

The Honourable Demetrios Nicolaides
Minister of Education
228 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5K 2B6

The Honourable Rajan Sawhney
Minister of Advanced Education
107 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5K 2B6

June 25, 2024

Dear Ministers Nicolaides and Sawhney:

Re: Dual Credit Program

On behalf of the Board of Trustees for Grande Yellowhead Public School Division (GYPSD), please accept this letter advocating for improvements to how Dual Credit programming is funded in Alberta; additionally, we request that the province support the acquisition of a Trade designation for certificated teachers through the Teacher Qualifications Service for salary purposes.

As you know, dual credit programming provides students the opportunity to acquire high school credits and post-secondary credits concurrently. As described in the *Alberta Dual Credit Framework*, (2023), “[D]ual credit is described as [p]rogramming authorized and funded by Alberta Education in which grade 10, 11, or 12 students can earn both high school credits and credits that count toward a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree, including a journeyperson certificate.” Students can get a head start on their career path and begin working in their intended field quicker. For example, a student could graduate with both their high school diploma **and** Health Care Aide certification if that formal post-secondary program partnership exists. However, establishing formal dual credit programs in small, rural school divisions is unattainable within the current framework.

The first obstacle to small jurisdictions is cost: high school funding is allocated within the three-year WMA enrolment of the school jurisdiction. The WMA does not allocate funding for specific courses, students, or schools. School jurisdictions must determine which education programs they can afford to prioritize as no additional funds for career pathway programs are available. The WMA allocation does not address tuition costs, nor the cost of consumables required to operate many career pathway programs. Additionally, school divisions cannot recoup tuition costs by collecting fees from the families.

Another obstacle for school jurisdictions is staff: earning dual credits in CTS Apprenticeship Pathway courses requires that the course be taught by an Alberta certificated teacher who also holds a Journeyperson designation in that field. Alberta Education provides a bridging program that supports Journeypersons to acquire their teaching certification. Their Trade experience is recognized in the salary grid. Certificated teachers who acquire a Trade are not similarly recognized. There is no incentive for a certificated teacher to take on the work and costs to pursue a Trade designation.

The third obstacle is student interest and readiness: successful students have to be confident, independent learners, with the maturity to tackle a post-secondary learning experience. This requires the ability to set priorities, anticipate and plan time to address the additional workload, study for exams, and meet deadlines. Students must be adept with technology and online learning platforms, and confident, consistent communicators; finally, they must be resilient when they struggle with the learning outcomes or tasks. There is no tuition refund if a student changes their mind. Providing dual credit experiences for high school students is a meaningful way to engage more young

people in selecting a career pathway; unfortunately, providing an experience does not ensure the student will commit to the path. Exploration is expensive.

Given the province's value for career pathway/dual credit opportunities for our high school students, career pathway courses must be funded differently to reflect the exceptional costs, and risks, of offering them. Finally, high school teachers who specialize in Career and Technology Studies (CTS) are already passionate about experiential learning experiences; if the additional training and education was recognized on the teacher salary grid, we believe more teachers would seek their Trade designation thus minimizing one barrier for school jurisdictions.

Sincerely,



Dale Karpluk (Jun 25, 2024 10:40 MDT)

Dale Karpluk, Board Chair (Jasper)

Cc: Board of Trustees
ASBA
PSBAA
Mr. Martin Long, MLA for West Yellowhead
Mr. Shane Getson, MLA for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland
Dr. C. Lewis, Superintendent of Schools

