

DATE: November 26, 2024

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Funds for the Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff (2025-2026 and 2026-2027)

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 both the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 operating budgets is requested to support the Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff. A commitment of funds for two budget years is being requested in order to implement a new trial process that gives teachers the option of applying for either one or two years of support.

Through the Professional Improvement Program, teachers can access tuition and leave support for post-secondary coursework as per clause 9 of the Teachers’ Collective Agreement. A commitment 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.
- 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”.
- In 2024-2025, the approved allocation of \$1,300,000 for this program was 32 per cent of the maximum possible allocation, compared to 34 per cent of the maximum for the previous year (Attachment II).
- 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 the 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 for support granted through this program. The commitment is for one year of active service in the Division for each year of tuition support and three years of active service for a full-time leave with an allowance. Part-time leaves are prorated accordingly.
- For the 2024-2025 Professional Improvement Program, programs of study were related to counseling, mental health and trauma-informed education, as well as leadership and inclusive learning. Support was also granted for programs related to literacy, social justice, diversity and equity, as well as curriculum studies, mathematics and science.
- Of the 150 requests for support through this program in 2024-2025, based on the relative strength of the applications, 37 applicants were granted the support they requested and were eligible to receive, 78 were granted partial support and 32 were not granted support. Gaps in alignment of the applications with Division priorities identified through the assessment process, combined with limited years of experience with the Division, accounted for the majority of the applications that were not recommended for support. One hundred and nine of the 150 (73 per cent) were first time applicants, while 41 (27 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 2024-2025 Professional Improvement Program was three per cent.
- A trial two-year application option will be implemented this year (Attachment III). This will allow teachers to submit a request for either one or two years of support within one application.
- With the two year application option, the program would need a commitment of funds from both the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 budgets.
- An allocation of funds from the 2025-2026 budget would support post-secondary studies that would take place between July 1, 2025 and August 31, 2026.
- To provide continued support for Year 2 requests, the program would also be committing to funds that will be formally brought forward with the 2026-2027 budget request.

- A maximum of 50 per cent of the funds for 2025-2026 would be allocated toward Year 2 requests. Those funds would support the second year of two-year applications for courses that take place between July 1, 2026 and August 31, 2027. Funding would be based on final budget approval.
- The Division is committed to supporting professional learning for staff in a number of ways. 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 activities for staff. These include sessions offered through Curriculum and Learning Supports, Specialized Learning 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’s Strategic Plan.
Teacher Development Fund (administered through the ATA)	Through the Teachers’ Collective Agreement, the Division’s current commitment of funds to Edmonton Public Teachers Local 37 of the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) is \$875,000 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 2025-2026 operating budget be committed for the Professional Improvement Program - Teacher Certificated Staff for the purpose of granting professional improvement leaves and tuition support to teachers for the 2025-2026 school year.

That a commitment of support for Year 2 (2026-2027) applications not exceeding 50 per cent of the 2025-2026 allocation amount be approved by the Board of Trustees. A formal request for an allocation of funds from the 2026-2027 budget year will be brought to the Board of Trustees in the fall of 2025.

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 staff capacity. Overarching this is our shared responsibility to ensure that our students 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. Post-secondary studies that align with our Strategic Plan and areas of need have resulted in significant benefits across the Division. Attachment IV highlights reflective statements from staff who have participated in the Professional Improvement Program. Participants reflected on the positive impact a deeper understanding of topics related to Indigenous ways of learning, diversity, equity, anti-racism and reconciliation has had on their instructional practices. They spoke about creating culturally responsive classrooms and school communities that prioritize student well-being and promote a strong sense of belonging. Several program participants explained how the integration of new instructional strategies and perspectives, learned through their post-secondary studies, enhanced student engagement, wellness and learning outcomes. Many program participants also shared their learning with colleagues and collaborated on thoughtful changes to promote educational excellence.

The Professional Improvement Program is grounded in all four Division values. Collaboration is particularly evident in program participants' reflective statements, which describe sharing their learning and experience with colleagues. Program participants leverage school and catchment professional development activities to build capacity and foster shared understanding. Program participants who are consultants within the Division describe the ripple effect of their learning that occurs when they share their knowledge, skills and experience across the Division through sessions and targeted supports. As well, staff in both informal and formal leadership roles describe how they are using their learning to inspire and support staff and students.

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's Strategic Plan, those teachers, in turn, work collaboratively with colleagues to support the academic success and wellness of our students. The chart in Attachment I shows a 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.

Over the past few years, the number of applications for support through the Professional Improvement Program were fairly consistent (Attachment I). The number of applications increased from 118 for 2023-2024 to 150 for 2024-2025, which represents a 27.12 per cent increase over the previous year. Increased requests for support, as well as rising tuition costs, resulted in 32 applicants not receiving any support through this programming in the 2024-2025 school year, and many who were granted partial support received less funding than they requested. At this time, it is not clear whether the increase in the number of applications for support in 2024-2025 was an anomaly or a trend.

Post-secondary professional learning, grounded in evidence-based research, is essential for building staff capacity and supporting student learning. Maintaining the allocation of funds at the current level in 2025-2026 will allow a 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, this option is considered most appropriate.

NEXT STEPS

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

ATTACHMENTS

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

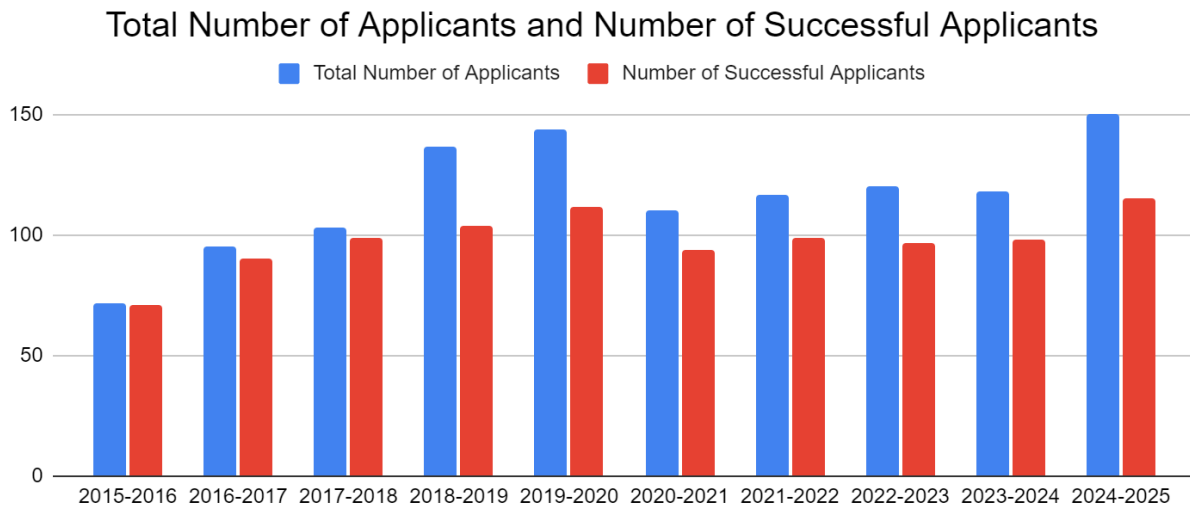
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Number of Teachers, Applicants and Successful Applicants

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF TEACHERS IN THE DIVISION	TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICANTS	NUMBER SUCCESSFUL	PERCENTAGE OF TEACHERS SUPPORTED*
2014-2015	4860	70	68	1.40%
2015-2016	4981	72	71	1.43%
2016-2017	5168	95	90	1.74%
2017-2018	5435	103	99	1.82%
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%
2023-2024	5806	118	97	1.67%
2024-2025	6001	150	115	1.92%

*This represents all successful applications with varying levels of support granted.

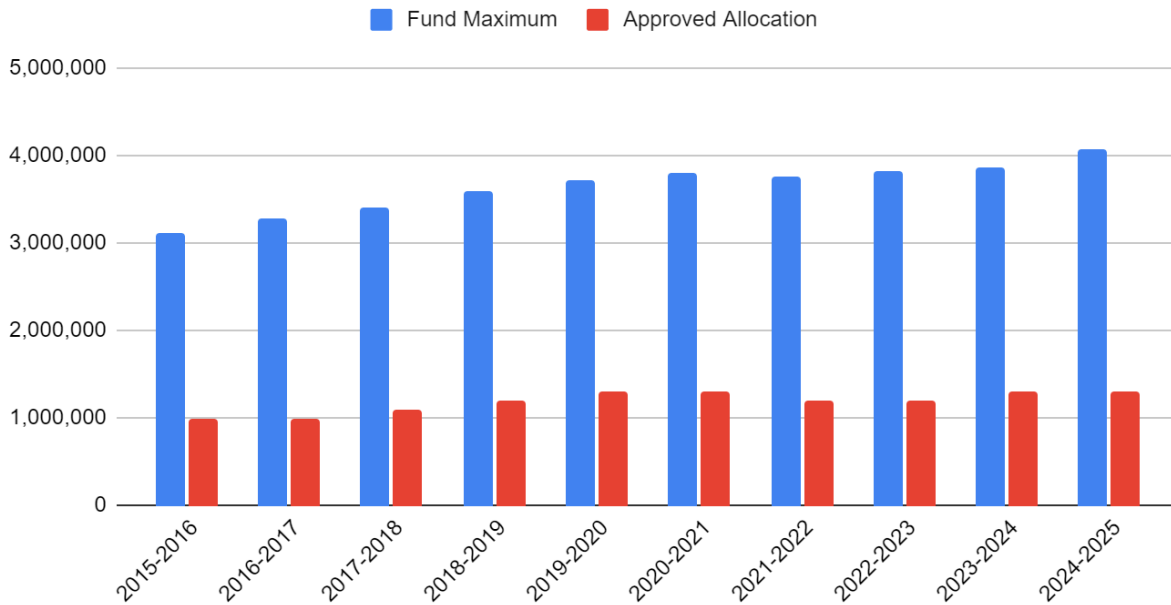
PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM - TEACHER CERTIFICATED STAFF



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
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
2023-2024	3,859,977	1,300,000	34%	6.325	474,546	780,000	1,254,546
2024-2025	4,071,363	1,300,000	32%	6.451	514,008	747,250	1,261,258

Fund Maximum and Approved Allocation



2024-2025 PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM TIMELINE

Activity	Year 1 Dates
Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff announced on Division Staff News and application available on Connect for support in 2025-2026 and 2026-2027	Oct. 31, 2024
Information meetings for interested staff (4:00 - 6:00 p.m. Google Meet)	Nov. 19 and 25, 2024
Obtain data to calculate maximums as per Clause 9.2.8 of the Teachers' Collective Agreement	Nov. 30, 2024
Due date for applications	Jan. 10, 2025
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 a committee of leadership staff 	Nov. 1, 2024 – Feb. 14, 2025
Review of applications	Feb. 6 – 14, 2025
Compile background information with input from assessors	Feb. 18 – Mar. 7, 2025
Recommendation submitted for approval	Mar. 12, 2025
Approval of leaves and tuition support	Mar. 19, 2025
Communication of support granted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Applicants notified; letters and agreements sent to successful applicants ● Posted on Connect 	Mar. 20 - 31, 2025

Selection of Reflective Statements: Benefits of Program Participation 2023-2024 Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff

Jason Ashmore, Teacher, awâsis waciston School

University of Alberta - Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies with a specialization in Technology in Education

Incorporating culturally relevant teaching methods and strategies that resonate with Indigenous students is expected to improve engagement, understanding, and achievement in mathematics. I am equipped with innovative, research-based approaches to teaching mathematics, which I am eager to apply in the classroom to provide more effective and dynamic instruction. Furthermore, by sharing the insights and techniques gained from this program with my colleagues, we can collectively enhance our teaching strategies to benefit all students, fostering a collaborative growth environment where everyone's contribution is valued and acknowledged.

Tanasha Dortch, Teacher, David Thomas King School

Yorkville University - Master of Education in Educational Leadership with a focus on Educational Administration

I have gained in depth knowledge on leadership skills and practices that support diversity, antiracism and reconciliation. These skills will directly support the Division's strategic plan towards building outstanding learning opportunities for all students and advancing action towards anti-racism and reconciliation. In the short term I see implementing culturally responsive teaching practices that support students' voice and choice in my classroom. Long range I strive to shift power imbalances and support students of marginalized groups in ways that improve academic achievement and their overall well being.

Betty Fu, Program Coordinator, Curriculum and Learning Supports

University of Alberta - Master of Education in Secondary Education, K-12 Science Cohort

Through the support of the program, I was able to take courses in curriculum, leadership, and research. I was able to use what I learned through these courses to support my work as a program coordinator working on developing science resources to support the new curriculum. I was able to increase my knowledge in research-driven instructional approaches and deepen my understanding of curriculum. I took this knowledge and shared it with the teachers and consultants that I work with.

Jocelyn Grant, Teacher, David Thomas King School

Yorkville University - Master of Education in Educational Leadership with a focus on Educational Administration

Diversity and the Indigenization of Education have been recurring themes in my courses, and I'm beginning to feel more comfortable with engaging in and facilitating conversations around Inclusion, Anti-Racism and Reconciliation. Within my school context, I'm interested in examining and using a framework ... on Culturally Responsive Teaching - practices that can promote authentic engagement, rigor, and reduce the achievement gap in linguistically diverse students.

Val Johnstone, Teacher, Parkallen School

University of British Columbia - Master of Education in Literacy Education

The fourth course I took this past summer was “Place Based Literacies”. It stretched me to consider my own bias and place as an educator and really took me outside my comfort zone to explore the learnings of the Land and those who were first on this land. I have begun a “walking curriculum” with my students this fall, which is taking us out of the traditional classroom, onto the land to learn a more Indigenous way of learning. One of the projects for this course was so highly valued by my Professor that together with her help, I have submitted it for publication.

Shannon Kulchisky, Curriculum Coordinator, Beacon Heights School

University of Alberta - Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies with a specialization in Structured Literacy and Reading Science

Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) provides students with explicit strategies for planning, drafting, and revising their writing, while also promoting self-regulation skills. This shift in writing instruction will not only improve students' ability to communicate effectively but also empower them with lifelong skills in goal setting, self-monitoring, and reflection. This is a major benefit for EPSB, as it equips our students with essential skills that go beyond the classroom and prepares them for future academic and personal success. The ripple effect has already begun to spread beyond my school. Staff members who have participated in collaborative sessions are sharing these strategies with teachers from other schools, multiplying the impact of these practices throughout EPSB. By fostering a division-wide community of practice, we are building a shared commitment to literacy excellence and student success.

Evan Lock, Teacher, Bessie Nichols School

University of Alberta - Master of Education in Educational Studies

The coursework, focused on educational leadership, has equipped me with the knowledge and tools to effectively manage and inspire teams, pursue a common vision, and foster a positive school culture. This knowledge enables me to better understand the academic research body around educational leadership and better implement evidence-based strategies in the classroom and beyond. This will help ensure that our educational practices are grounded in the latest research, ultimately improving student outcomes. I have been able to share new strategies and insights gained from my studies, fostering a collaborative professional learning community.

Darryl MacKinnon, Teacher, Spruce Avenue School

Walden University - Master of Science in Education with a specialization in Science

One of the major benefits that I feel that was derived from this program was the ability to find new ways to create effective learning environments that are engaging, supportive, and respectful. I have learned new and research based methods that will allow me to foster positive relationships with students and their families, and to build a sense of community in my classroom.

Marija Murray, Teacher, Braemar School

University of Calgary - Graduate Diploma towards Master of Education in Interdisciplinary Studies

In the long term, the leadership skills I developed enabled me to advocate for mental health awareness and equity, helping to foster policies that prioritized student well-being. This allowed me to contribute positively to the school community by creating a more supportive, inclusive environment and helping to address broader mental health challenges within the division.

Jana Nelson, Department Head - Math/Literacy and Numeracy, Institutional Services

University of Wyoming - Doctor of Philosophy in Education with a specialization in Curriculum and Instruction and a focus on Mathematics Education

By engaging in advanced coursework and research my understanding of effective mathematics teaching strategies and curriculum design will deepen. This expertise will allow me to implement innovative instructional practices immediately, improving student engagement and achievement in mathematics. The skills and knowledge acquired through the program will empower me to lead long-term initiatives aimed at improving mathematics education across multiple grade levels. As I grow as an educational leader, I will be well-positioned to take on roles that influence district-wide policies and practices, contributing to a culture of excellence in mathematics education within Edmonton Public Schools.

Roxanne Olsen, Teacher, Dr. Lila Fahlman School

University of Alberta - Master of Education in Elementary Education with a specialization in Curriculum and Pedagogy

These learning experiences have enabled me to be more effective in my work by supporting the literacy development of my students across curricular areas. I have been able to focus on connecting literacy with mathematics and immerse my learning in academic research to strengthen language and numeracy skills. I feel more confident in building a classroom community where students are engaged learners and have a strong sense of belonging in our school community. Throughout my learning, the importance of connecting academic competencies, such as critical thinking skills, is necessary for students to achieve high levels of learning.

Janice Pinnock, Diversity Education Consultant, Specialized Learning Supports

Western University – Master in Professional Education in the Field of Equity, Diversity and Social Justice

The program has equipped me with a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical frameworks and practical strategies necessary for advancing diversity, and equity in educational settings. This knowledge allows me to offer more effective strategies to educators and division staff. The skills and insights gained through my studies have greatly enhanced my ability to collaborate with my team to deliver impactful anti-racism training sessions. I am now able to address complex issues with greater confidence and sensitivity, helping educators develop a deeper understanding of racism and effective strategies for combating it. With advanced training, I have been able to foster stronger partnerships with educators, school leaders, and other stakeholders. My ability to facilitate meaningful conversations and collaborations around diversity and equity has been greatly enhanced, leading to more impactful efforts within our schools.

David Tran, Assistant Principal, Esther Starkman School

University of Alberta – Master of Education in Educational Studies

My work aligns with the Division's vision of fostering equitable learning environments, ensuring that all students receive the support they need to succeed. I am committed to leveraging my experiences to create a more inclusive, supportive, and equitable educational landscape for all students. Together, we can transform our schools into environments where diversity is celebrated, and every student feels empowered to thrive. By cultivating a culture of belonging, support, and advocacy, we can ensure that all students have access to quality education and feel valued and respected within our school communities. I firmly believe that through education, we can empower individuals who, in turn, can transform the world.

Alisha Wollmann, Teacher, Thelma Chalifoux School

Yorkville University - Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology

This program has deepened my understanding of developmental and emotional challenges, allowing me to create a more supportive and inclusive classroom environment. My ability to provide a trauma informed classroom through the strategies learned in my courses has made my classroom a safe place for all students and staff. With the knowledge and skills I am gaining, I can tailor my teaching strategies to meet the unique needs of each student, fostering both their academic and social-emotional growth. This, in turn, promotes a more positive learning atmosphere and reduces behavioral issues, benefiting not just my students but the entire school community. Moreover, my advanced training allows me to collaborate more effectively with colleagues, parents, and support staff, ensuring that we implement strategies that promote the well-being of our students and support to families of diverse learners. The investment made by our school board in my education reflects a commitment to enhancing the quality of education for our most vulnerable learners, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for the district as a whole.