

## Chinook's Edge seeing significant growth in online dual credit participation

### Connection with caring adult positively impacts student success

Chinook's Edge School Division is seeing a significant increase in the number of students participating in online dual credit courses this year. Registration in online dual credit has increased from 163 students in 2022-23 to 270 students in 2023-24.

[According to Alberta Education](#), dual credit is optional career-based high school programming, aimed at helping students in making meaningful transitions to post-secondary or the workplace. Students who participate get credit for their work at the high school and post-secondary level.

Some dual credit programs are delivered in person, such as welding and heavy duty mechanics. Some dual credit programs are offered online - for instance: animal sciences, accounting and business, agriculture technology, environmental science, and sociology / psychology.

***"We're thrilled to see the increase in students choosing to participate. Dual credit learning is an incredibly powerful experience for students, which is why we've worked hard to create these opportunities. Our data tells us that when students take at least one dual credit course, they graduate from high school," said Jason Drent, Associate Superintendent, Chinook's Edge School Division.***

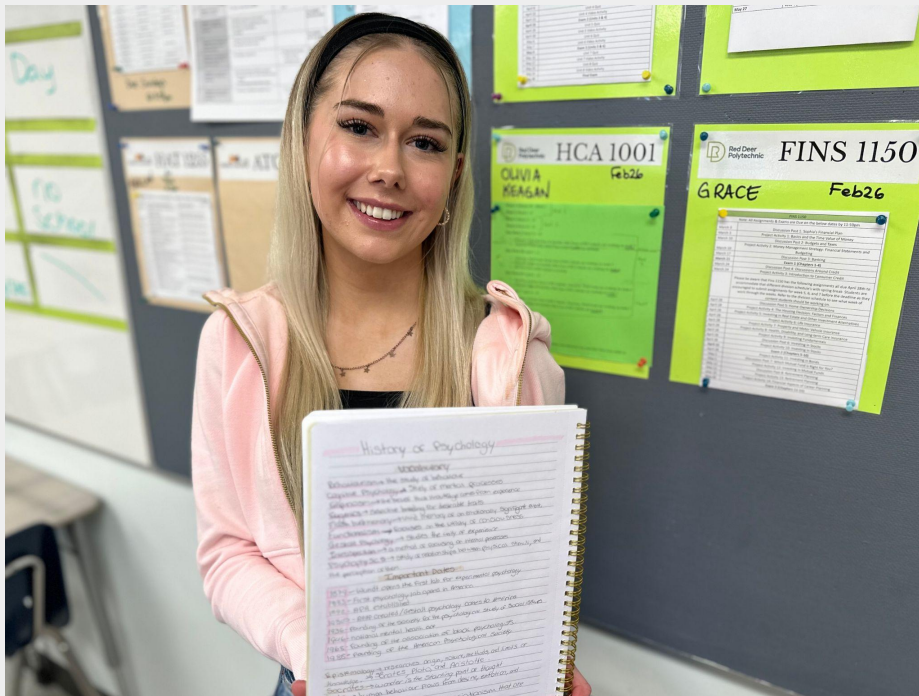


*Alexis Taylor, a Grade 10 HSS is taking Sports Management 1020, online dual credit course.*

***Drent said, "We see that because of their participation in dual credit, students increase in their academic confidence, they are more engaged in their academic learning at school, and they are more likely to choose to be in challenging academic classes. Dual credit helps students see the 'why' of school; it helps them connect what they are learning to their future."***

***"Dual credit gives relevance to current learning, and it creates a level of excitement and confidence in students about who they want to become," said Jackie Taylor, Director of the Central Alberta Collegiate Institute.***

***"When students find their purpose, especially early on in high school, it gives meaning to their school journey. Connecting in such a meaningful way is transformational for our students and prepares them with confidence and skills to successfully transition on to their post-secondary career training after high school," said Taylor.***



Kiera Pennell, a Grade 11 HSS is taking Psychology 260, online dual credit course

Taylor said provincial data shows that students who take dual credit while in high school are twice as likely to successfully transition to post-secondary career training.

***“The fact that dual credit has seen such huge growth in Chinook’s Edge speaks to how hard our schools are working on career readiness with students. Schools are seeing the positive impact of dual credit for students, and so they want to offer more opportunities for them,”*** said Taylor.

### **Teachers help students successfully navigate the post-secondary world**

A key piece to the success of dual credit in Chinook’s Edge is having school staff support each student on their dual credit journey. This includes an assigned teacher, and often key support staff, who check in on a student individually at least once a week to review the status of assignments and deadlines. School staff in these roles help students navigate the post-secondary environment and requirements of that world.

***“We see that students are far more successful this way,”*** said Dean Nielsen, the Principal of Hugh Sutherland School (HSS) in Carstairs, which has 40 students participating in dual credit courses this year.

***“The teacher in this role helps students by answering their questions and supporting them, while also holding them accountable. She genuinely cares about the students and wants them to get full value from the post-secondary courses they are enrolled in,”*** said Nielsen.

Kristin Pollock is that teacher at HSS. Pollock said most of the students enrolled in dual credit are in her classroom during one option block in the school timetable.

***“I help students remember week by week what needs to be done. I help them meet the technical requirements such as navigating the Microsoft environment for the first time. I help them write emails to their instructors. Also, together we decide how they will record their learning,”*** said Pollock.

### **How students feel about dual credit learning**

Kiera Pennell said she jumped at a chance to take Psychology 260 online through Red Deer Polytechnic, ***“because for as long as I can remember, I’ve wanted to be a psychologist.”***

Pennell, a Grade 11 student at HSS, said, ***“I thought this would be a good opportunity to see what the post-secondary workload is like and it was good that I didn’t have to pay any fees.”***





Olivia Halverson, a Grade 11 HSS is taking the Health Care Aid, online dual credit course.

Pennell said she likes having a teacher in her high school to rely on. ***“Post-secondary is different from high school. It’s helpful to have someone who will help me figure it out, and if I have a question I can ask without any stress. Being able to work with my teacher helps me build confidence,”*** said Pennell.

Alexis Taylor, a Grade 10 HSS is taking Sports Management 1020. ***“It all started with a love of sports,”*** said Taylor. ***“One day I was thinking about my future and I saw that sports management was an option, and I thought I could travel the world with a team, helping athletes if they’re hurt. I took sports management at school and when I saw I could take the dual credit course I was excited.”***

Alexis Taylor said even though she has just started the course she is already making connections. ***“The anatomy I learned about last semester at school is the same as what I’m learning in Sports Management.”***

And Alexis Taylor said being in dual credit ***“has made me think about classes I need for the future. It makes being at school more interesting and fun.”***

Olivia Halverson, a Grade 11 HSS student decided to take the Health Care Aid dual credit course through Red Deer Polytech because she wants a career in health care.

***“I think it’s a cool opportunity to look into something you want to pursue in the future, and I’m really enjoying it. I like learning about what people in health care do and seeing how it runs,”*** said Halverson.

Halverson also appreciates having a teacher available in her school. ***“She helped me figure out how RDP works. And with all the core classes I’m taking, having a teacher that reminds me about what is due is really helpful.”***



# Prescription for success: Sundre High students test drive health care careers



Sundre High students interested in health care careers got to experience a variety of possible health care roles recently. Health professionals in the community organized a day with a variety of stations where students could try hands-on activities. Students got to learn more about airway intubation, cardiac treatment, x-ray lab technician work, suturing, pharmacy, emergency medical services (EMS), and dental hygiene.

The March 13th health care skills day welcomed about 40 students. About half of them were from Sundre High. Students also came from Cremona School and from Caroline.

McKenzie Lorimer, a Grade 11 Sundre High School student has attended the health care skills day twice. ***“My goal is to become a member of the Alberta Health Care family,”*** said Lorimer, who plans to attend the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology to become either a primary care paramedic or work in Advance Care Planning. ***“The best part of the day for me was the EMT fire station. Being in a paramedic vehicle is one of the coolest and most fascinating things to learn about.”***

Lorimer said she appreciates the opportunity her community has provided to students. ***“I think it’s important to get a hands-on aspect of the health care world instead of listening to a lecture or studying notes, just to get a feel for whether it is something you might enjoy doing as a career for the rest of your life,”*** said Lorimer.

Brooklyn May, a Grade 11 Sundre High School student has also experienced health care skills day twice. ***“Health care is something that I am passionate about learning and is something that I would like to do as a career,”*** said May, who said the highlight of the day was being at the e-Sim lab, where students got to work with one of only two life-like mannequins in rural Alberta. ***“Experiencing a life-like simulation that gives you a close representation of what you would expect in a real life cardiac event was really interesting.”***

***“The health care skills day is a chance to learn hands-on and not just in a classroom setting,”*** said May. ***“The community getting together to give us small town kids opportunities like this means a lot to us!”***



## Sundre community's commitment to offering this experience for students

The roots of health care skills day are in the Sundre Health Professional Attraction and Retention Committee (SHPARC for short, which falls under the Sundre Hospital Futures organization and the Wetaskiwin Health Foundation). SHPARC was originally focused on physician attraction and retention. In 2017 SHPARC partnered with the Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP) to support a skills day designed for high school students, and to provide experiences with a range of healthcare professions. This year is the first time since 2017 that SHPARC has organized and financially supported a day for high school students on its own, with food costs, venue rentals and extra equipment requirements. Community businesses stepped up to provide lunch and snacks for students.

*“Our goal is to give students a positive hands-on experience with healthcare,” said Gerry Greschner, Secretary for Sundre Hospital Futures.*



*“We hope that students will go on to choose careers in health care, and come back to our community and work here. We’re hoping this taste of what rural health care is like will be a confidence builder for students,” said Greschner.*

*“This is one of many strategies we employ to attract health care professionals to Sundre,” said Joyce Wicks, a former Registered Nurse who practiced in Sundre and Olds, and Hospital Futures member. “Research shows us that if we can help to grow the people in our own community, they may go away to get their formal schooling, but are more likely to come back to our community.”*



Wicks said Sundre health professionals and many volunteers are willing to contribute to health care day because they recognize it is a valuable experience for students. ***“It gives them a taste of what is possible,”*** said Wicks.

## **Experiencing a career makes school more meaningful**

Corynn Sande, a teacher at Sundre High School who works in a career counseling role said students attending health care skills day benefit in many ways - including making connections to what they are learning at school.

***“We teach anatomy and physiology in Biology class. We teach about the health care system in Social Studies. We even teach about careers at school,”*** said Sande. ***“When students experience health care skills day, based right here in Sundre, we see them making connections between their school learning and the real world. That’s exciting!”***

***Scott Saunders, Sundre High School Principal, said, “A big thank you to the Sundre community and everyone involved in organizing this event. It is wonderful for our students to explore possible careers, and see what is possible in their own community.”***



## **Possible middle school expansion**

Also in attendance at this year’s health care skills day was Leslie Cooper-Shand, the Principal of River Valley School in Sundre, as well as other River Valley staff members and the chair of the school council.

***“We were so pleased to be able to be eyes and ears at the health care skills day, as we dream about the possibility of creating something similar for middle school students,”*** said Cooper-Shand. ***“We strongly believe that engaging kids at the middle school level in exciting opportunities like this, increases their motivation to do well in school, as they become more aware of the relevance of their learning in the world of work.”***

