | 39% | 11.56 | 706,110 | 354,758 | 1,060,868 |
| 2014-2015 | 3,019,266 | 1,000,000 | 33% | 7.20 | 517,762 | 367,680 | 885,442 |
| 2015-2016 | 3,111,487 | 1,000,000 | 32% | 8.026 | 561,457 | 400,757 | 962,214 |
| 2016-2017 | 3,286,102 | 1,000,000 | 30% | 9.40 | 577,248 | 371,809 | 949,057 |
| 2017-2018 | 3,402,751 | 1,100,000 | 32% | 7.818 | 521,808 | 545,100 | 1,066,908 |
| 2018-2019 | 3,587,437 | 1,200,000 | 33% | 8.09 | 589,115 | 581,762 | 1,170,877 |
| 2019-2020 | 3,725,511 | 1,300,000 | 35% | 11.072 | 679,106 | 584,120 | 1,263,226 |
| 2020-2021 | 3,795,407 | 1,300,000 | 34% | 8.478 | 621,109 | 641,150 | 1,262,259 |
| 2021-2022 | 3,754,228 | 1,200,000 | 32% | 9.079 | 515,900 | 651,700 | 1,167,600 |
| 2022-2023 | 3,828,254 | 1,200,000 | 31% | 10.117 | 492,070 | 680,170 | 1,172,240 |

Fund Maximum and Approved Allocation



2023-2024 PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM TIMELINE

| Activity | Date |
|--|--|
| Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff announced on Division Staff News and application available on Connect | October 31 |
| Information meetings for interested staff (4:00 - 6:00 p.m. Google Meet) | November 22 and 28 |
| Obtain data to calculate maximums as per Clause 9.2.8 of the Teachers' Collective Agreement | November 30 |
| Due date for applications | January 13 |
| Processing of applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receipt of applications confirmed • Background information compiled (previous leaves, degrees, grid placement, years of service, summary of request, projected costs) • Applications prepared for review by committee of leadership staff | January 16 – February 3 |
| Review of applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application packages prepared for committee review • Committee workshop conducted • Review of applications completed | January 16 – February 8 February 9 February 16 |
| Compile background information with input from assessors | February 16 – March 3 |
| Recommendation submitted for approval | March 10 |
| Approval of leaves and tuition support | March 17 |
| Communication of support granted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants notified; letters and agreements sent to successful applicants • TM to Board • Division Staff News announcement | March 20 - 24 April 5 April 6 |

**Selection of Reflective Statements: Benefits of Program Participation
2021-2022 Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff**

Kari Harris - Teacher, Vimy Ridge Academy

Yorkville University - Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology

“This program has given me an enriched and thorough knowledge base about the mental health issues that individuals experience. Understanding the complexities of mental illness allows me to assist staff with providing appropriate accommodations to students when needed, and to help identify those individuals who may need to receive extra support.”

Sherri Humphrys - Principal, Julia Kiniski School

University of Portland - Doctor of Education in Learning and Leading

“Accessing the coursework around leadership has expanded my skills and competencies directly related to all aspects of the [Leadership Quality Standard]. I am more intentional about my own leadership, sharing with my principal colleagues, and building the capacity of emerging leaders at my school and within the division.”

Alexandra Stewart - Teacher, Dr. Donald Massey School

University of British Columbia - Master of Education in Special Education

“My learning has far exceeded my expectations. I learned about how multiple disabilities impact the individual, the current research on what works best for teaching and learning with these disabilities and uncovered resources to put theory into practice. My program has significantly increased my self-efficacy to design an effective inclusive classroom where no student is left behind.”

Jennifer Williams - Assistant Principal, Argyll Centre/Metro Continuing Education

University of Alberta, Campus Saint-Jean - Master of Science in Education, Leadership and School Administration

“The course work that I completed supported my continued journey in the area of anti-racism, responding to the Truth & Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action, multiple and varied assessment strategies, and issues impacting bilingual programs. ... I know that by continuing to develop expertise in such important areas affecting education, I am now better equipped to support and foster success for individual students.”

Nicole Nelubowich - Teacher, Oliver School

Bellarmino University - Master of Arts in Education, Teacher Leadership and Trauma Informed Practice

“I have gained a deep understanding of childhood trauma and the effects on learning and behaviors. With this information I am able to implement strategies that create a safe learning community accepting of all students. ... I plan to share the culturally responsive teaching strategies with my colleagues so benefits can be seen school-wide. Some of these strategies include understanding each student’s cultural background, inviting families to share their culture, ensuring resources and curricular objectives contain diverse perspectives and fully dissecting my own conscious and unconscious biases.”

Lindsay Misiwich - Teacher, Ross Sheppard School

Royal Roads University – Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management

"I have learned how to provide evidence-based assessment and intervention of reading difficulties, writing difficulties, oral language difficulties, complex cases, and methods of educational research. During the final phase of my program, I completed a culminating capstone project, which allowed me to integrate my knowledge and skills that I have acquired during the program into a 3-session professional development series for teachers."

Kelsey Reiner - Teacher, Scott Robertson School

University of Alberta - Certificate in Teaching Students with Complex Communication Needs

"This certificate expanded my knowledge of emergent and conventional literacy, emergent numeracy, and alternative and augmentative communication (AAC)."

Cory MacTaggart - Principal, Dr. Lila Fahlman School

Concordia University of Edmonton – Master of Education in Educational Leadership

"... [T]his research highlights the impact of working as a community to create intentional spaces for Indigenous teachings and learning. ... This collaborative research provides insights into the importance of weaving Indigenous knowledge in meaningful ways and seeking truth alongside children, families, Knowledge Keepers, Elders, teachers, and community. In the spirit of reconciliation, we must seek the truth and work to create more inclusive and belonging spaces through collaborations with Indigenous colleagues."

Amanda Donst - Teacher, Jasper Place School

University of Alberta - Certificate in Teaching Students with Complex Communication Needs

"The three courses I took in emergent literacy, conventional literacy and numeracy have improved my ability to help my students succeed in the classroom. As I was taking the courses I was immediately able to use the strategies I gained in the classes to support my students' learning."

Denise Alexander - Teacher, Coronation School

University of Ottawa - Master of Education in Second Language Education

"Through my coursework, I gained knowledge and expertise in how to best support second language learners, linguistically, socially, and culturally. This applies not only to my work as an FSL teacher, but also to my work with the many ESL students in our district. An unexpected but incredible blessing of this program was its focus on culturally inclusive, anti-racist education."

Anna Burn - Department Head, J. Percy Page School

University of Alberta - Graduate Certificate in School Leadership

"I have been able to better understand and apply the TQS and LQS framework through an anti-racism lens. The coursework will lead me to become a stronger leader, develop evidence-based practices in my teaching and leadership, and develop an understanding of local, provincial, national, and international issues and trends and their implications for education. This was all done with the ultimate goal of being able to better support my students, school, and district."