



Central Alberta
Collegiate
Institute



Education Minister visits Olds, and emphasizes the importance of career based learning

June 21, 2024

The partners of the Central Alberta Collegiate Institute (CACI) program were pleased to showcase career pathways learning underway in Central Alberta, at an event at Olds College of Agriculture and Technology held on June 20. They were also pleased to host Alberta Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaidis, who spoke about the importance of helping students have career based learning opportunities that lead directly into their career training.

“I am firmly committed and confident that through collaboration, like the ones we see here in Central Alberta, and by sharing knowledge and ideas we can continue to build opportunities for students to flourish in school and in life,” said Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaidis to the gathering.

Nicolaidis spoke about initiatives underway at the provincial level, referencing the Career Education Task Force established a few years ago, and a dual credit review group that will meet over the summer. He said the group will review dual credit programming and its components to gain a “better understanding of how to eliminate barriers, improve transferability, and explore the role that collegiate schools play in improving course offerings.”

The gathering welcomed dozens of senior leaders from CACI partner organizations, as well as elected board members, staff members, representatives from Advanced Education and Alberta Education, and other K-12 school authorities and post-secondaries involved in career pathway programming for youth. Participants heard about the development of CACI and career learning opportunities, and then from a panel of five students who have experienced career learning. Participants also toured facilities on the Olds College campus, observing students in trades programming: welding, veterinary technician and heavy equipment mechanics.

“We were excited to celebrate the accomplishments of CACI, and to encourage the continued growth of career pathways learning for students,” said Jackie Taylor, CACI Executive Director. “This work is exciting because it makes a measurable difference for students.”

In her presentation, Taylor talked about the impact of early exposure to career learning. “Success looks like students who transition to post secondary training with confidence, and students who know what they want and with that, they become more engaged in their academic learning,” said Taylor. “Critical to that success is the support students have at the high school level to help them be successful in the post-secondary environment.”

Dual credit is one type of career learning opportunity available to students, and is a critically important piece of career learning. Some statistics shared at the event about dual credit learning:

- Several Alberta school divisions examined their data and found that with students who participated in dual credit learning, 98% graduated from high school (compared to an 83 - 87% overall completion rate provincially)
- Transitions to post secondary are higher for students who participate in dual credit as well. Students who enrolled in dual credit courses during high school saw a:
 - 8% transition rate to post secondary diploma programs (compared to 4% of students not in dual credit)
 - 20% transition rate to certificate learning in post secondary (compared to 2% of students not in dual credit)
 - 28% transition rate to post-secondary degree programs (compared to 16% not in dual credit)
 - 71% transition rate to post-secondary trades programming (compared to 6% not in dual credit)

Taylor said, “We are grateful to the provincial government for its support of CACI programming and the needed facilities. It is this support around our province that will significantly impact all of Alberta’s youth career readiness.”

Later, while touring the facilities Nicolaidis commented, “We have some amazing facilities and spaces where students can have the opportunity to try trades, explore those pathways and see what really works for them. Anything we can do to open up more of those doors I think we have to facilitate it.”

CACI partners include: Red Deer Public Schools, Red Deer Catholic Regional School Division, Wolf Creek Public Schools, Chinook’s Edge School Division, Red Deer Polytechnic, Olds College of Agriculture and Technology, and CAREERS. CACI was [approved for provincial funding](#) in the spring of 2023.

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