EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Recommendation Report

Date	November 10, 2026
To	Board of Trustees
From	Ron Thompson, Superintendent of Schools
Subject	Funds for 2027-2029 Professional Improvement Program - Teacher Certificated Staff
Originator	Angela Anderson, Chief Human Resources Officer
Resource Staff	Renée Thomson
References	Division Strategic Plan 2026-30 Teachers' Collective Agreement-September 1, 2020 to August 31, 2024, Clause 9)

ISSUE

An allocation of funds from the 2027-2028 and 2028-2029 operating budgets is requested to support the Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff. This two-year funding commitment is necessary to continue to offer teachers the flexibility of applying for either one or two years of program 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. 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **That an allocation of $1,450,000 from the 2027-2028 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 2027-2028 school year.**
2. **That a commitment of support not exceeding 50 per cent of the 2027-2028 allocation amount be approved for the 2028-2029 Professional Improvement Program - Teacher Certificated Staff applications. A formal request for an allocation of funds from the 2028-2029 operating budget will be brought to the Board of Trustees in the fall of 2027.**

BACKGROUND

Edmonton Public Schools recognizes that staff professional development is a critical aspect in supporting successful outcomes for students, as well as for effective succession planning. The Professional Improvement

Program – Teacher Certificated Staff is in direct support of Board Policy GE.BP - Organization for Instruction, which affirms that "effective teachers who have strong knowledge of pedagogy and subject content knowledge, make a significant difference to student learning and achievement." Grounded in the Division's core values of accountability, collaboration, equity, and integrity, the program aligns with the Division Strategic Plan. In doing so, it advances our vision of "Empowering students to shape their futures and communities" and reinforces our mission: "We provide high-quality public education that supports students' academic success and builds compassion and connection."

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 Strategic Plan and areas of need. A comparison of the number 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.

In November 2025, the Board of Trustees approved an allocation of $1,350,000 from the 2026-2027 operating budget to fund the Professional Improvement Program - Teacher Certificated Staff. These funds are supporting professional improvement leaves and tuition support for teachers in the 2026-2027 school year.

The Board of Trustees also committed to an allocation of funds from the 2027-2028 operating budget to support the second year of a trial two-year application process. The pilot allowed teachers to submit requests for either one or two years of support within one application. The commitment of funds for 2027-2028 could not exceed 50 per cent of the 2026-2027 allocation amount and was provisional based on final budget approval.

The two-year application option has been piloted since the 2025–2026 school year to allow for a full review cycle. Program participants were surveyed to assess the impact and effectiveness of the trial. Overwhelmingly positive feedback was received from the 82 program participants who responded to the survey questions. Participants view the two-year application as a significant program benefit that saves them time and energy as they balance professional, academic and personal commitments. Participants also appreciated funding certainty that better aligns with university timelines. While some program participants noted the need to adjust their plans for their second year of studies, due to changes in university course offerings, those changes were accommodated. Following a successful pilot and positive participant feedback, the two-year application option will now be offered on an ongoing basis.

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, a 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 a 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 2026-2027, the approved allocation of $1,350,000 for this program was 29 per cent of the maximum possible allocation, compared to 31 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 include 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 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.
- In total, we received 140 applications for support for the 2026-2027 school year.
  - Through the 2025-2027 application process, 56 applicants requested support for the 2026-2027 school year.
  - Through the 2026-2028 application process, 84 applicants requested support for the 2026-2027 school year. Thirty-eight applications were for support in 2026-2027 only. Forty-six applications were for support in both 2026-2027 and 2027-2028.
  - Based on the relative strength of all the 2026-2027 applications, 41 applicants were granted the support they requested and were eligible to receive and 74 were granted partial support. Support was not recommended for 25 applicants.
- Based on the relative strength of the requests for support in 2027-2028, 17 applicants were provisionally granted the support they requested and were eligible to receive, 23 were provisionally granted partial support, and six were not recommended for support.
- The majority of applications for support in 2026-2027 were for programs related to counseling and trauma-informed education, leadership, inclusive learning, as well as health and wellness. Support was also requested for programs related to mathematics, science/STEM, literacy, curriculum studies, as well as equity and diversity.
- 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 2026-2027 Professional Improvement Program was $34,804, which is 2.6 per cent of the total allocation amount.
- 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 - Teacher Certificated Staff
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 has committed funds to Edmonton Public Teachers Local 37 of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) to administer and distribute funds in support of professional development activities and 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.

CONSIDERATIONS and ANALYSIS

Supporting teachers in their post-secondary studies advances the Division's commitment to student success and well-being. By engaging in university coursework, teachers acquire current, evidence-based research, which translates into impactful and innovative learning opportunities within classrooms and school communities. As highlighted in the reflective statements in Attachment IV, teachers participating in the Professional Improvement Program reported meaningful shifts in their practice. Teachers noted a deepened understanding of Indigenous worldviews, equity, and diversity. Participants highlighted that they better understand how to create classrooms and school communities that prioritize student well-being and belonging, while integrating evidence-based strategies to elevate engagement and achievement. Furthermore, several participants shared that coursework in trauma-informed education deepened their compassion and empathy, enabling them to respond to student needs with greater care and understanding.

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 each year by supporting a small number of teaching staff to participate in post-secondary studies aligned with our Division's Strategic Plan, those teachers, in turn, share their learning and experience with colleagues to foster shared understanding. This expertise ripples across the Division through professional development, communities of practice, peer

collaboration and mentorship. Ultimately, this shared learning strengthens our ability to help every student thrive in a supportive, connected school community.

We are requesting an increased allocation of funds to support the 2027-2029 Professional Improvement Program. As indicated in Attachment I, the Division has steadily expanded teaching staff over the past several years in an effort to keep pace with our growing student population and classroom complexities. Since 2022, the number of teachers in our Division has expanded from 5,591 to 6,621, which is 1,030 additional teachers, an 18.4 per cent increase. As the number of teaching staff continues to grow, we anticipate a corresponding increase in demand for the Professional Improvement Program. An increase in the program's funding allocation will proactively address rising post-secondary tuition costs, while continuing to support teacher certificated staff to develop a deeper understanding of educational theories and practice, curricula and subject content in support of Division students.

NEXT STEPS

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

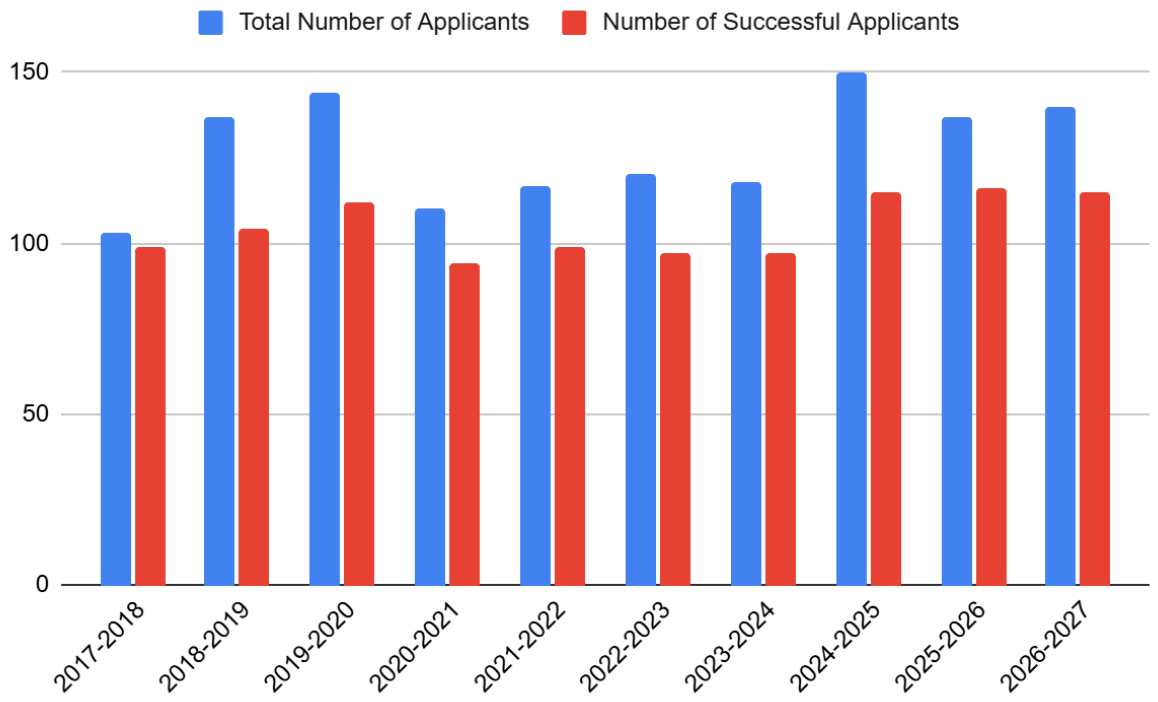
ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I	Comparison by Year: Total Number of Teacher Certificated 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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ATTACHMENT I

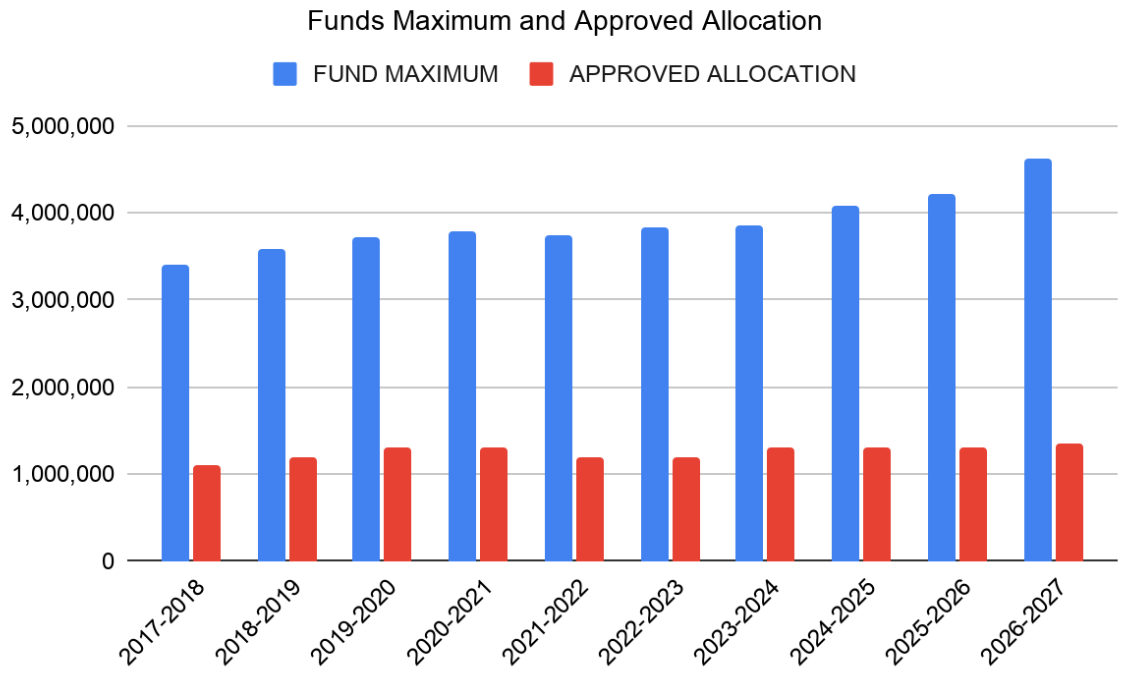
Comparison of Total Number of Teachers and Number of Successful Applicants				
Year	**Number of Teachers (Sept. 30)**	**Total Number of Applicants**	**Number of Successful Applicants**	**Percentage of Teachers Supported**
2017-2018	5518	103	99	1.79%
2018-2019	5737	137	104	1.81%
2019-2020	5832	144	112	1.92%
2020-2021	5614	110	94	1.67%
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%
2025-2026	6261	137	116	1.85%
2026-2027	6621	140	115	1.74%



ATTACHMENT II

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
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
2025-2026	4,222,075	1,300,000	31%	7.470	479,882	780,000	1,259,882
2026-2027	4,614,675	1,350,000	29%	7.955	615,135	700,060	1,315,195



An allocation of funds in the amount of not greater than $675,000 was provisionally approved for 2027-2028 applicants.

ATTACHMENT III

PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM TIMELINE

2027-2028 Activities	Dates
Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff (2027-2028/2028-2029) announced on Division Staff News and application available on Connect	October 31, 2026
Information meetings for interested staff (4:00 - 6:00 p.m. Google Meet)	November 17 and 23, 2026
Obtain data to calculate maximums as per Clause 9.2.8 of the Teachers' Collective Agreement	November 30, 2026
Due date for applications	January 8, 2027
Processing of applications ● 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	November 2, 2026 – February 12, 2027
Review of applications	February 4 – 12, 2027
Compile background information with input from assessors	February 15 – March 5, 2027
Recommendation submitted for approval	March 12, 2027
Approval of leaves and tuition support	March 19, 2027
Communication of support granted ● Applicants notified; letters and agreements sent to successful applicants ● Posted on Connect	March 22 - 26, 2027

ATTACHMENT IV

Selection of Reflective Statements: Benefits of Program Participation
2024-2025 Professional Improvement Program – Teacher Certificated Staff

Jason Ashmore, Teacher, Hospital School Campuses
University of Alberta - Master of Education in Educational Studies
Ultimately, this professional improvement experience will strengthen my ability to serve Edmonton Public Schools as a confident, informed, and collaborative leader. By integrating research-based leadership practices with the Division's commitment to excellence and equity, I will be better positioned to contribute to sustainable school improvement and to advance the Division's priorities in teaching, learning, and community engagement.

Heather Belanger, Assistant Principal, Soraya Hafez School
University of Alberta - Master of Education in Studies in Educational Leadership
Ongoing development of knowledge and skills has allowed me to specialize in educational leadership, gain further insight and understanding of Indigenous worldviews, and conduct a research assignment. These opportunities have significantly bolstered my pedagogical techniques and professional credibility.

Patrick Crowell-Bour, Principal, Queen Alexandra School
Concordia University of Edmonton - Master of Education in Educational Leadership
The skills and knowledge I am gaining, combined with job-embedded opportunities to apply them, are instilling incredible growth both professionally and personally... Collective efficacy has been shown to be at the heart of effectiveness in education, and my current program enhances my own efficacy immediately; as leaders have the opportunity to influence the efficacy of many others, the impacts of this growth can reach numerous staff and ultimately enhance student learning for years to come.

Rajia Fayad, Department Head, Institutional Services Schools
Western University - Master of Professional Education with a specialization in Diversity, Equity and Social Justice
In the short term, the coursework I am undertaking—particularly in the areas of Indigenous education, anti-oppressive pedagogy, and equity-focused curriculum design— has already deepened my ability to design learning environments where a wider range of students feel seen, supported, and academically capable. This learning is informing my day-to-day decisions in the classroom, from how I structure mathematical tasks to how I respond to the complex social realities many students bring with them. As a high-school mathematics teacher working with diverse learners, including many who face systemic barriers, these insights are immediately improving the relevance, accessibility, and responsiveness of my instruction.

Kym Francis, Curriculum Coordinator, Bannerman School
University of Alberta - Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Psychology with a specialization in Special Education
I engaged in coursework that deepened my understanding of quantitative and qualitative research methods, enhancing my ability to utilize data effectively to support student learning, evaluate the effectiveness of instructional methods, and assess the impact of various learning programs... The knowledge and strategies I have acquired will directly impact my students by providing them with more personalized and effective support in their learning journeys. In the long term, these advancements will contribute to Edmonton Public Schools' goal of fostering inclusive and high-achieving learning environments, ensuring student success.

Jackie Fuga, Teacher, Hillcrest School
University of Alberta - Master of Education in Educational Psychology with a specialization in School Counselling
I am able to approach complex situations with a more informed and intentional lens, and I can offer new strategies and insights to my colleagues as we work together to meet student needs. I also feel I am able to address behaviour issues with more compassion, and better understanding how to support these students during and after incidents.

Philip Girgis, Teacher, Hillcrest School
University of Alberta - Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies with a specialization in Trauma Sensitive Practice
This course has deepened my understanding of how trauma impacts students' development, behavior, and learning. I have gained a deeper awareness of the subtle ways trauma can manifest in young people, allowing me to respond with more empathy, effectiveness, and professionalism... The coursework has equipped me with new strategies and tools to foster safe, inclusive, and supportive classroom environments. I now have several practices I can turn to that enhance emotional regulation and build resilience among students.

Kerry Harvey, Assistant Principal, S. Bruce Smith School
University of Alberta - Master of Education in Educational Psychology with a specialization in Special Education
Without a doubt, I have learned more about how to teach students to read and write in the past 12 months, than I ever learned in my 15 years as an educator prior... I have also learned how to be a research informed educator, and how to access academic studies to ensure the decisions I make around instructional practices, assessments, and programming, are grounded in research and data... The benefit to SLS and EPSB is that I am now a more informed employee and I am excited to share my knowledge and expertise with the colleagues I work with and support. And of course, to use my new knowledge to support struggling learners to achieve their full potential.

Chelsey Hawthorne, Teacher. S. Bruce Smith School
City University in Canada - Master of Education in School Counselling
The School Counselling program at City University provided me with a strong foundation in trauma-informed, person-centered, and multicultural approaches that directly support the diverse needs of our students and align closely with the Edmonton Public School District's commitment to equity and inclusion. This training has equipped me to respond to students' academic, social, and emotional needs with greater understanding and intentionality, creating safer, more connected learning environments.

Abbass Hojeij, Assistant Principal, Rosslyn School
Yorkville University - Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology
This program has deepened my understanding of student mental health, strengthened my ability to respond to student needs with empathy and evidence-based strategies, and improved how I support both students and colleagues in challenging situations. In addition, this professional growth will allow me to contribute more meaningfully to our school community by integrating mental wellness into the culture of learning, creating safer and more supportive spaces for all students.

Jenessa Lowe, Teacher, Athlone School
University of Alberta - Master of Education in Educational Studies
After learning new evidence-based strategies, I promptly integrated them into my Tier 1 classroom instruction. The positive impact was both rapid and significant... I now have a clear understanding of evidence-based instructional practices that effectively support vocabulary development among English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners.

Stephanie Luk, Teacher, Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour School
University of Virginia - Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction
The program has strengthened both my theoretical grounding and my practical expertise, especially in the areas of curriculum design, culturally responsive pedagogy, and multilingual (or English as Another Language) learner support... In the immediate term, my expanded knowledge and skills will enhance the instructional experiences I design for students. I am now better equipped to support English Learners and multilingual families through responsive assessment practices, differentiated instruction, and evidence-based literacy approaches. This will contribute to stronger student engagement, more effective early interventions, and improved learning outcomes in my classroom.

Scott Markine, Principal, Donald R. Getty School
University of Alberta - Master of Education in Educational Psychology with a specialization in Special Education
The deep, evidence-based knowledge acquired has been immediately leveraged to strengthen the school's Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). Crucially, this specialized expertise has enabled me to support the continued development and implementation of effective, targeted Tier Two intervention strategies, a critical next step for our school in addressing the 25-30% of students identified as struggling readers. By providing research-informed guidance on assessment interpretation and intervention selection, the program ensures that instructional decisions are data-driven, systematic, and aligned with the Science of Reading.

Ashleigh Murasiranwa, Teacher, Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour School
Yorkville University - Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology
The courses I've completed so far have deepened my understanding of how mental health, culture, and lived experiences shape student behaviour and their ability to learn. I've been able to apply what I'm learning directly into my classroom—whether it's recognizing signs of anxiety in students, using more effective communication strategies, or adapting lessons to better support neurodiverse learners.

Jillian Pidcock, Teacher, awâsis waciston School
University of Alberta - Master of Education in Educational Studies
My research focussed on how to enhance teacher confidence in delivering Indigenous content in the K-3 Science classroom... One such change is embedding Indigenous concepts (e.g., wahkohtowin, gift economy) to guide expectations within the classroom. By living these teachings each day, we authentically honour the traditional teachings and implement Indigenous foundational knowledge into the classroom for the benefit of all students, as required by the Teaching Quality Standards in Alberta.

Cheryl Popik, Assistant Principal, Grovenor School
University of Alberta - Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies, Structured Literacy and Reading Science
By completing the Graduate Certificate in Structured Literacy and Reading Science, I have deepened my understanding of how best to meet the literacy needs of all learners. I am now applying that knowledge not only with students in the division but also in collaboration with teachers... My goal is to remain in a role that allows me to coach, collaborate, and teach—using current research to support teachers in implementing evidence-based strategies that provide students with outstanding learning experiences.