

First annual Try-a-Trade successful

Chinook's Edge School Division and Olds College, with the support of industry partners, launched its first annual Try-a-Trade program for grade eight students recently. On May 17, 64 students from three Chinook's Edge schools visited Olds College for a hands-on learning experience.

Students from River Valley School (Sundre), École Deer Meadow (Olds), and Innisfail Middle School participated in activities related to Agriculture Technology, Landscape Horticulture, and Pipe Trades. This year's event was a trial, offering skilled trades that are already well established courses for Chinook's Edge high school students. Organizers are hoping to branch out across other career pathways in the future, and to have students from throughout the division attend.

Students responded to an anonymous survey about what they liked that day. One said, "Landscaping was my favorite trade and if I was to do a trade it would be landscaping."

"My favorite experience of the day was making sprinklers after they taught us about plumbing," wrote another student.

"Providing career-real, age-appropriate exploration of the skilled trades was our goal for this first ever day-long event at Olds College," said Brianne Fletcher, Chinook's Edge Career Connections Coordinator. "Early exploration with skilled trades help students be more career aware and ready for further training and opportunities in the future."



Jackie Taylor, Director, Community Learning Campus, said, "Being able to explore career pathways in the middle years helps our students start to understand what career pathway is their best fit long before they reach Grade 12. When we are able to engage students with these types of career exploration and training opportunities, we see students perform to higher levels while in school and then more successfully transition to a chosen career training experience after high school. Students finding purpose and direction in their learning is ultimately the goal of why career exploration is so important for youth."



Grade 8 students from River Valley School, Innisfail Middle School, and Ecole Deer Meadow try a variety of hands on trade activities at Olds College.



New options at École Deer Meadow extend opportunities for students

École Deer Meadow School students are excited about some new or improved “Academies” (or options) this semester. The classes not only provide engaging opportunities for students, but also help students gain skills and explore interests related to possible careers.



Horse sense developed in Horse Care class

A new class called Horse Care is helping students learn the ins-and-outs of working with horses. For instance, students come to understand how to approach horses safely, understand their body language, and halter and groom them.

Students spend time learning in the classroom and then have four visits to the Olds arena, to have a hands-on experience with the animals.

“The class made me think about being a horse chiropractor, equine dentist, and farrier,” said Bella Kerr, student, École Deer Meadow.

“I liked horse academy because we got to interact with horses in a fun and safe environment with kind and patient mentors who make me crave more time with both the horses and people alike,” says another École Deer Meadow student.

Students excited about better access to sewing machines

Students who wanted to learn how to sew at Deer Meadow in the past shared a handful of sewing machines owned by staff members and loaned to the school. As a result of a \$6,000 innovation grant from the Chinook’s Edge School Board, there is now a classroom full of sewing machines.

“We also worked with the community and Olds College to fully furnish the sewing room,” says Melissa Johnson, École Deer Meadow teacher. “It’s been great!” Johnson applied for the grant because she thought students could use a hands-on learning experience such as sewing.

“I like it because you can go at your own pace,” says Kendall Hammer, student, École Deer Meadow, “and because I can make my own stuff.”



New shop class opens possibility of taking trades classes in high school

Johnson, who helped get the grant for the sewing machines, wanted to see students learn to use other tools as well. As a result, the school started a shop class where students learn basic construction skills. The school received a \$5,000 grant from the Lion’s Club to fund equipment for the class.

“Not every student grew up on the farm, so they haven’t had a chance to learn these practical skills,” says Johnson. “I am excited for them to learn that, and also explore ideas about what they could do for career and trades options.”

“I like that they give us a lot of responsibility,” says Bailey Manton, student, École Deer Meadow. “This is my first time using a power tool and I’m enjoying it. Next year in high school I want to take it again.”