

# LEARNING LAB

*Supporting Student Success Through  
Skilled Trades, Apprenticeships, and  
Vocational Education*





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# Overview

- Learning Labs are designed to facilitate active learning, collaboration, and practical application of knowledge as it relates to system education leadership.
- Learning Labs are designed to be worked through independently or collaboratively. Learning Lab sessions will be offered at CASS Conferences, but the resources are also designed for use by individuals or teams outside of conference sessions.

## Connection to Research

- Learning Labs are used in various educational settings, including schools, universities, professional development programs, and corporate training, to enhance learning outcomes and provide a dynamic and immersive learning experience.
- Each Learning Lab includes relevant research related to the topic of the lab.

## Application

- Stories of practice case studies demonstrate the application of the concept within a school authority.
- Practical application and reflective exercises help solidify understanding of the material and allow participants to apply their learnings to their own context.
- Learning Lab topics can be applied to a variety of school authority contexts.

Learning

Lab

## Study

- Each Learning Lab allows participants to deepen their understanding of a specific topic and reflect on related case studies from practice.
- Interactive and hands-on elements keep participants actively engaged in their learning process.
- The focus on real-world application aids in developing practical skills that can be directly applied in professional or personal contexts.

## Synthesis

- Stories of practice case studies are accompanied by synthesis questions designed to allow participants to synthesize their learning and consider applications to their own context and/or professional growth as a system education leader.
- When Learning Labs are done in a collaborative setting, the sharing of diverse ideas and experiences can contribute to system education leaders' learning.



# Introduction

- Premier Danielle Smith issued a mandate letter in June 2023 to the Minister of Education, emphasizing the importance of providing Alberta students with a world-class education. The Premier's letter outlines her expectations that Alberta should offer greater educational choices with tailored options that best suit individual student needs, thereby enabling them to pursue career paths with the most plentiful and lucrative employment opportunities.
- In 2021, the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) published a report titled [Supporting Student Choice: Successes and Challenges in Recruiting Teachers](#). This report explores supporting student choices in pursuing careers in skilled trades and technologies. Feedback from 63 participating school authorities revealed that authorities are collaborating with industry, communities, and post-secondary institutions to enhance programming, although challenges with sustainability remain. The findings detail four calls to action to improve student choice and success: building curriculum connections, providing professional learning for career pathways, demonstrating value, and developing a provincial framework.
- This Learning Lab is designed to explore and demonstrate inspiring practices from Alberta school authorities that promote skilled trades and technologies as viable career paths for students. It aims to highlight effective strategies within the provincial school system that increase student interest and enhance their success in school and life. The Lab will also illustrate how three school authorities are actively implementing the calls to action, to further enhance educational programming.
- This Learning Lab has been designed to align with the following Professional Practice Standards:



## CEP Credits

- For information on credit allocation for the completion of this Learning Lab, please refer to the [Accreditation Requirements](#) document on the CASS CEP website.

# Introduction

## Learning Outcomes

Participants in this Learning Lab will:

- **Investigate and apply insights from research and case studies**, including analyzing the calls to action from the 2021 CASS report [Supporting Student Choice](#) (CASS, 2021).
- **Identify and leverage resources** to lead initiatives that inspire students to pursue careers in trades and technologies, evaluating their effectiveness within respective contexts.
- **Analyze research and stories of practice**, exploring opportunities for replication, adaptation, or establishment of partnerships based on the successful models presented.
- **Actively participate and contribute** to the Learning Lab, using it as a platform to develop strategies for professional capacity building within the context of skilled trades and vocational education.

## Guiding Questions

- How do Alberta system leaders inspire students to pursue careers in skilled trades and technologies as viable career paths?
- What successes and challenges do system education leaders face when implementing programs for skilled trades and technologies?
- How can these successes and challenges be leveraged to achieve optimal learning outcomes for all students?

These questions are designed to explore the practical application of strategies and partnerships in promoting skilled trades, apprenticeships, and vocational education within system education leadership. They aim to identify effective approaches for enhancing student interest and success in these fields and to address the potential challenges that system leaders may encounter.

# Acknowledgements

This Learning Lab was created thanks to the generous contributions of system education leaders who provided invaluable insights and experiences related to skilled trades, apprenticeships, and vocational education. Their shared expertise has been instrumental in developing this learning opportunity for system leaders.

- **Alberta Education**, Conditional Grant Funding
- **College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) Trades Apprenticeships and Vocational Education (TAVE) Committee**
- **Mike McMann**, Superintendent, Fort Vermilion School Division
- **Karen Smith**, Associate Superintendent of Learning, Fort Vermilion School Division
- **Kurt Sacher**, Superintendent, Chinook's Edge School Division
- **Jackie Taylor**, Director, Community Learning Campus for Chinook's Edge School Division/Olds College and the Central Alberta Collegiate Institute
- **Dr. Reagan Weeks**, Superintendent, Prairie Rose School Division



# Related Research

## Background Information

Canada faces a critical and time-sensitive issue: its aging population. The Royal Bank of Canada has projected that one in four Canadians will be seniors by the end of the decade, marking a 17% increase from 2020 (RBC Economics, 2020). Combined with a youth unemployment rate of 16.7% as of August 2024 (Canada Youth Unemployment Rate, 2024.), this demographic shift creates an opportunity to inspire students to pursue careers in skilled trades and technologies. According to [Statistics Canada](#) (2022), the demand for skilled trades workers reached record highs in 2021. Job vacancies in the occupational category of "trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations" that require at least a trades or apprenticeship credential nearly doubled from late 2019 to late 2021.

In Alberta, the need for skilled labor is similarly pressing. The Government of Alberta's (2020) report, [Alberta 2030: Building Skills for Jobs](#), emphasized the importance of equipping students with the skills, knowledge, and competencies for fulfilling careers and called for increased transparency regarding labor market outcomes (p. 8). The aim of Alberta Education's (2019) 2019–2023 business plan is to expand opportunities for hands-on learning in apprenticeship, trades, and vocational education (p. 50).

In a synthesis report, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (OECD, 2014) noted that Canada's high school system, unlike those in countries like Germany or Switzerland, has limited vocational education tracks. The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (2018), in [Youth Skilled Trades Employment Strategy](#), reported that most students lack exposure to skilled trades and have a limited understanding of apprenticeship opportunities. Accessibility issues and significant stigmas around skilled trades are notable, with the Alberta Skills for Jobs Task Force (2020) recommending strategies to elevate the esteem and understanding of these careers.

Commissioned by the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum in 2018, the [Youth Trades Employment Strategy](#) research report highlighted that most students have limited exposure to skilled trade professions and lack an understanding of apprenticeship education or labor market opportunities (p. 5). The report also noted issues with accessibility, as some students reported that their high schools offered little or no trades programming. Furthermore, in 2020, the Alberta [Skills for Jobs Task Force](#) identified a persistent "significant stigma" associated with skilled trades and apprenticeship education (p. 5). Based on feedback from focus groups, industry roundtables, and an online survey of Albertans, the task force recommended enhancing the perceived value, merit, and worth of skilled trades to establish them as esteemed as other post-secondary education paths and professions (p. 6).



# Related Research

The [\*Powering Up: Preparing Canada's Skilled Trades for a Post-Pandemic Economy\*](#) report emphasized the importance of early exposure to boost recruitment efforts among underrepresented groups, including women, newcomers, and Indigenous peoples (Powell & Richardson, 2021). The report's authors suggested that exposure to trades should be integrated into school curricula, proposing that trades problem-solving be incorporated into primary- and secondary-level science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) courses. The Conference Board of Canada's (2020) report, *Essential Skills for Learning and Working*, identified a significant gap in students' awareness of employer expectations in the workplace, particularly regarding social and emotional skills (SES), such as communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and adaptability. The report also emphasized the need for strong digital literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills alongside a positive work ethic to meet the demands of the evolving workplace. Additionally, The National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE; Burbank et al., 2021) researched gaps in trades education. NAPE provides resources and tools to support the long-term, adaptable approach necessary for sustainable educational change. The [\*Equity in CTE & Stem Root Causes and Strategies – A Call to Action\*](#) report examined root causes to identify effective methods and new tactics for bridging opportunity gaps.



# Related Research

Career education programming in the K–12 education system is reported by the Government of Alberta's Career Education Task Force (2023) in its Career Education in Alberta report as follows:

## Career and Technology Foundations (CTF)

Students in Grades 5–9 explore their interests and learn about various career possibilities and occupations, fostering early engagement with potential career paths.

## Career and Technology Studies (CTS)

CTS includes courses that help students develop practical skills, enhancing their employability and/or post-secondary prospects.

## Dual Credit

This enables high school students to discover their career interests while earning both high school and post-secondary credits, providing a seamless transition into further education.

## Knowledge & Employability (K&E) Occupational Courses

This focuses on developing employability skills, helping students become active and responsible citizens who can achieve their educational and career goals and positively impact their communities.

## Off-Campus Education

This allows students to gain practical knowledge and skills related to work and other life roles through activities like study, observation, and performance at community-based work sites (volunteer or paid). Programs under this category include career internships, the Green Certificate Program (GCP), the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP), Work Experience, Work Study, and Workplace Readiness and Practicum.

## Physical Education and Wellness, Health, and Life Skills, and Career and Life Management Curriculums

This category addresses aspects of career education through new initiatives in K–6 Physical Education and Wellness, Health and Life Skills for Grades 7–9, and Career and Life Management for Grades 10–12, integrating career readiness into broader educational objectives.

School authorities share common educational standards, curriculum frameworks, and guiding legislation. However, they also display notable variations. Factors such as the size of the authority, geographical location, career pathway guidance, assessment practices, access to skilled instructors, and the availability of relevant technologies significantly influence each school authority's ability to offer diverse and effective trades and technologies education to students.

# Related Research

With the imminent retirement of a significant number of tradespersons and the subsequent shortage of skilled workers in Alberta, it is clear that school authorities cannot single-handedly provide the diverse pathways needed for students to successfully transition to post-secondary education and the workforce. This challenge demands a collaborative effort from policymakers, educators, industry partners, and employers to demonstrate the value of skilled trades and technologies to today's youth.

As part of a conditional grant, in 2021, the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) conducted a provincial needs assessment to identify effective practices and challenges in recruiting teachers to support students opting for careers in skilled trades and technologies. The resulting report, [Supporting Student Choice: Successes and Challenges in Recruiting Teachers to Support Student Choice in Pursuing a Career in Skilled Trades and Technologies](#), gathered feedback from 63 school authorities. It revealed that, while school authorities are forming partnerships with industry, communities, and post-secondary institutions to enhance programming, sustainability remains a significant challenge. The assessment also highlighted several factors affecting support for students interested in skilled trades or technology, including funding constraints, difficulties in recruiting qualified instructors, limited student choice, issues with location and placements, and inadequate facilities and equipment.

The report proposed four calls to action:



By addressing these priorities and engaging with stakeholders, Alberta's system leaders can create a robust environment that empowers students to pursue careers in skilled trades and technologies. Implementing these strategies will not only foster individual success but also strengthen the province's economy in response to its aging population.



# Related Research

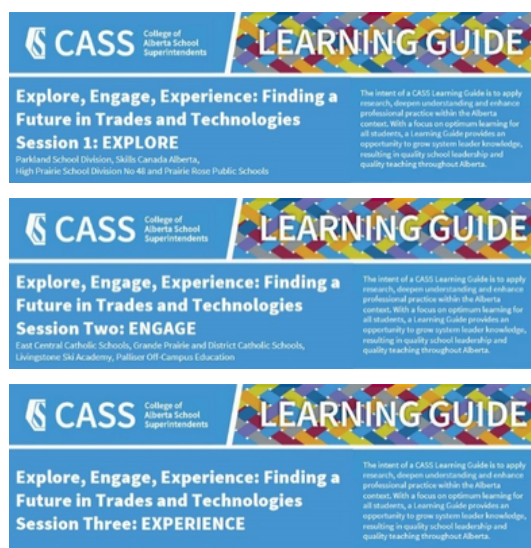
In response to identified needs, the College of Alberta School Superintendents established the Trades, Apprenticeships, and Vocational Education (TAVE) Committee. This committee, guided by the principles of the collective impact process, developed the Skilled Trades, Apprenticeships, and Vocational Education Strategic Framework (CASS, 2022b), which serves as a blueprint for how diverse stakeholder groups can collaborate to close the employment gap and enhance efficiencies and synergies among partners.

TAVE included representatives from Alberta's education ministries, school authorities, post-secondary institutions, skilled trades organizations, and employers. The framework's collective vision aims to inspire Alberta's youth to actively consider skilled trades and technologies as viable career options. Through shared responsibility and accountability, all stakeholders play crucial roles in enabling students to explore, engage, and experience these fields. More information about the TAVE Strategic Framework and detailed guidance can be found in the [learning guide](#).

In 2022, TAVE published its survey results in [Explore, Engage, Experience: Finding a Future in Trades and Technologies](#) (CASS, 2022a). This report highlighted successful practices within the Alberta school system that could be leveraged, adapted, or further developed to enhance learning in skilled trades and technologies.

Continuing its efforts in 2023, TAVE focused on raising awareness and enhancing the understanding of trade and technology practices in Alberta. The committee gathered a series of success stories from across the province that demonstrate the goals of its strategic framework. These stories, featured in three learning guides (CASS, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c), exemplify promoting exploration, engagement, and hands-on experiences in trades and technologies as viable and attractive career paths. The learning guides serve as essential resources for stakeholders interested in adopting similar strategies. Click on the images to follow the link to each learning guide:

These promising practices within the province showcase diverse career pathways for students. The collaborative efforts represent a significant stride toward empowering students and cultivating a workforce ready for success in the realm of skilled trades and technologies. As succinctly captured by [WorldSkills](#) (2024.), "skills create opportunities and connect societies. They are the foundation of economic progress."



# Story of Practice Case Study

## FVSD - Context

### Success with an EDGE: Building the Future One Student at A Time



- Situated in the expansive Mackenzie Region of northern Alberta, which covers over 87,000 square kilometers, the Fort Vermilion School Division (FVSD) provides education to 4,011 students. The division, employing 603 staff members, supports a vibrant mix of 1,032 self-identified Indigenous students from Beaver, Dene, and Cree First Nations alongside 802 English language learners, and a significant Mennonite population.
- FVSD is committed to cultivating educational environments that mirror this rich diversity, focusing on recognizing and fostering the individual strengths and needs of each student. This approach goes beyond traditional academic achievement measures, offering customized learning opportunities that align with each student's interests and strengths, promoting growth, engagement, and educational success. The overarching aim is to equip students for career paths that motivate them to remain and thrive in their northern communities.
- A key component of this strategy is the implementation of Priority 4 from the FVSD Education Plan, advocating for career pathways under the guiding principles of EDGE: explore, develop, grow, and experience. This priority integrates career development into all educational levels, progressively building expertise up to post-secondary education. The program's structure ensures that, from early childhood through Grade 6, students are introduced to a variety of occupations, laying the groundwork for future career choices. In Grades 7–9, the emphasis shifts toward developing vital workplace skills and readiness for real-world applications. By Grades 10–12, students intensify their focus on specialized areas, further honing their skills. The journey continues in post-secondary education, including Grades 13–14, where students engage in hands-on experiences within their chosen fields. The educational aim for every student is to attain relevant credits or credentials to solidify their career readiness.
- By reshaping the definition of success and preparing students for future careers, FVSD ensures that learners are academically adept, work-world skilled, and purpose-driven. This Alberta story of practice is significant because it addresses an important question in education: How can integrating diverse career paths and relevant skill-building opportunities from an early age enhance students' decision-making, academic achievement, and preparedness for future careers, thereby influencing their long-term success?

# Story of Practice Case Study

## FVSD - Application

- The 2021 [Supporting Student Choice: Successes and Challenges in Recruiting Teachers to Support Student Choice in Pursuing a Career in Skilled Trades and Technologies](#) report investigated the efforts and obstacles in enhancing programming for careers in skilled trades and technologies. The report proposed four calls to action:



FVSD has actively demonstrated these calls to action in practice, showing a firm commitment to fostering educational and career pathways. FVSD's approach is discussed below.

Demonstrate value

### Supporting Student Choice Call to Action: Demonstrate Value

#### Vision Setting

- The vision for career pathways at FVSD is shaped by thought leaders like Adam Grant (2023), as detailed in his book *Hidden Potential*, and the principles outlined in *Free-Range Kids* (Skenazy, 2021). These texts emphasize the significance of freedom, exploration, and adaptability for personal growth and career development. Embracing these principles, FVSD is dedicated to identifying and enhancing each student's strengths, empowering them to direct their career paths. This approach aims to create an environment in which students are free to explore a range of career options, adapt to evolving circumstances, and develop the essential skills needed for future success.

#### Needs Assessment

- The initial assessment phase involved conducting a regional survey that identified 1,026 job vacancies, emphasizing a critical need to bridge these employment gaps. During the 2023 Texas Computer Education Association (TECA) Conference, attended by 17 local business professionals and parents, discussions focused on breaking down barriers to make learning accessible to all students. Participants represented various industries, including airports, lumber mills, carpentry, and healthcare, and they played an essential role in supporting and developing the Fort Vermilion School Division's career pathways. Collaboratively, the school community and industry partners explored opportunities for allocating space and resources.



# Story of Practice Case Study

## FVSD - Application

### School Board Governance: Prioritizing Career Pathways

- The Fort Vermilion School Board has strategically designated Priority 4 of its Education Plan to focus on career pathways for students. This priority stresses the importance of student engagement with their chosen career paths through a structured approach that includes exploration, skill development, knowledge growth, and hands-on experience. The overarching goal is to ensure that students are well-prepared for their future careers and can successfully transition from education to the workforce.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the career pathways priority, FVSD systematically monitors several key performance indicators:
  - number of students earning post-secondary credentials,
  - high school completion rates, and
  - transition rates to post-secondary education or vocational training.
- This data collection tracks FVSD's strategies for career pathways to effectively support students' academic achievements and readiness for future challenges in alignment with the objectives of the Education Plan. This emphasis on measurable outcomes demonstrates the School Board's commitment to fostering lasting success for students both during and beyond their educational journey.



# Story of Practice Case Study

## FVSD - Application

Develop a provincial framework

### Supporting Student Choice Call to Action: Develop a Provincial/School System Framework

#### The EDGE Framework



- As a member of the TAVE Committee, Fort Vermilion contributed to the [Strategic Framework](#) (CASS, 2022b), aimed at enabling students to
  - explore the scope, the demand, and the value of skilled trades and technologies,
  - engage in academic studies and skills training through authentic, hands-on learning opportunities, and
  - experience diverse work-integrated learning opportunities with employers.
- Similarly, FVSD believes that every student deserves an EDGE: the opportunity to explore, develop, grow, and experience trades and careers they are passionate about. The EDGE framework provides a comprehensive model to support students from early childhood through post-secondary education. By promoting a growth mindset, creativity, and adaptability, it guides students through their academic and career development. This framework integrates various elements, creating a continuum of support that enables students to explore occupations, develop workplace skills, and participate in work-integrated learning opportunities.



# Story of Practice Case Study

## FVSD - Application

Build  
curriculum  
connections

### Supporting Student Choice Call to Action: Build Curriculum Connections

#### Career Pathways Program

- The Fort Vermilion School Division has designed a suite of 12 collegiate career academies as outlined in the diagram.
- From these academies, 120 career paths have been identified, and they will be developed in alignment with student interest and community needs. Partnerships and consultations with local industries and communities are foundational to these programs and allow students to begin their careers at home. This strategic alignment ensures that students gain the knowledge and skills to meet local employers' demands, thereby fostering the community's economic growth.





# Story of Practice Case Study

## FVSD - Application

### System Supports for Success

The EDGE framework is supported by 11 system strategies that enhance student experiences:

<b>District Collegiate Principal</b>	Oversees collegiate facilities, staff, and programming to ensure effective student support.
<b>District Career Path Principal</b>	Assists and supports high school guidance counselors in developing personalized career pathways for students.
<b>Career Coaches</b>	Guide students on collegiate pathways, ensuring successful program completion.
<b>Technology Utilization</b>	Implement zSpace technology to provide immersive and interactive learning experiences connected to the curriculum and career paths.
<b>Purposeful Play Programming</b>	Develops resources for Grades K–6 that link early learning with collegiate academies to ignite early interest in various careers.
<b>myBlueprint Tool</b>	A comprehensive tool used by all Grade 7–12 students to explore, plan, and document their career path decisions tailored to their learning needs and aspirations.
<b>Career Path Mapping</b>	High school guidance counselors collaborate with students in Grades 9–12 to create and map out potential career pathways supported by relevant courses and collegiate programming.
<b>Data Collection</b>	A tool is developed to track the progression of each student's career path journey from Grade 9 to 12.
<b>Educational Partnerships</b>	Collaborates with post-secondary institutions, universities, and licensing agencies to provide course content and credentials for collegiate programs.
<b>Business Partnerships</b>	Expand partnerships with local businesses and industry leaders to offer work-integrated learning opportunities, including work experience, internships, job shadowing, and the Registered Apprenticeship Program.
<b>Facility Utilization</b>	Utilizes three renovated buildings and Career and Technology Studies (CTS) spaces across high schools to support collegiate programming. The Gramson Center in High Level, the Sipiwani Center in Fort Vermilion, and the De Oabeit School in La Crete provide advanced educational and training facilities, including classrooms, shops, and VR labs.



# Story of Practice Case Study

## FVSD - Application

Provide career pathways professional learning

### Supporting Student Choice Call to Action: Provide Career Pathways Professional Learning

Fort Vermilion is building capacity in the following ways:

#### Empowering Students: The Critical Role of Career Coaches and School Counselors

- Career coaches play a pivotal role in supporting students enrolled in career-focused programs. These professionals act as bridges between these students and the complexities of post-secondary educational environments, aiding them in overcoming obstacles related to technology, administrative processes, and program specifics. In addition to their direct interactions with students, career coaches work closely with school counselors to provide a comprehensive support network. This collaboration ensures that students receive well-rounded guidance that encompasses both academic and career planning, further enhancing their readiness for the challenges of post-secondary education and beyond.

#### Integrated Curriculum and Management

- Program managers oversee the functionality of equipment and technology, ensuring the curriculum is seamlessly integrated into the software used for training. This process supports self-directed learning, allowing students to progress through educational modules embedded within the technology.

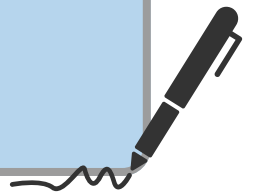
#### Hiring Industry Professionals

- The Fort Vermilion School Division has adopted a strategic approach to vocational training by engaging individuals with direct industry experience, including Red Seal trades personnel and college instructors. This practice integrates practical knowledge and real-world expertise into the learning experience and enhances the educational environment by utilizing short-term contracts. These contracts offer greater flexibility in recruitment and allow for more efficient adaptation to educational needs.
- Flexibility in scheduling is a key component, enabling the organization of specialized training sessions that can extend beyond typical school hours. Core class times are adjusted to accommodate participation in vocational training or other specialized programs. Additionally, the collaboration with Alberta colleges involves sharing facilities and equipment and bringing college instructors directly to collegiate sites. This partnership allows college instructors to teach both high school students and adult community members.
- In specific cases, FVSD utilizes a letter of authority issued by the registrar, acting as a conditional teaching certificate. This certificate permits hiring industry experts who do not meet traditional teacher certification standards but possess essential skills for technical and vocational education. Such arrangements ensure that students receive an education that is not only directly applicable but also highly beneficial to their career paths. This system guarantees that the educational offerings are closely aligned with industry standards and requirements, thus enhancing the overall effectiveness and relevance of the training provided.

# Story of Practice Case Study FVSD - Application



Which practices identified in this case study would you use to advance student engagement and career readiness in your school authority?



# Story of Practice Case Study

## FVSD - Study

As the Fort Vermilion School Division implemented its comprehensive EDGE framework and career pathways program, several insights emerged. These lessons highlight the successes, challenges, and strategies that have shaped FVSD's approach to fostering student career development and provide guidance for other educational institutions seeking to enhance career education integration for their students.

### Student-focused K-12 Framework

- An important insight from FVSD's success is its emphasis on personalized learning that recognizes and nurtures the unique strengths and interests of each student across the K-12 spectrum. By tailoring educational opportunities to individual needs, FVSD ensures that students are engaged and motivated. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility in students toward their learning and future career choices and also enhances student satisfaction and educational outcomes. Tools like myBlueprint, which facilitate student involvement in designing career paths, exemplify this collaborative and adaptive educational process.
- Additionally, FVSD's strategic integration of career exploration and skills development from early childhood through Grade 12 ensures thorough and continuous preparation for post-secondary challenges. The structured progression of the EDGE stages—explore, develop, grow, and experience—supports a comprehensive and coherent framework that aligns academic learning with real-world applications. This continuous engagement helps students form a clear understanding of how their academic efforts relate to future career opportunities, encouraging a seamless transition into the workforce or further education.

### School Board Governance: Prioritizing Career Pathways

- The Fort Vermilion School Board has designated career pathways as Priority 4 in its Education Plan, emphasizing its dedication to enhancing student opportunities. This strategic priority is assessed through key performance indicators, including student engagement, graduation rates, and post-secondary enrollment figures. Furthermore, the Board has endorsed implementing a collegiate education model that supports this priority. All funding allocated aligns with this focus, ensuring that resources are used effectively to improve educational outcomes and prepare students for their future careers.

# Story of Practice Case Study

## FVSD - Study

### Integrated Community Partnerships: Enhancing Career Programs Through Local Collaboration

- Integrating community partnerships within the educational framework has proven essential for developing relevant and practical career pathways. Engaging with local businesses, industries, and community members provides students with essential hands-on learning experiences, effectively connecting educational outcomes with the needs of the local labor market. This community involvement not only enriches the curriculum but also makes the educational experience more impactful and directly applicable to students.

### Role of Dedicated Support Structures

- Establishing dedicated support structures, such as the district collegiate principal, the career pathways principal, and career coaches, has been important in guiding students through their career pathways. These roles ensure that students receive personalized guidance and support, helping them navigate their educational and career journeys effectively. Additionally, tools like myBlueprint and career path mapping have empowered students to take ownership of their career planning, fostering a sense of agency and responsibility.

### Strategic System Resource Utilization

- FVSD employs a practical approach to maximize resource utilization and enhance learning opportunities by educating students at three strategically selected locations. By bussing students to these sites, the division overcomes geographical limitations and promotes a collaborative learning environment. This arrangement not only addresses the challenges of distance but also enriches the educational experience by facilitating interactions among students from diverse backgrounds.

# Story of Practice Case Study

## FVSD - Study

### Enhancing Learning in Geographic Sparsity and Distance

- FVSD confronts the significant challenges of its vast geographic spread by leveraging advanced technologies and strategic resource management to ensure equitable access to educational opportunities. Using immersive technologies, such as zSpace, transforms career education delivery, allowing students to engage with complex concepts in visually rich, interactive environments. These technological tools are instrumental in bridging physical distances, enabling a level of engagement that brings uniform educational quality to students in distant communities. They also support tracking student progress and customizing learning plans, facilitating tailored educational content that aligns with each student's specific needs. This tailoring captures students' interests and ensures that learning resources are accessible throughout the division's extensive and remote areas.
- Adopting a unified timetable across locations ensures synchronized educational activities, promoting a cohesive learning experience despite geographical separations. This strategic alignment of schedules optimizes the use of both technological and human resources, forming a holistic strategy to address educational challenges related to sparsity and distance. These efforts collectively demonstrate FVSD's commitment to providing a high-quality, equitable education tailored to each student's career goals.

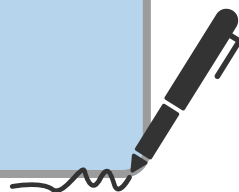


# Story of Practice Case Study

## FVSD - Study



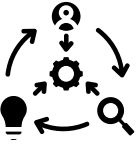
What lessons from this case study could be used to enhance your student career pathway choices?





# Story of Practice Case Study

## FVSD - Synthesis

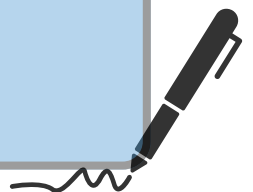


- Use the following questions to connect your learning to your own context and role as a system education leader.



### **Reflection: Operational Insights**

- How can we improve our approach to provide students with diverse and rewarding career pathway experiences?
- What gaps in our skilled trades and technologies need to be addressed to better serve our students and community?
- What strategic actions can the board take to elevate the status and accessibility of education in skilled trades and technologies?
- How can we implement effective strategies that generate student interest and significantly enhance success in skilled trades and technologies?
- Which school authorities, industry partners, or post-secondaries can we partner with to maximize efficiencies and create synergies between organizations?
- What quick wins can shape the future of our students' educational journeys?





# Story of Practice Case Study

## PRPS - Context

### Prairie Rose Possibilities Forges Futures

- Prairie Rose Public Schools (PRPS) in southeastern Alberta is transforming education with its Prairie Rose Possibilities initiative. This program introduces innovative opportunities to the classroom, representing a progressive approach to education. PRPS's strategic goals to "ignite minds, kindle hearts, and forge futures" highlight their commitment to academic excellence, respect for rural heritage, and creating future opportunities for students.
- The district spans 29,117 square kilometers, bordering Saskatchewan to the east and the United States to the south. PRPS operates 18 public schools, 18 Hutterite Colony Schools, and Coulee Collegiate, a distance learning high school in partnership with Medicine Hat Public Schools and Medicine Hat College. The division serves 3,600 students from junior kindergarten through grade 12 and employs 240 full-time equivalent staff. PRPS includes a unique blend of various cultures and communities. At Ralston School, 70% of the students are from British military families. The 18 Hutterite Colonies account for about 10% of all colony children in Alberta. PRPS also has Low German-speaking Mennonite students, further contributing to PRPS's diversity.
- The Prairie Rose Possibilities program offers students personalized learning experiences by connecting the Alberta curriculum with local businesses, non-profit organizations, and post-secondary institutions. Schools select projects based on community, staff, and student interests. The district's 18 unique projects include the Dave Rozdeba Flight Academy, where students can fly at 5,000 feet to earn their pilot's license, and the Seven Persons Fine Arts Academy, which offers music, drama, and art for Grades 4–6. Other academies develop elite skills in baseball, hockey, and rodeo, while agricultural programs allow students to manage a farm, engage in sustainable agriculture, and gain experience in beekeeping and gardening. In addition, Badlands Cre8tions is a student-run online store that teaches students entrepreneurship and practical business skills.
- This Alberta story of practice is significant because it demonstrates how diverse career pathways and immersive learning experiences enrich students' educational experiences and support the dynamic nature of their communities.



*To unleash  
potential through  
a culture of  
learning*

***Ignite minds, kindle hearts, and forge futures.***

# Story of Practice Case Study

## PRPS - Application

- The 2021 [\*Supporting Student Choice: Successes and Challenges in Recruiting Teachers to Support Student Choice in Pursuing a Career in Skilled Trades and Technologies\*](#) report examines the efforts and challenges associated with enhancing programming for careers in skilled trades and technologies. It concludes by advocating for four specific calls to action:



PRPS has demonstrated a strong commitment to igniting students' passions for careers connected to their communities.

### Supporting Student Choice Calls to Action:



### School Board Generative Governance

- PRPS's vision is of a world where everyone is a learner, and students and staff achieve more than they thought possible. This vision guides the creation and implementation of the School Board's Educational Plan. The development of this plan is a collaborative effort, inviting input from all staff and community members. Such a comprehensive approach ensures that the plan meets the community's current needs and remains open to future adaptations and improvements.
- The Prairie Rose School Board has incorporated the FORGE FUTURES strategic priority into its education plan, which is designed to prepare students for a wide variety of future opportunities. Four main strategies support this priority:
  - Personalized Learning Paths
  - Cultivating Wonder and Possibilities
  - Empowering Confident Communicators
  - Building Strong Community Partnerships

# Story of Practice Case Study

## PRPS - Application

- Trustees and administrators work together to oversee and support the Education Plan, ensuring that it aligns with local system needs and standards. The Board of Trustees plays an essential role by providing support. For example, the trustees have expedited the FORGE FUTURES plan by pre-approving funding, streamlining project execution, and allowing school leadership the flexibility to adapt to changing educational demands.

### Localized Solutions for Equitable Learning

- In addressing the diverse needs of student populations, PRPS acknowledges that equity does not equate to uniformity. Each community has unique characteristics influenced by specific factors such as geographic isolation or cultural diversity. Therefore, PRPS does not implement the same programs in every school. Instead, the focus is on identifying and understanding the specific needs of each community and creating customized educational solutions to meet these needs. This approach to providing tailored, non-standardized solutions ensures that educational programs are effective and considerate of each community's context, which ultimately enhances student success.

### Environmental Scan

- PRPS utilizes a strategic approach in designing customized educational programming that reflects the unique characteristics of each community. This process requires detailed environmental scans with several key components:
  - **Contextual Understanding:** The first step in the environmental scan is to deeply engage with each community's unique context. PRPS initiates generative conversations and uses structured design processes to actively listen and gather information from community members. Tools such as assurance surveys help collect broader feedback. The goal is to fully understand the community's aspirations and future visions, especially in sectors like farming or ranching, which might require specialized educational solutions like tailored online programs.
  - **Assessment of Existing Facilities:** A critical part of the scan involves assessing the community's existing infrastructure. This assessment helps identify which resources are available and where gaps might exist. For example, although smaller communities may not have advanced athletic facilities or theaters, they often have other spaces like fire halls or riding arenas that can be repurposed for community-specific programs.
  - **Alignment of Local Talent and Interests:** PRPS carefully identifies and matches the skills and passions of staff and community members with the needs of the educational programs. This alignment ensures that the initiatives are driven by individuals who are both competent and enthusiastic about enhancing the community's educational environment.

# Story of Practice Case Study

## PRPS - Application

- **Continuous Feedback and Adjustment:** The scanning process is dynamic, incorporating both scheduled and spontaneous feedback mechanisms. This adaptive strategy allows PRPS to modify and improve its plans based on ongoing input from the community and changing circumstances.
- **Synergistic Integration:** By combining information about existing facilities, local talents, and community aspirations, PRPS can identify areas where these elements intersect synergistically. This thorough analysis often reveals unique opportunities for developing programs that are feasible, well-supported, and in close alignment with community expectations.
- Through this methodical environmental scanning process, PRPS ensures that the educational programming for each community accurately reflects its specific needs and resources. This customized approach supports effective change management and builds strong community support and enthusiasm, thereby boosting the sustainability and impact of educational initiatives within the division.

### Deliberate Navigation of Relationships

- In Prairie Rose, relationship management is prioritized as a fundamental strategy to enhance community connections and improve educational opportunities. Each system leader actively participates on various community boards, from women's shelters to food banks, thereby ensuring that the division remains a central part of community activities and maintains strong connections within local networks. School leaders are also encouraged to engage in similar activities, with support provided to facilitate their participation. This strategic engagement ensures that Prairie Rose is seen as an important part of the community, making the division a preferred partner for new opportunities.
- Regular communications, including sending Christmas cards and participating in significant community events, are vital for maintaining connections within Prairie Rose. Key partnerships with organizations like Super T Aviation for the flight program and Willie Desjardins for the hockey program are strengthened through memorandums of understanding and personalized interactions. Simple actions, like sending a thank-you note or a quick text to acknowledge good work, highlight the division's gratitude for each partnership. Each program is designed to have a primary partner, such as various fire chiefs for the firefighting initiatives. These relationships are strengthened through regular check-ins and recognitions, which reinforce the mutual benefits and commitment between the school division and its community partners.

# Story of Practice Case Study

## PRPS - Application

Build  
curriculum  
connections

### Supporting Students Call to Action: Curriculum Connections

#### Prioritizing Literacy and Numeracy Learning

- The division's commitment to the fundamental educational pillars of literacy and numeracy is highlighted by initiatives such as the pioneering of innovative reading instruction approaches. This commitment ensures that, although students engage in diverse educational experiences, like aviation and sports, the focus on core academic skills remains strong. By weaving these essential skills into all classroom activities from kindergarten to higher grades, the division mitigates the notion that education might be overly focused on specialized programs. This strategic emphasis builds the necessary skills for lifelong learning, demonstrating the commitment to providing a balanced and comprehensive education that prepares students for diverse pathways and ensures educational success.

#### Exploring Career Pathways: Internship Programs

- Prairie Rose Public Schools has developed a comprehensive internship program for junior high students, designed to expose them to a wide range of trades and career-readiness experiences. The six-week program features Career and Technology Foundations (CTF) blocks, where academic core subjects are taught in the morning and CTF activities are scheduled for two afternoons per week. This schedule allows flexibility for off-site learning and travel.
- By the time students reach Grade 10, they begin to explore specific trades such as power engineering, welding, pipe trades, electrician roles, heavy-duty mechanics, and specialized mechanics focused on farm equipment. In Grade 12, the curriculum allows students to choose a specific trade and complete pre-employment requirements as well as accumulate the necessary work hours before graduation.
- The internship program is enriched through foundational partnerships with industry leaders. For example, collaborations with companies are essential to provide students with professional connections and mentors. The curriculum also offers innovative agricultural internships such as "Beef to Burger," where students follow the beef industry from farm to grocery store, and "Agr Grow," which focuses on advanced agricultural technology in partnership with Western Tractor. These internships are hands-on and involve key business operations, negotiations, and sales, aligning closely with the practical aspects of the industries.
- This internship program combines real-world experiences from industry partnerships with classroom learning, preparing students for the workforce or further studies by providing both practical skills and theoretical knowledge.



# Story of Practice Case Study

## PRPS - Application

### Build on Division Success: Creating Identity and Connection

- The success of the school division's programs, particularly the Hockey Academy, is largely attributed to the efforts to create a distinct identity for students, providing them with a specific place and space within the school environment. This sense of connection is crucial. Each program, whether it involves sports, aviation, or emergency services, is designed to ensure that students do more than just participate; they feel part of something special and unique.
- For example, students in the Flight Academy wear green flight jackets and earn badges, creating a team atmosphere. Similarly, the rodeo and agricultural programs equip students with high-quality gear and promotional materials that affirm their identities. Rodeo participants wear branded apparel, and agricultural students are featured in professionally produced commercials. These deliberate details, modeled after elite sports teams, help instill a deep sense of belonging and pride among the students.
- Staff from various departments work together to share ideas, ensuring that these programs not only replicate the success of the Hockey Academy, but are also customized to meet the diverse needs and interests of different student groups. This collaborative approach has been effective throughout the division, boosting student engagement and participation by turning educational activities into opportunities for personal development and community integration.

### Resource

- Click on the image to access a resource developed by Prairie Rose Public Schools.



# Story of Practice Case Study

## PRPS - Application

Provide career  
pathways  
professional  
learning

### Supporting Students Call to Action: Provide Career Pathways Professional Learning

#### Communications Professional Learning: Strategic Narrative Shaping

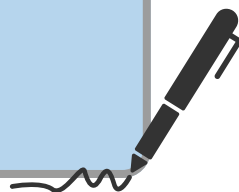
- System leaders have recognized the crucial role of shaping educational narratives, leading to significant investments in improving communications through specialized professional training in branding and storytelling. This work has provided leaders with tools to positively influence perceptions across the school system.
- A key part of this strategy was participating in an online communications course from Harvard University, focusing on effective social media use and practical marketing techniques. These methods have transformed basic announcements into engaging narratives that increase student engagement. Techniques such as tagging students or family members on platforms like Instagram and Facebook have also been implemented to extend the posts' reach and interaction.
- To further enhance communications training, Dr. Darren Howes, a marketing expert from Medicine Hat College, led sessions aimed at fostering a "culture of yes." This training encouraged embracing and building upon new ideas, promoting a "yes, and" mindset over a "yes, but" attitude to cultivate a more creative and receptive environment.
- In addition to emphasizing external marketing, the importance of internal marketing is recognized. Internal marketing helps alleviate staff concerns about neglecting certain areas while focusing on others. Regular discussions on the core elements of education are held to ensure that communications encompass all aspects of the curriculum.
- Prairie Rose leaders' approach represents a commitment to clear and effective communication that enhances the community's perceptions and addresses potential challenges that school leaders may face. By consistently promoting positive stories and updates, the leaders build community goodwill. This strategic accumulation of goodwill acts as a buffer, providing grace and support when challenges arise while always maintaining a favorable division narrative.
- Communication skills development is essential for the entire executive team, not just those in communications roles. Each executive participates in annual professional development training, covering instructional leadership, leadership skills, and business-related aspects such as marketing and communication. Regular meetings with school leaders and the School Board emphasize the importance of communication, with achievements in this area being routinely celebrated and recognized, affirming its critical role for all leaders within the organization.



# Story of Practice Case Study PRPS - Application



**Which practices identified in this case study would you use to advance student engagement and career readiness in your school authority?**



# Story of Practice Case Study

## PRPS - Study

The Prairie Rose Possibilities program showcases the significant impact of incorporating skilled trades, apprenticeships, and vocational education into a student-centered education. This section reviews the key lessons learned and identifies emerging themes that illustrate how system leaders have effectively shaped educational practices to enhance student success.



### Creativity from Constraints

- A fundamental lesson from the Prairie Rose Possibilities initiative is how constraints drive creativity. Despite limited facilities and resources in a rural setting, these limitations have spurred innovative solutions, demonstrating that constraints often catalyze creative thinking and problem-solving.

### Deep Understanding of Context and Place-Based Learning

- Prairie Rose Possibilities emphasizes the importance of deeply understanding the local context and integrating place-based learning to significantly enrich the educational experience by aligning learning activities with the local community and environment. Place-based learning makes academic content more relevant and engaging for students and strengthens community connections. Educational programs are thoughtfully designed to leverage local landscapes, businesses, and cultural features, which improve educational outcomes and foster a strong sense of community belonging in students.

# Story of Practice Case Study

## PRPS - Study

### **Building Early Engagement and Advocacy: A Key to Effective Change Management in Program Development**

- Engaging stakeholders and generating excitement early in the process is essential for successful program development in the Prairie Rose School Division. Proactive engagement is key to managing change effectively, helping to circumvent issues such as low enrollment and resistance. An early partnership with well-regarded entities, such as Super T Aviation—one of Canada’s top flight schools located nearby—has set a standard for future successful collaborations within the aerospace sector and beyond. These initial connections have facilitated further integration with community resources like Halo, a critical medical emergency service, thereby enhancing collaborations with Fire and Emergency Services and enriching practical learning experiences for students.
- Early successful partnerships with key local institutions have fostered increased trust and led to additional collaborations, resulting in smoother implementations and reduced resistance over time. This is especially advantageous in environments where geographical and logistical constraints make it challenging to introduce change and attract the necessary personnel and resources. Adopting a proactive approach and using backward design are essential in these contexts, ensuring that initial engagement and thorough planning significantly alleviate challenges that may arise later.



# Story of Practice Case Study

## PRPS - Study

### Vision Relationships and Reciprocity

- At Prairie Rose Public Schools, relationships are central and integral to the system's success. Recognizing the immense value of these connections once established, PRPS begins its projects by establishing significant collaborations with community and industry partners. These partnerships provide access to essential resources and broaden the scope of PRPS's programming, attracting more collaborators who are eager to participate.
- By actively engaging with partners and maintaining regular, personalized interactions, PRPS has effectively nurtured a network of advocates and resources. PRPS's leadership is deeply committed to fostering these relationships. All leaders are encouraged to engage actively in community activities, to sustain and strengthen the relationships over time.
- Internally, the synergy among educators, administrators, and the School Board ensures that each initiative is well-supported and aligned with the system's strategic goals. This alignment is particularly vital in rural communities, where passionate staff can significantly impact the success of local programs. Externally, ties with local businesses and other organizations deepen community involvement and enhance the support necessary for the programs' success.
- This strategic emphasis on nurturing strong, multifaceted relationships ensures comprehensive stakeholder engagement and fosters reciprocal benefits that extend beyond what was previously thought possible, confirming the irreplaceable value of strategic relationships.



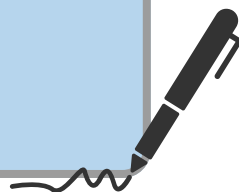


# Story of Practice Case Study

## PRPS - Study



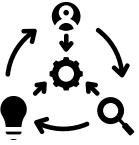
What lessons from this case study could be used to enhance your student career pathway choices?





# Story of Practice Case Study

## PRPS - Synthesis



- Use the following questions to connect your learning to your own context and role as a system education leader.

### **Reflection: Operational Insights**

- What would people say your school authority is known for?
- How can we leverage our strengths and under-utilized community resources to innovate and improve career pathway programming?
- Given the team's strengths, who is best suited to assist the superintendent in leading this initiative?
- Which strategic partnerships could we develop to strengthen our organizational capabilities and program development?
- What strategies can we implement to develop or enhance a framework that supports sustained progress?
- What actions can we initiate immediately?

A large, empty light blue rectangular area intended for writing reflection notes. A black pen icon is positioned at the bottom right corner of this area, with a wavy line suggesting writing.

# Story of Practice Case Study

## CESD - Context

### Future Ready:

### Career Connections in Chinook's Edge



CHINOOK'S EDGE  
SCHOOL DIVISION

- Chinook's Edge School Division (CESD) serves a diverse student population of more than 11,000 learners across 40 schools in Central Alberta, between Calgary and Red Deer. The region's blend of rural and semi-urban settings provides many industry and post-secondary partnerships that are essential for facilitating students' seamless transitions from high school to further career education.
- Career Connections, a key educational priority within CESD's Education Plan, is designed to equip all high school students with the necessary experiences and skills for successful transitions to post-secondary education and career opportunities. This Alberta story of practice is significant because it addresses an important educational question: How does prioritizing career pathway education develop essential skills for successful transitions to post-secondary education and future careers?



# Story of Practice Case Study

## CESD - Application

- The 2021 [Supporting Student Choice: Successes and Challenges in Recruiting Teachers to Support Student Choice in Pursuing a Career in Skilled Trades and Technologies](#) report explores the efforts and challenges involved in enhancing programming for careers in skilled trades and technologies. It concludes with four specific calls to action:

Build  
curriculum  
connections

Provide career  
pathways  
professional  
learning

Demonstrate  
value

Develop a  
provincial  
framework

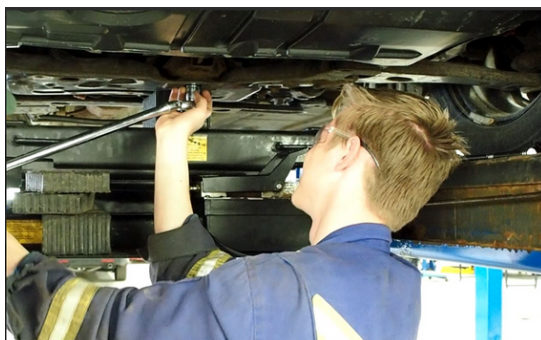
The following section explores the calls to action CESD has implemented, which have significantly contributed to high levels of student success.

Demonstrate  
value

### Supporting Student Choice Calls to Action: Demonstrate Value

#### Research and Development: Where It All Began

- A decade ago, CESD system leaders researched graduation rates and transitions to post-secondary education and discovered that university-degree-seeking students had the most favorable outcomes. To enhance collaboration and ensure a supportive environment, every high school within the division formed a Career Connection Team for Grades 9–12, comprised of administrators and staff from both the school and division levels. These teams spent two years reviewing current practices and conducting focused research to identify data that supported the most effective strategies for transitioning to post-secondary career education. This initial phase concluded with the creation and presentation of the first draft of the career connection goal. This draft was supported by CESD's senior leadership and its Board, establishing it as a priority within the division's education plan for 2016–2017.



# Story of Practice Case Study

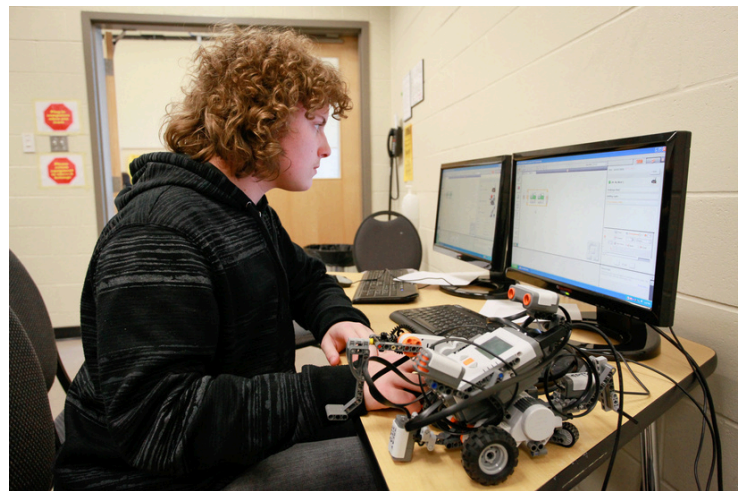
## CESD - Application

### Strategic Development of Career Connections

- The Career Connections Education Plan goal underwent continuous refinement, supported by CESD's senior leaders and its Board. This process emphasized the role of data as a critical driver, with strategies and measures continuously adjusted to ensure that initiatives remained aligned with students' needs and divisional priorities. System leaders focused on directing and enhancing the goal's impact on student outcomes, particularly in ensuring that students are well-prepared for post-secondary transitions. By involving all stakeholders, including students, the development and modifications of the 2024 final goal ensured that all students would graduate high school having meaningful career pathway experiences. The final goal—"all students will graduate high school having had purposeful career pathway experiences that lead to all students confident and prepared for a successful transition to post-secondary career training"—reflects this commitment.

### Metrics That Matter

- CESD has established targeted measures to ensure accountability and progress in student career preparedness. These metrics are essential for equipping students with the necessary skills and confidence for success in their future educational and career endeavors. The measures are:
  - 90% of CESD students will achieve 3-year high school completion, which underscores the division's dedication to facilitating timely and efficient high school completions,
  - 60% of CESD students will transition to post-secondary education within 6 years of Grade 10, which verifies students' successful transition into further education or vocational programs, reflecting sustained educational engagement; and
  - 100% of graduating students will be confident in their career choice and transition plan and can articulate this with clarity, which ensures that every graduating student is prepared for subsequent educational or career phases and can communicate their plans, demonstrating preparedness and self-assurance in their future paths.





# Story of Practice Case Study

## CESD - Application

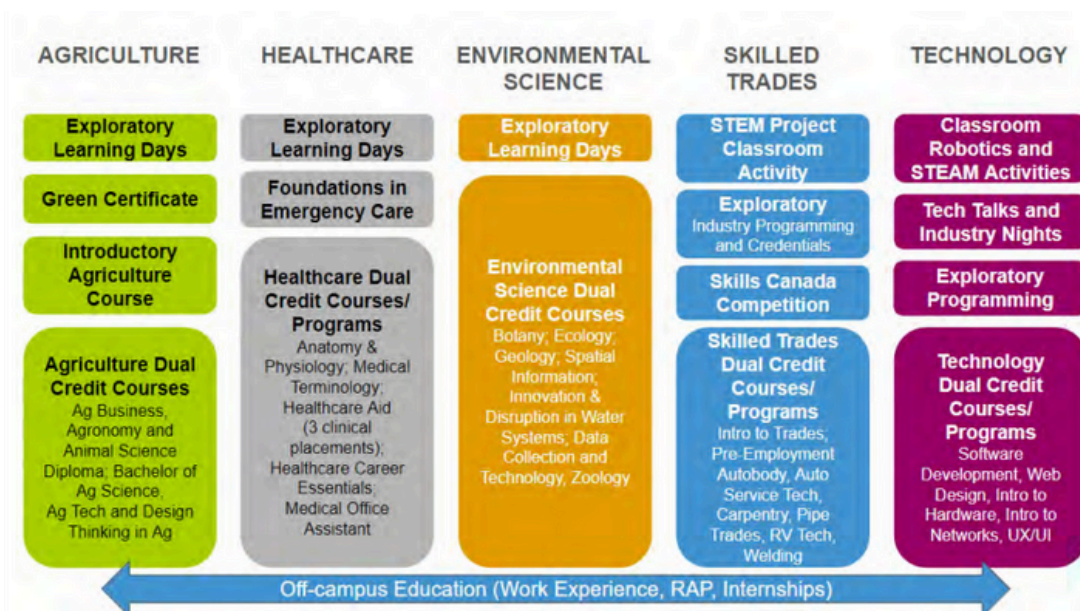
Develop a provincial framework

### Supporting Student Choice Calls to Action: Develop a Provincial/School Division Framework

#### Career Connections Design

- CESD has effectively integrated the core goals of the Trades, Apprenticeships, and Vocational Education (TAVE) strategic framework (i.e., explore, engage, and experience) into its multi-year educational delivery model.

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4 <small>(additional support year as needed)</small>
<b>School Programming</b>	Graduation Course Requirements			
	Use of division/school design to develop career pathways within school programming i.e. core, flex times, WE, Green Certificate, CTF/CTS develop growth of academic and skill readiness for career pathway success			
<b>Post Secondary Programming</b>	Dual Credit Single Course & Skill Development			
		Skilled Trades Year 1 (Pre-employment) & Other Full Career Certificates		
<b>Industry</b>	Exploration and early work integrated learning experiences		WIL/RAP Placement	
	Use of CAREERS as a partner in career placements September through June and Summer			
<b>Student Support &amp; Career Advising</b>	School division supervision, academic and career coaching for student career transitioning success			
	Use of CAREERS as a partner in career advising and career education support			





# Story of Practice Case Study

## CESD - Application

Build  
curriculum  
connections

### Supporting Students Call to Action: Curriculum Connections

#### Designing Cultures to Support Career Pathway Success

- Cultivating school and division cultures that are adaptable and supportive of each student's unique journey is very important. Key aspects to consider include:
  - **Flexibility for Students:** Recognizing the diverse needs of each student allows for a more personalized educational approach so that each learner engages in a way that suits them best.
  - **Multiple Entry and Exit Points:** Offering various points at which students can join or leave programs accommodates different stages of learning and life circumstances, enhancing inclusivity and easing the pressure to stay on a singular path.
  - **Supportive Transitions:** Smooth transitions between different educational stages are essential. Proper support during these transitions can alleviate the stress and confusion arising from changes in a student's educational environment.
  - **Appropriate Levels of Risk:** Adjusting the level of challenge based on individual students' readiness fosters growth without overwhelming them.
  - **Comprehensive Readiness Factors:** Addressing factors such as academic readiness, the ability to articulate pathway connections, maturity, and alignment with personal goals and career plans is crucial for effectively guiding students.
  - **Confidence Building for Career Choice and Post-Secondary Readiness:** Creating supportive environments and setting clear, attainable goals help cultivate confidence, preparing students for future career choices and post-secondary education.
  - **Ongoing Student Support:** Providing consistent coaching and advising support throughout the educational journey is key to student success, ensuring that they feel guided and valued at every step.
- By integrating these elements schools, and divisions can greatly enhance student engagement, satisfaction, and success, providing a strong foundation for lifelong learning and career readiness.



# Story of Practice Case Study

## CESD - Application

### Individual Student Planning and Support

- CESD provides consistent, tailored support to each student, ensuring that they are academically prepared and equipped with the tools and confidence needed for future career and educational paths. Staff offer personalized support and coaching through the following strategies:



#### Weekly Success Tracking

Staff engage with students weekly to monitor progress, coach them, and address emerging concerns.

#### Building Personal Connections

Staff make dedicated efforts to understand each student individually, becoming acquainted with their interests, strengths, challenges, and aspirations. High levels of trust are established.

#### Academic Monitoring and Coaching

Staff continuously monitor and coach students on their academic performance across all high school and dual credit courses to maintain or enhance their academic success.

#### Comprehensive Support

When challenges arise, the program provides a wrap-around support system, which includes delivering additional resources and supports tailored to meet students' specific needs.

#### Career and Post-Secondary Advising

Guidance is provided to students on potential career pathways and the necessary steps for post-secondary education, helping them plan effectively for the future.

#### Support with Applications

Staff assist students with practical aspects of career readiness, such as resume building and navigating the application processes for jobs and further education.

#### Long-Term Engagement

Support for each student extends beyond a single academic year, spanning multiple years to provide a consistent and comprehensive understanding of each student's development and needs.

# Story of Practice Case Study

## CESD - Application

### Exploration, Engagement, and Experience in Dual Credit and Work-Integrated Learning

- CESD enhances career readiness through work-integrated learning. In a pilot initiative, Grade 10 students from one school participate in classroom readiness activities designed to prepare them for internships placed within their top two career pathway choices. In April of each year, students embark on a three-day, hands-on internship experience aligned with their preferred career path, where they apply classroom-learned skills in real-world settings. After the internship, students return to the classroom for follow-up learning and advising, integrating their practical experiences into their academic pathways. This structured approach credits students for their engagement and provides them with firsthand career experiences. This comprehensive Grade 10 work-integrated learning is being expanded to include other schools.
- CESD also offers an extensive range of dual credit programs to high school students, providing access to a wide array of post-secondary fields, including skilled trades, health sciences, animal sciences, business agriculture, emergency services, and agricultural technology. This programming allows students to start with individual courses and progressively enroll in multi-year programs, facilitating a smooth transition into post-secondary career training.
- CESD has partnered with other Zone 4 School Divisions, Olds College, Red Deer Polytechnic, and CAREERS to form the approved Central Alberta Collegiate Institute (CACI) to expand the range of dual credit pathway programming accessible to students in their region. These partnerships among K–12 education, post-secondary institutions, and industry partners are essential for developing extensive career experiences through dual credit, thereby enhancing students' educational outcomes and career readiness successes.





# Story of Practice Case Study

## CESD - Application

Provide career pathways professional learning

### Supporting Students Call to Action: Provide Career Pathways Professional Learning

#### Career Connections Team Professional Learning

- In CESD, the formation of the Career Connections Team brought together a diverse group of school and division leaders. This approach was designed to promote collaborative learning and collective capacity enhancement, with designated times for these leaders to meet and coordinate their efforts. This attention to perspectives was essential for building a foundation of shared commitment and for ensuring the successful implementation and sustainability of the initiative.
- Central Team leadership was crucial in maintaining focus and momentum. They initiated several strategies to improve team cohesion and effectiveness:
  - Whole Division Days: Conducted biannually, these sessions provide comprehensive training and development for staff from across the division to create a cohesive approach to career education.
  - Individual School Visits and Coaching: The Central Team's regular visits to schools offer customized support and allow for the adaptation of strategies to meet the specific needs of each school.
  - Micro-Online Sessions: Frequent online meetings have ensured that team members remain well-connected, facilitating continuous communication and the prompt resolution of any issues.
- These actions have harnessed the collective expertise to address the diverse needs throughout the jurisdiction.



# Story of Practice Case Study

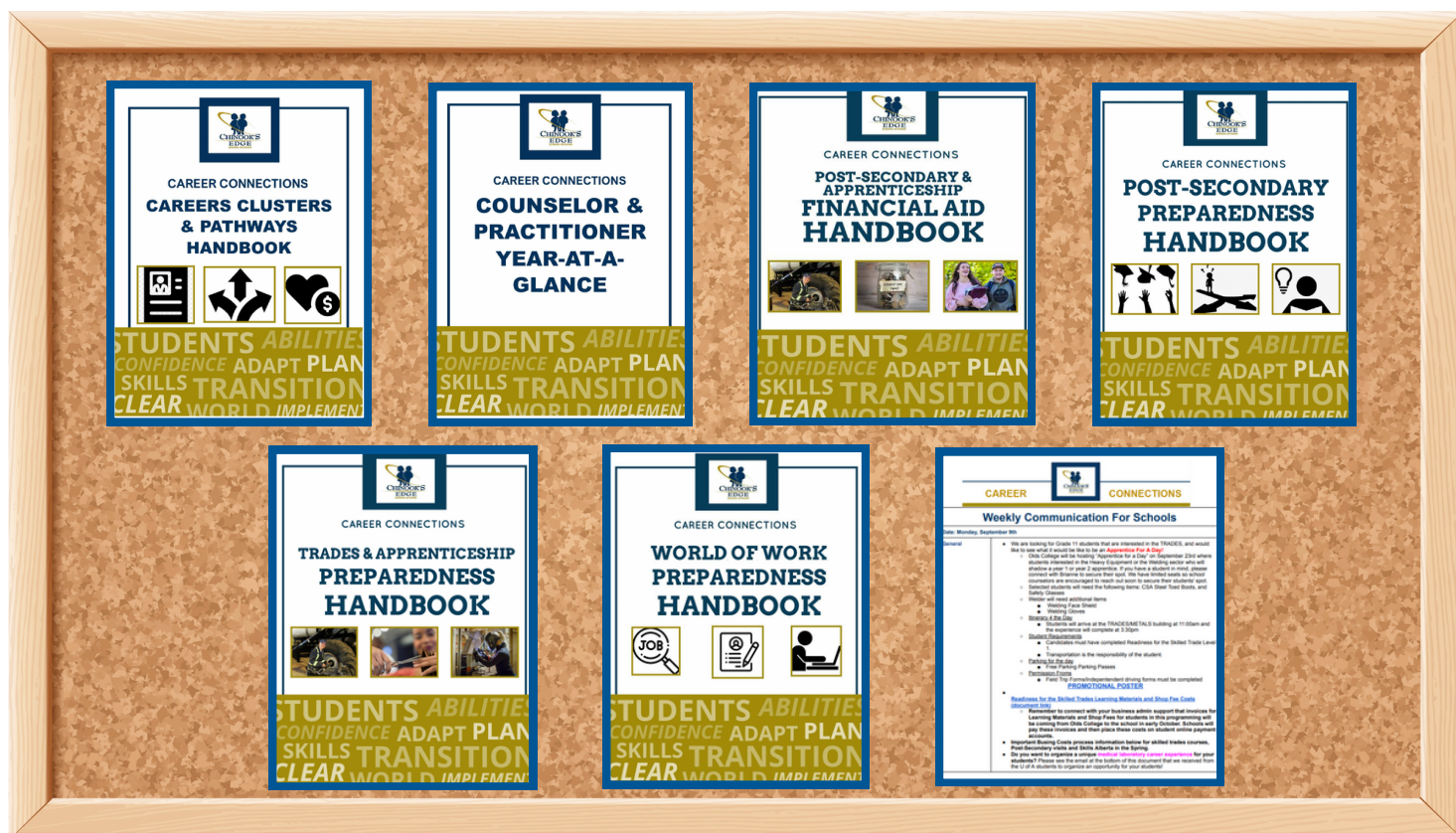
## CESD - Application

### Handbooks: Key Tools for System Sustainability and Success

- The implementation of handbooks plays a pivotal role in defining and sustaining system operations and culture. These handbooks outline protocols and guidelines that clarify staff roles, strategic actions, and support career pathways planning. Aligned with the division's educational goals, the handbooks provide systematic approaches to facilitating smooth transitions into post-secondary career pathways. The handbooks also enhance parental engagement by offering comprehensive insights into educational processes and expectations. This alignment of practices fosters consistency and clarity, contributing to the sustainability of programs within CESD.

### Resources

- Click on the images below to access resources developed by Chinook's Edge School Division.



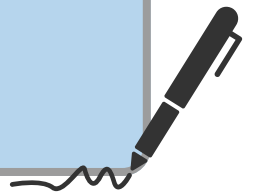


# Story of Practice Case Study

## CESD - Application



Which practices identified in this case study would you use to advance student engagement and career readiness in your school authority?



# Story of Practice Case Study

## CESD - Study

Integrating skilled trades, apprenticeships, and vocational education within a student-centered framework has produced significant educational impacts within CESD. This section examines the lessons learned and emerging themes, emphasizing the role of system leaders in shaping educational practices and enhancing student success.

### Establishing a Core Team and Building Capacity

- The establishment of a Core Team has been an important strategy for building capacity and fostering a collaborative culture across the division. This team, consisting of central office system leaders, school leaders, and teachers, is crucial for guiding the division's focus and shaping its culture. Team members' work in developing and refining staff roles across schools has been essential for extending influence and ensuring uniformity in educational practices throughout the division.
- The Core Team is central to enhancing career pathways programming within CESD. Team members conduct in-depth research on best practices and assess their relevance to the division's unique context. This includes extensive data collection and analysis, where the team surveys high schools to identify trends in post-secondary success rates and pinpoint areas that need additional support. The data collected, both quantitative and qualitative, forms the foundation for the ongoing refinement and improvement of the division's educational goals, strategies, and measures. To ensure that the division's approaches remain innovative and effective, the Core Team maintains a continuous focus on directing and expanding the impact of these strategies on student outcomes. This sustained commitment enables the adaptation and evolution of educational practices to better meet the needs of students and effectively prepare them for their future careers.

### Board and Senior Leadership Support

- The support of both the CESD Board and senior leadership is essential for the success and development of the Career Connections program within the division. Such endorsement is critical for establishing clear goals and measurable outcomes. The process of arriving at the current Career Connections goal was highly collaborative, involving key stakeholders at all levels. This inclusive approach helped ensure that the goal was reflective of the broader educational objectives and community expectations. By engaging a wide array of perspectives in the decision-making process, the CESD Board and senior leadership were able to foster a sense of ownership and accountability.

# Story of Practice Case Study

## CESD - Study

### System Alignment through a Common Framework and Guiding Documents

- Developing comprehensive guiding documents, such as a strategic actions framework and handbooks, is essential for standardizing and sustaining educational practices throughout the division. These documents provide clear guidelines that enable the consistent application of educational strategies at every level. As foundational resources, they align diverse educational activities with the division's overarching objectives, ensuring uniform adherence to standards and procedures across all schools. This consistent approach supports the overall progress and sustainable implementation of practices, contributing to the long-term success of the division.

### Ongoing Strategic Student Support

- CESD has developed a structured coaching model with clearly articulated levels, with coaching provided by division-based roles, career counselors, practitioners, and classroom teachers. This comprehensive approach ensures that students receive the necessary guidance to successfully navigate their career pathways. By addressing student challenges and fostering confidence through this strategic support, CESD equips students with the essential tools and support needed to achieve their goals.

### Preparing Students for the Academic Rigor of Post-Secondary Education

- Through partnerships with Red Deer Polytechnic and Olds College, CESD identified gaps in student readiness for post-secondary education, particularly in study skills, math, and science knowledge. To address this, CESD introduced targeted learning sessions to raise awareness of the academic rigor required in skilled trades and technical careers. They also focused on the curriculum to ensure that all students reach a minimum Science 10 level, which is a key entrance requirement in the skilled trades. CESD's efforts have led to students meeting, and even exceeding this goal, with many reaching advanced science courses at the 30 level and progressing beyond Math 10C. The division also introduced specific dual credit courses for students in Grades 10 and 11 to prepare them better for the academic demands of pre-employment programs at post-secondary institutions.
- These practices highlight the need for early and thorough preparation and coaching for students navigating the challenging academic demands of high school and post-secondary institutions.

# Story of Practice Case Study

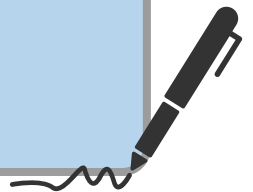
## CESD - Study



What lessons from this case study could be used to enhance your student career pathway choices?

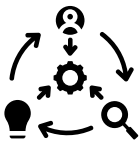


CHINOOK'S EDGE  
SCHOOL DIVISION



# Story of Practice Case Study

## CESD - Synthesis



- Use the following questions to connect your learning to your own context and role as a system education leader.



### **Reflection: Operational Insights**

- If you were to prioritize one area for improvement within your curriculum to enhance career education, what would it be and why?
- What strategies would a Core Team focused on career readiness implement to ensure objectives and well-defined and effectively communicated?
- How can the Board and senior leadership actively champion the development of career pathways education to meet the diverse needs of all students?
- Considering CESD's model, how might you design a multi-year strategic framework to guide and sustain career pathway education within your division?
- How will you measure the effectiveness of your career readiness initiatives in improving learning outcomes within your schools? What metrics would be most indicative of success?
- In what ways can you expand partnerships with post-secondary institutions to enhance career opportunities for students?
- What collaborative opportunities could you advance with industry partners and other stakeholders to expand students' career education opportunities?
- How can your system create and maintain a customized plan with consistent, responsive support that effectively guides each student from school through post-secondary education and into the workforce?



# Pulling It All Together

## Synthesis



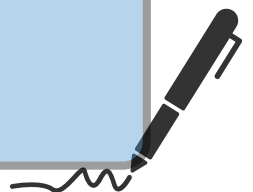
### Reflection: Shared Success Drivers

#### *Visionary Leadership and Direction Setting*

Alberta places a significant emphasis on preparing students for higher education and lifelong learning, ensuring they possess the skills and knowledge required to succeed in a rapidly changing world. All three school authorities have established a clear, strategic vision for the district, aligned with the educational needs of the community. The education plans' career pathway priorities are comprehensive, actionable, and measurable, fostering continuous improvement in response to evolving educational needs.

- **Fort Vermilion School Division** utilizes the EDGE framework to ensure that all students explore, develop, grow, and experience their chosen career paths.
- **Prairie Rose Public Schools** emphasize place-based learning, utilizing the local environment and community diversity to FORGE FUTURES, cultivate wonder, and expand possibilities for students.
- **Chinook's Edge School Division** integrates a comprehensive approach to career pathways, labeled CAREER CONNECTIONS, to ensure a seamless transition for students through various educational stages.

**How can we adjust our strategic direction to increase student engagement and career success beyond high school?**



# Pulling It All Together

## Synthesis

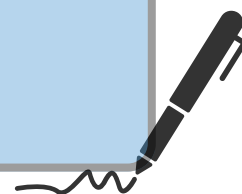


### **Reflection: Shared Success Drivers**

#### ***Scaffolding Student Career Readiness Using a Multi-Year Division Framework***

System improvement is driven by a clearly defined and continually evolving framework, supported by consistently reviewed policies and practices. Career education frameworks within the divisions prioritize personalized learning that develops each student's unique strengths, enhancing engagement, ownership, and educational outcomes. These multi-year frameworks provide comprehensive strategies that integrate academic learning with career readiness initiatives. Students explore, engage, and experience diverse career pathways through work-integrated learning, internships, and dual credit opportunities, with multiple entry and exit points available. This approach ensures that students recognize how their academic efforts align with future career opportunities, facilitating a smooth transition into further education and the workforce.

**What framework components or practices would you include to comprehensively support career readiness for all students in your jurisdiction?**



# Pulling It All Together

## Synthesis



### **Reflection: Shared Success Drivers**

#### ***Support Systems for Student Success***

Each of the three case study school authorities has developed support systems that are interdependent and cohesive, enhancing career development and student support. The roles of these support groups are summarized below:

- **Staff:** Support for students is centered around comprehensive coaching and guidance. Career counselors, support staff, and teachers provide personalized support and tools like career planning applications to foster student independence and accountability.
- **Partners:** Vital partnerships with local businesses, industries, and educational institutions ensure curriculum relevance and facilitate work-integrated learning opportunities. Partners contribute insights for program planning.
- **Parents:** Engagement initiatives keep parents informed and involved through workshops and sessions that clarify educational resources and strategies.
- **School Leaders:** School leaders act as communicators and connectors, actively engaging in community activities and facilitating partnerships that enrich educational programs and align with local needs. By gathering feedback and advocating for resources, they ensure educational strategies are responsive to student and community needs.
- **System Leaders:** System leaders implement educational projects that operationalize the Board's education plan priorities, goals, and strategies. They utilize data-driven tools for strategic planning and maintain accountability through monitoring and reporting measures. Their ongoing participation in professional development and collaborative networks align innovative educational research and practices, facilitating successful outcomes.

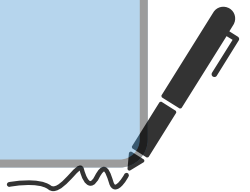
**When examining the support roles and the integrated system designed to enhance student career readiness and their successful transition into the workforce, what practices could be identified for adoption or adaptation to enhance outcomes within your school authority?**



# Notes



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