EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Recommendation Report

Date	November 10, 2026
To	Board of Trustees
From	Ron Thompson, Superintendent of Schools
Subject	Funds for 2027-2028 Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program
Originator	Angela Anderson, Chief Human Resources Officer
Resource Staff	Renée Thomson
Reference	Division Strategic Plan 2026-30

ISSUE

An allocation of funds from the 2027-2028 operating budget is requested to support the Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program. Through this program, exempt staff can access tuition and leave support for post-secondary coursework. 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 exempt 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 program admission processes.

RECOMMENDATION

That an allocation of $140,000 from the 2027-2028 operating budget be approved for the Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program for the purpose of granting professional improvement leaves and tuition support to exempt staff for the 2027-2028 school year.

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 Exempt Staff Professional Improvement 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 "empowering students to shape their futures and communities", and our mission, which states that "we provide high-quality public education that supports students' academic success and builds compassion and connection."

Through this program, Division exempt staff have the opportunity to apply for tuition and leave support to participate in professional improvement activities that are aligned with the 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 few years (Attachment II) are included in this report.

In November 2025, the Board of Trustees approved an allocation of $140,000 from the 2026-2027 operating budget to fund the Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program. These funds are supporting professional improvement for exempt staff in the 2026-2027 school year.

RELATED FACTS

- The Professional Improvement Program ensures that exempt staff members across the Division have access to opportunities to enhance their professional capacity and stay current with industry standards and evidence-based research.
- Support for professional development assists in the attraction of exempt staff to the Division and in the retention of those employees.
- Exempt staff have the opportunity to apply for support in January for courses that take place between July 1, 2027, and August 31, 2028, or in September for courses that take place between December 1, 2027, and August 31, 2028 (Attachment III).
- The application process for this program 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 the Division Strategic Plan and identified areas of need. Additional considerations are the anticipated benefits to the Division, as well as connections to the applicants' professional growth plans and career goals.
- Successful applicants agree to a one-year return of service to Edmonton Public Schools for tuition support and three years for a full-time leave with an allowance; part-time leaves are prorated accordingly.
- For the 2026-2027 Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program, requests for support from exempt staff varied as greatly as their roles in the Division.
- Based on the relative strength of the 2026-2027 applications for the January intake, eight applicants were granted their full request for support. Six applications for the September intake are currently being assessed.
- 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 an allocation amount of $140,000 would be $4,200, which is three per cent of the total allocation. This has not been a material factor for this program to date because funds have not been fully used.
- 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 - Exempt Staff
Decision Unit Budgets	Funds are allocated for staff professional learning within decision units.
Central Decision Units	Central decision units allocate funds for the delivery of targeted professional learning courses for staff. These include sessions offered through Curriculum and Learning Supports, Specialized Learning Supports, Technology and Information Management and Human Resources, among others.

	Funds for Professional Learning - Exempt Staff
Professional Improvement Program	Tuition and leave support is available to exempt staff through the Professional Improvement Program for post-secondary coursework aligned with the Division's identified areas of need.
Bursaries and Scholarships	Staff are encouraged to access support through bursary programs and to explore scholarship opportunities through their post-secondary institution and other community organizations.

CONSIDERATIONS and ANALYSIS

There is a relatively small but growing pool of applicants to the Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program. Fluctuations in the support granted each year are significantly influenced by the nature of the requests for leaves and tuition support, as well as associated allowance and tuition costs. Based on the number of applications and the types of requests we have received over the past few years, it is anticipated that maintaining the allocation of funds for this program at the current level would adequately cover the requests for support in 2027-2028.

A selection of statements from staff members who were granted support through the Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program has been included with this report (Attachment IV). Program participants reflected on the benefits of their professional learning and how it has been effectively integrated into their work responsibilities. Post-secondary professional learning, grounded in evidence-based research, is critical to building staff capacity and supporting student learning. We continue to see strong demand for support through the Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program.

NEXT STEPS

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

ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

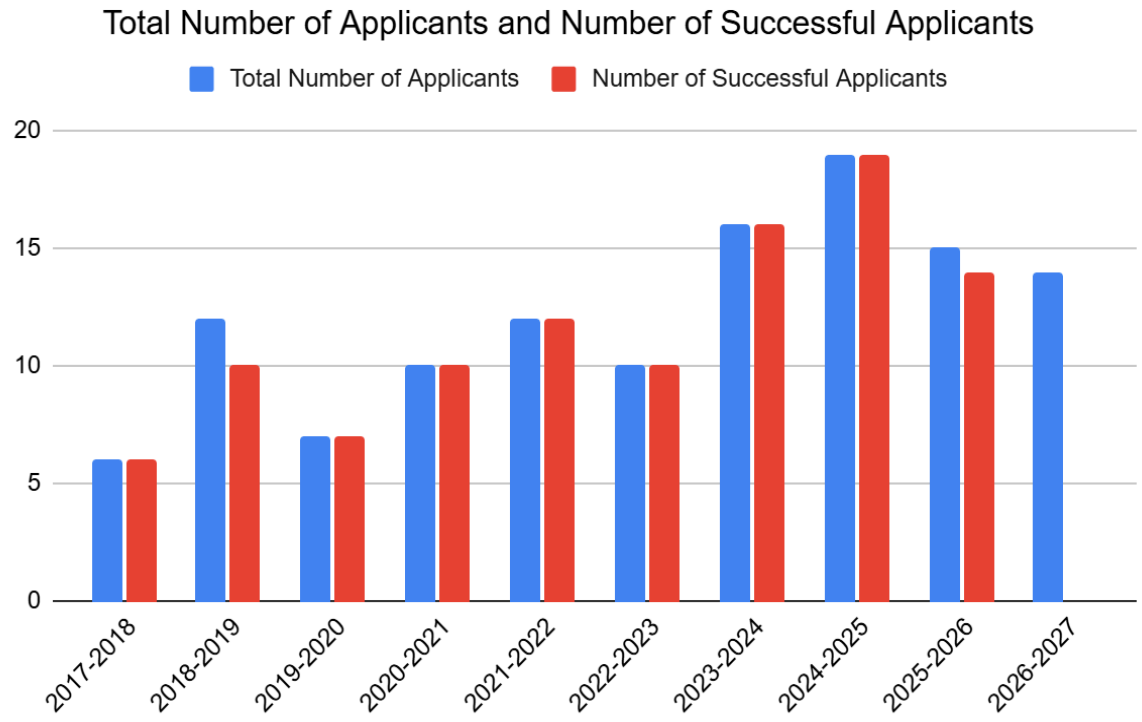
ATTACHMENT I Comparison by Year: Total Number of Applicants and Number of Successful Applicants
ATTACHMENT II Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program History
ATTACHMENT III Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program Timelines
ATTACHMENT IV Selection of Reflective Statements: Benefits of Program Participation

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ATTACHMENT I

Comparison of Total Number of Applicants and Number of Successful Applicants		
Year	**Total Number of Applicants**	**Number Successful**
2017-2018	6	6
2018-2019	12	10
2019-2020	7	7
2020-2021	10	10
2021-2022	12	12
2022-2023	10	10
2023-2024	16	16
2024-2025	19	19
2025-2026	15	14
2026-2027	14	8[1]

[1] Six applications from the September 2026 intake are currently being reviewed.



ATTACHMENT II

EXEMPT STAFF PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM HISTORY

YEAR	APPROVED ALLOCATION	APPROVED TOTAL LEAVE FTE	ACTUAL GRANTED FOR LEAVES	ACTUAL GRANTED FOR TUITION	TOTAL ACTUAL GRANTED FOR LEAVES & TUITION
2017-2018	$150,000	0.644	$47,129	$39,304	$86,433
2018-2019	$150,000	0.600	$47,147	$52,902	$100,049
2019-2020	$150,000	0.440	$32,699	$37,730	$70,429
2020-2021	$150,000	1.000	$67,572	$30,450	$98,022
2021-2022	$140,000	0.216	$19,564	$58,327	$77,891
2022-2023	$140,000	0.00	$0	$77,065	$77,065
2023-2024	$140,000	0.00	$0	$54,830	$54,830
2024-2025	$140,000	0.300	$10,229	$79,185	$89,414
2025-2026	$140,000	0.080	$4,648	$60,042	$64,690
2026-2027[1]	$140,000	0.000	$0	$55,253	$55,253

[1] Six applications from the September 2026 intake are currently being reviewed.

ATTACHMENT III

PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM TIMELINE

JANUARY 2027 APPLICATION INTAKE (for courses that take place between July 1, 2027 and August 31, 2028)	**Date**
Exempt Professional Improvement Program announced on Division Staff News and application package available on Connect	October 30, 2026
Information meeting for interested staff (4:00 - 6:00 p.m., Google Meet)	December 1, 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 16 - 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

SEPTEMBER 2027 APPLICATION INTAKE (for courses that take place between December 1, 2027 and August 31, 2028)	**Date**
Due date for applications	September 17, 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	September 20 - October 1, 2027
Review of applications ● Application packages prepared for committee review ● Review of applications completed	October 4 - 15, 2027
Compile background information with input from assessors	October 18 – 22, 2027
Recommendation submitted for approval	October 25, 2027
Approval of leaves and tuition support	October 29, 2027
Communication of support granted ● Applicants notified; letters and agreements sent to successful applicants ● Posted on Connect	November 1 - 5, 2027

ATTACHMENT IV

Selection of Reflective Statements: Benefits of Program Participation
2025-2026 Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program

Linda Derksen, Principal, Constable Daniel Woodall School (previously in an exempt position)
University of Alberta - Master of Education in Educational Psychology with a Specialization in Special Education
Interdisciplinary research from cognitive science, linguistics, and education has made clear how reading develops and what effective instruction looks like. Successful reading outcomes depend on high-quality core instruction grounded in the Science of Reading, universal screening that enables early identification of at-risk students, and timely, evidence-based intervention for those who need additional support. Through my learning in this program, I have the ability to work with colleagues to identify our at-risk students and implement a Multi-Tiered System of Support that will address the needs of all students - from strong core instructional practices aligned with the science of reading (Tier 1) to targeted and individualized interventions (Tiers 2 and 3). As a capping project, my colleague and I created a series of three professional learning sessions designed primarily for principals to build leadership capacity and support effective literacy implementation. I hope to share this learning with colleagues at the school, catchment and division levels.

Jayson Kralkay, Technical Analyst, Technology and Information Management
Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) - School of Health and Life Science, Disaster and Emergency Management Diploma
Through this program, I earned a NAIT Disaster and Emergency Management Diploma and developed practical skills in business continuity, disaster recovery, risk assessment, emergency planning, crisis communication, exercise design, and resilience. These skills can support the Division by helping identify risks, reduce impacts, improve communication, and support recovery when disruptions affect schools, staff, students, facilities, technology, or operations.

I am grateful for the support provided through the Professional Improvement Program and look forward to applying these skills to support preparedness, continuity, and resilience across the Division.

Brittany Paetsch, Mental Health Therapist, Hospital School Campuses / Victoria / J. Percy Page
University of Calgary - Master of Clinical Social Work with Families, Groups and Individuals
In the short term, the knowledge and skills gained through my graduate studies will enhance my ability to respond to the increasingly complex social, emotional, mental health, and behavioural needs of students. The program has strengthened my understanding of trauma-informed practice, mental health interventions, assessment, counselling approaches, ethical decision-making, and culturally responsive support strategies. These enhanced competencies will allow me to provide more effective direct support to students and families, contribute to stronger school-based interventions and prevention efforts.

My specialization in Clinical Social Work Practice has also strengthened my ability to support staff and school communities through consultation, advocacy, crisis response, and collaborative problem-solving. I believe this

will contribute to healthier, more inclusive, and more supportive learning environments where students are better positioned to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally.

Erin Regan, High School Completion Coach, Jasper Place School
University of Alberta - Master of School Counseling
In my current role, I have come to understand that supporting young people in academic success is closely connected to their emotional well-being, relationships, identity, and mental health.

The School Counselling program has strengthened my ability to provide support, recognize needs, and collaborate effectively with students, families, and community partners. I will continue to share my learning with colleagues and apply it in my work with the Indigenous student population and the broader school community!

Ultimately, it comes down to the benefit to students. My overall goal is to strengthen relationships, remove barriers, and help students feel supported, valued, and capable.