

Exploring Alberta Students' Perceptions of Success Related to Grade 12 Transition Research Proposal

Study Title:

Alberta Grade 12 Students' Perceptions of Essential Conditions for Career Success

1. Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of this study is to explore Alberta students' perceptions of the essential conditions that support their success in making informed career decisions, particularly within the context of trades and vocational education. Framed by the [Trades, Apprenticeship, and Vocational Education \(TAVE\) Framework](#), this study will gather Grade 12 student perspectives through the lens of three key dimensions:

- Exploring in Career Thinking,
- Engaging in Career Thinking, and
- Experiencing in Career Thinking.

Findings will be used to inform school authorities and Alberta Education on potential to improve access to, and the effectiveness of, career pathways exploration in trades and technologies.

2. Research Focus

This study will explore how Alberta students perceive their readiness for career decision-making and identify the school-based supports and experiences that most effectively foster success in trades and technologies pathways.

3. Research Questions

1. What factors (e.g., family, media, school experiences, peer influence) most influence students' initial career awareness? (Exploring Career Thinking)
 - a. At which grade level do Alberta students perceive first seriously considering their future career pathways?
 - b. How confident are students in understanding the variety of available career paths when they begin thinking about their future?

2. What do Alberta students perceive as essential conditions for successfully aligning their personal interests and strengths with future career pathways in trades and vocational education? (Engaging in Career Thinking)
 - a. To what extent do students perceive their school programming (e.g., courses, counselling, dual credits) support them in identifying and pursuing meaningful career goals?
 - b. What barriers and enabling experiences do students identify as influencing their ability to engage in informed and meaningful career planning, particularly in relation to trades and technologies?

3. How do students describe the impact of hands-on experiences (e.g., job shadowing, CTF/CTS courses, RAP, dual credit) on their career decision-making confidence? (Experience Career Thinking)
 - a. What conditions do students identify as most influential in helping them explore or confirm potential career interests?
 - b. In what ways do students believe these experiences have increased their confidence in making informed career decisions?
 - c. What improvements do students suggest for enhancing school-based career education, especially in trades and technologies?

4. Methodology

This study will use a qualitative descriptive methodology to explore Alberta students' perceptions of the essential conditions for career decision-making success, as framed by the Trades, Apprenticeship, and Vocational Education (TAVE) Framework. A qualitative descriptive methodology is well-suited for this type of research study aimed at providing a comprehensive summary of participants' perceptions and experiences in their own words. As a pragmatic and flexible approach, qualitative description is commonly used in applied research where the objective is to generate straightforward, data-driven insights that can inform policy and practice. Rather than seeking deep theoretical abstraction, this methodology allows researchers to stay close to the data and accurately reflect the language and perspectives of participants. In the context of this study, qualitative descriptive methodology will support the exploration of Alberta students' career thinking by capturing their voices and articulating essential conditions for success in career decision-making across diverse educational settings.

The research will focus on capturing student voice across the three dimensions of the framework: exploring, engaging, and experiencing in career thinking. A purposeful sample of Grade 12 students will be selected from diverse school authorities across Alberta, including rural, urban, First Nations, and francophone contexts. These grade levels will be chosen to reflect key transition points in students' educational journeys where career exploration and decision-making are particularly salient.

Data will be collected using an online survey created in Google Forms. The survey will include both closed- and open-ended questions designed to gather baseline data on when students begin thinking about careers, the supports and barriers they experience, and how career-related opportunities influence their thinking.

Thematic analysis will be used to analyze the qualitative data collected from the survey. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach, the research team will identify and code key themes that emerge from the data, with attention to variations across grade level, geography, and school context. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to thematic analysis provides a systematic yet flexible method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. The first step involves familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts and survey responses, allowing the researchers to note initial observations. In the second step, meaningful segments of the data are coded systematically across the entire dataset. The third step focuses on collating these codes into potential themes. In the fourth step, themes are reviewed in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set to ensure coherence and relevance. The fifth step involves defining and naming each theme to clearly articulate the essence of what each theme represents. Finally, the sixth step is the production of a final report that weaves together thematic findings with illustrative quotes and a compelling narrative linked to the research questions. This process ensures credibility and trustworthiness of the study's findings.

NVivo or Chat GPT will be used to support data organization and coding. This methodology allows for an in-depth understanding of students' lived experiences and perceptions, which will help inform actionable recommendations for school authorities and Alberta Education to strengthen career education, particularly in trades and vocational pathways.

5. Ethical Considerations

This study involves research with minors; therefore, strict ethical protocols will be followed in accordance with standard institutional and Tri-Council guidelines for conducting research with human participants. Participation in the survey is entirely voluntary. Informed student assent will be obtained prior to data collection. The student assent form will clearly outline the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, and the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Grade 12 students, though nearing adulthood, will still be provided with age-appropriate information to ensure they understand the voluntary nature of their participation and their rights throughout the research process.

All student responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Surveys will be collected anonymously. No student names or identifying details will be used in any reports, presentations, or publications. To ensure data protection, all electronic data will be stored in a password-protected folder on the CASS Google Drive. Only members of the research team and CASS administration will have access to the raw data.

The research design also includes safeguards to minimize risk. While the topic of career planning is considered low risk, participants may feel uncertain or anxious when discussing their futures. They will be reminded that they can withdraw from the survey at any time. If any student experiences discomfort, appropriate supports will be arranged as determined by the teacher administering the survey.

5. Dissemination of Results

Findings from this study will be shared with school authorities, Alberta Education, and relevant education stakeholders to inform the development and improvement of career education programming, particularly in trades and technologies. The results will be compiled into a comprehensive final report and posted on the public version of the CASS website in the [research for system education leaders](#) section. In addition, key findings may be presented at provincial conferences, such as the 2026 Alberta Skilled Trades and Technologies Summit, and may be submitted for publication in [The CASS Connection](#) or similar publication with a focus on system education leadership, K-12 career development, or applied education research.

6. Timeline

- CASS CEO Approval – September 2025
- Data Collection – November 18 – December 18, 2025

- Data Analysis – December 2025–February 2026
- Report Writing – March/April 2026
- Dissemination – May/June 2026

Appendix A: Student Assent Form

Student Assent Form for Participation in a Research Study

Title of the Study:

Alberta Grade 12 Students' Perceptions of Essential Conditions for Career Success **Research**

Research Team:

This study is being conducted by Dr. Gloria Antifaiff and Colleen Symyrozum-Watt-Watt on behalf of the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS).

Why am I being asked to take part?

You are being invited to participate because you are in Grade 12, and we are interested in learning about how students like you make decisions about future career paths.

What will I be asked to do?

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete an online survey. The survey includes multiple choice and short-answer questions about your experiences in school and what has helped or influenced your thinking about future careers. The survey will take about 15–20 minutes to complete.

Do I have to participate?

No. You do not have to take part if you don't want to. You can say no now or change your mind at any time, even if you've already started the survey. There will be no negative consequences if you decide not to participate.

Will my answers be kept private?

Yes. Your answers will be kept private and will not be shared with your teachers, school, or anyone who knows you. The survey is anonymous which means we will not ask for your name or anything that could identify you.

Are there any risks or benefits?

There are no known risks to taking part. While you may not benefit directly, your responses will help us understand how schools can better support students in planning for their futures. If you do feel discomfort with the questions, please let your teacher know.

What if I have questions?

If you have any questions now or later, you can talk to your teacher or contact the research team at gloria.antifaiff@cass.ab.ca

Your Assent

- I understand what this study is about.
- I know that participating is my choice.
- I know that I can stop at any time.
- I know my answers will be private and not shared with anyone at my school.

By checking the box below, I agree to take part in this study.

Yes, I agree to participate in the survey.

No, I do not want to participate.

Appendix B: DRAFT Survey Instrument

Your Voice Matters: Grade 12 Career Pathways Student Survey

Your Voice Matters: Grade 12 Career Pathways Student Survey

(Note to Teachers: Questions 5, 6, 10, and 12 are optional to answer. All other questions require an answer.)

The College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) is conducting this survey as part of a province-wide study to better understand how Grade 12 students in Alberta feel about planning for their future careers. We are looking to learn what has helped, what has been challenging, and how schools can better support students to feel ready for a career after high school.

Your voice matters. Your answers will help school leaders across Alberta improve career education, so future students get the support they need. There are no right or wrong answers. The survey is anonymous and takes about 15–20 minutes to complete.

Whether you are already set on a specific career path or are still undecided, your participation in the survey can contribute to a broader understanding of the career experiences of Grade 12 students in Alberta high schools.

We appreciate your reply on or before Friday, November 21, 2025. Thank you!

A. About You

This survey includes both multiple choice and short answer questions. Please answer based on your own experiences and opinions. Choose the option that best fits you or share your thoughts in your own words.

1. What grade level are you currently in?
 - Grade 12

- Other (please specify)

2. How old are you?

- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- Other (please specify)

3. Which of the following best describes the area where your school is located?

- In a large city (like Calgary or Edmonton)
- In a smaller city (like St. Albert, Sherwood Park, Spruce Grove, Red Deer, Airdrie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie, or Fort McMurray)
- In a rural area (school is in a small town, village, or agricultural community)
- In a remote community (far from cities, with fewer services and harder access)

4. Which area of Alberta best describes where your school is located? Choose the option that fits the best.

- Zone 1 – North: near Grande Prairie, High Level, Peace River, Fort Vermilion, La Crête
- Zone 2/3 – North Central: near Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Bonnyville, St. Albert, Sherwood Park, Lloydminster, Westlock, Athabasca, Spruce Grove, Slave Lake, Whitecourt
- Zone 4 - Central: near Red Deer, Lacombe, Ponoka, Olds, Stettler, Millet, Coronation, Rocky Mountain House, Camrose
- Zone 5 - South Central: near Calgary, Airdrie, Okotoks, High River, Strathmore, Banff, Canmore, Three Hills, Hanna, Drumheller, Oyen, Vulcan
- Zone 6 - South: near Lethbridge, Brooks, Taber, Claresholm, Medicine Hat, Dunmore, Cardston

B. Exploring Career Thinking

5. When did you first start thinking seriously about your future after high school?

- Before Grade 7
- Grade 7 or 8
- Grade 9
- Grade 10
- Grade 11
- Grade 12
- I have not started thinking about my future after high school.

6. What supports have helped guide your thinking about future careers or post-secondary pathways? (Select all that apply.)

Personal Influences

- Family
- Friends
- Elder
- Coach or mentor

School Career Support

- Teachers
- School counselor or career advisor
- One-on-one career planning meeting
- Career planning workshop
- CTF (Career and Technology Foundations) course (Grades 5–9)
- CTS (Career and Technology Studies) course(s) (Grades 10–12)
- Collegiate or career pathway program offered at your school

Career Learning Opportunities

- Career exploration day or field trip
- Career presentations or guest speakers
- Try-a-Trade® event, camp, or hands-on workshop
- Post-secondary campus visit, open house, or presentation
- Off-campus education program (e.g., Work Experience, RAP, Green Certificate)
- Dual credit program (High school + college course)

Media and Digital Resources

- Career Websites
- Social media (e.g., TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube)
- Career quizzes or self-assessments

C. Engaging in Career Thinking

7. How much do you feel your school programming has helped you figure out and work toward meaningful career goals?

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Not helpful

8. What types of challenges, if any, have you faced while planning your career path in high school? (Select all that apply.)

Interest and Self-Awareness

- I'm still figuring out what interests me.
- I'm not yet confident about my strengths or skills.
- I have not really thought much about career planning.
- I feel confident about my career direction and haven't faced major challenges so far.

Access to Information and Support

- I haven't had enough help or guidance.
- I'm unsure what programs or career options are available.

Learning Opportunities

- I haven't taken many career-focused courses.
- I haven't had many career-related opportunities (like guest speakers, events, or planning tools).
- I haven't had the chance to try real-world experiences like job shadowing or work placements.

Personal and Life Challenges

- I've had personal or family things going on.
- I'm concerned about the cost of post-secondary education or training.
- I've found some schoolwork or classes difficult.

Experiencing Career Thinking

9. Rate how much each of the following career-related learning experiences has helped you feel more confident in your career decisions.

(Responses are very helpful, helpful, not helpful, I did not have these experiences)

- Junior High Options
- High School CTS courses
- CALM course
- Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP)
- Dual credit course(s)
- Job shadow or workplace tour
- Work experience
- Career fairs or events
- Try-A-Trade® events or camps
- Guest Speakers
- Conversations with teachers, counsellors or career advisors about career pathways
- Post-secondary presentations and/or on-site visits
- Career Planning Tools (e.g., myBlueprint, Xello, ALIS.ca)

10. Is there another type of experience not listed above that helped you feel more confident about your career decisions? If yes, please explain.

11. To what extent has participating in workplace learning or career pathway programs helped you feel ready for life after high school?

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Not helpful

- I did not have these experiences.

12. Rate the conditions that are essential for helping you feel successful when making decisions about your future career. (Very helpful, helpful, not helpful)

- Feeling supported by teachers, counselors, or mentors
- Having access to one-on-one career guidance
- Being given time in school to explore career options
- Using a career planning tool provided by my school
- Taking part in hands-on or real-world learning experiences
- Seeing clear connections between school and real-world careers
- Feeling confident in my skills and abilities
- Being encouraged to explore different career pathways
- Getting clear information about career pathways
- Having access to role models
- Listening to guest speakers from different careers

13. Is there another type of condition that you believe is essential for helping you feel successful when making decisions about your future career? If yes, please explain.

14. What could your school do to make career education more helpful, especially if you are thinking about trades, technology, or apprenticeship pathways as a career?