

Second year of “Just Try-a-Trade” for middle school students focuses on small group, hands-on learning



Middle school students from throughout Chinook's Edge have had an opportunity to “Just Try-a-Trade” recently, at Olds College of Agriculture & Technology. The program, in its second year, expanded so that there would be smaller groups of students having increased hands-on learning to begin to understand their own readiness for skilled trades careers.

Students attending “Just Try-a-Trade” were exposed to careers in heavy equipment, with a tour of the Agriculture and Horticulture labs at Olds College - along with discussions about the many careers available in those fields.

“We are working on building programming in Chinook's Edge that is specifically designed for middle school students to experience various career pathways at an age where it is important

for them to explore possibilities out there and find where their passions lie. This “try-a-trade” day fits into our development of opportunities for skilled trades careers,” said Jackie Taylor, Director of the Central Alberta Collegiate Institute.

Taylor said, “providing exploration like this helps students better understand how to pursue career pathways that are of interest to them. There is a lot that a student can do as early as middle school to prepare themselves for career training after high school. In the skilled trades careers, higher levels of math and science skills are important and opportunities like “Just Try-a-Trade” help students see the value of these subjects in school for their future career training success.”



“With relevant and real exploration of career pathways, students will begin to engage to higher levels with their current schooling as they better understand where they are headed and what they need to be successful in their career training,” said Taylor.

Schools who chose to participate brought 14 students, who expressed interest in skilled trades careers, to Olds College. Unlike last year, where all the schools brought students on the same day, this year each school got its own allotted day, during February and March.

Schools that participated included: Bowden Grandview School, Cremona School, Elnora School, Ecole Fox Run School (Sylvan Lake), Innisfail Middle School, River Valley School (Sundre), and Westglen School (Didsbury).

William Boulton, a Grade 8 student from Innisfail Middle School, said, ***“So far I’ve loved the day. I liked being able to turn the engine on.”*** Boulton said, ***“I like diesel engines and mechanics, and I am thinking of a career as a heavy duty mechanic. I think this day is good because it gives ideas of what to expect at college and helps me think about what I want to do for a job.”***

Alina Hoffmann, a Grade 8 Innisfail Middle School student, said, ***“I like having the opportunity to see different ideas for a career. It gives you a feel, and could help you decide if you want to take dual credit in high school. Before coming here, I didn’t realize how many opportunities there were and that they would help me not have to do so much schooling after high school.”***



Photos on the previous page, this page, and the following page, are of students from Innisfail Middle School, last week, attending the ‘Just Try-a-Trade’ experience at Olds College of Agriculture & Technology.

They experienced hands-on learning with heavy equipment, and then toured College facilities related to agriculture, ag technology, and horticulture.





Chinook's Edge says 'thanks' to valuable team members - Educational Assistants



Jane Greenwood is an Educational Assistant who works at Penhold Crossing Secondary School.

This week Chinook's Edge is saying thank you to Educational Assistants. April 3 is recognized by many around the world as a paraprofessional day, and so it is on this day the division takes a moment to celebrate the contribution of EAs to the success of our students.

“Educational Assistants perform an important and highly valued role in our schools,” said Ray Hoppins, Associate Superintendent, Chinook's Edge School Division.

“They work directly with students, ensuring individual children get what they need to be successful in school. EAs do what they do because they love working with students, and we are incredibly grateful.”

Chinook's Edge employs approximately 400 EAs including full time and substitute EAs.





Jane Greenwood surrounded by a group of Grade 9 students who attend Penhold Crossing Secondary School.

Jane Greenwood is one of those EAs. Greenwood currently works at Penhold Crossing School, and has 24 years of experience as an EA. She has worked, as well, at Jessie Duncan School in Penhold, and at Penhold Elementary School.

“Chinook’s Edge and the Penhold schools and community have been a huge part of my last 24 years,” said Greenwood. “It’s a wonderful feeling to watch the students grow and see them be proud of what they can achieve. Every student can succeed if given a chance.”

Clark Peters, Principal of Penhold Crossing, said, ***“I have been lucky enough to work with Jane in two different schools. She is one of those people that makes things happen efficiently and effectively.”***

“Jane has a gift to be able to calmly keep progressing the learning and helping kids achieve, and she does that so well that you almost take it for granted. She reads people and situations so effectively that she makes the hardest work seem almost effortless,” said Peters.

“Jane’s steady drive manifests in the students and staff she works with,” said Peters. “It fosters a belief that anything is possible every day. Jane is an important person that really makes our school great.”

Hoppins said, “Chinook’s Edge says a heartfelt thank you to Jane Greenwood, and to each and every Educational Assistant working in our schools. Thank you for the difference you make!”



Jessie Duncan School takes a collaborative approach to brand update



Students at Jessie Duncan Elementary School (JDES) in Penhold are helping to choose a new logo and motto for their school. The school is turning 40 years old this year, and staff felt it would be a good time for an update to the school's brand.

In addition to a new logo and motto, the school will also create a new mission statement.

“This process has been really amazing,” said Kory Sholdice, Principal, JDES. “It has given us an opportunity, as a school community, to consider what we value most - and what we are proud of at our school.”

The project began in January 2024 with discussions, and surveys of students, staff and parents, about what is valued about the school and the experiences that students have there.

Working from the feedback from stakeholders, staff created a handful of possible mission statements and mottos, as well as several animals that could be used in a logo and that aligned with the feedback received. Also, each of the animal possibilities are aligned with local Indigenous teachings. Eventually the options were narrowed to two possibilities for each brand item.



Voting on a new logo and motto! Students at Jessie Duncan Elementary School voted, by secret ballot in a room set up to run like a real election. JDES students were assisted by their Grade 9 buddies from Penhold Secondary School.

Sholdice said he was impressed with how aligned the feedback from the three stakeholder groups was.

“Students, staff and parents all expressed their appreciation for the safe and caring environment in our school. They spoke about the importance of community, how strong relationships need to be the foundation for everything we do, and how learning flows from the positive relationships students experience here,” said Sholdice.





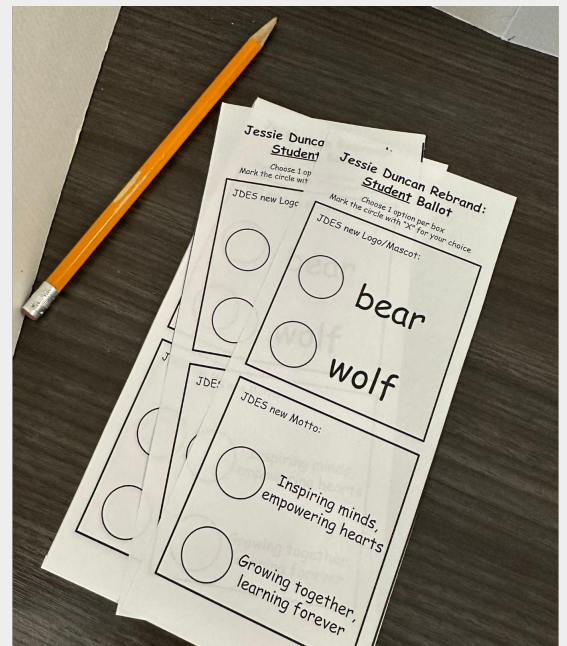
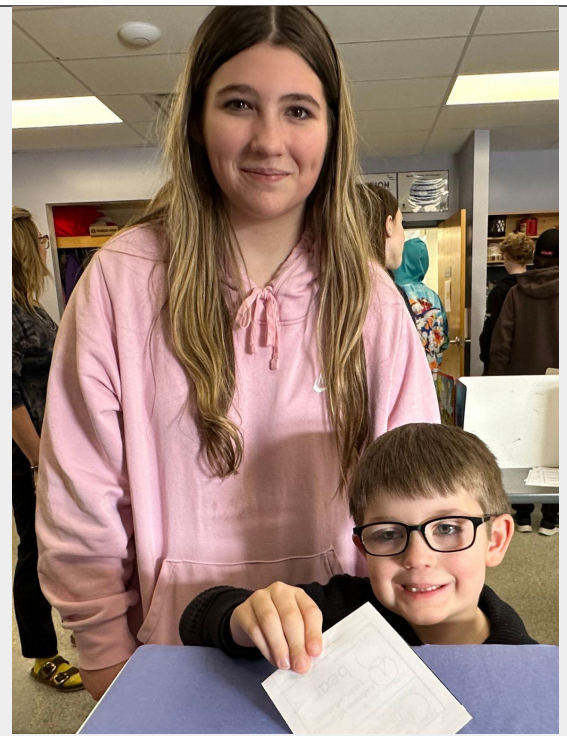
Choosing between a wolf or bear: working with Grade 9 buddies to narrow the possibilities

Last week JDES students voted, by secret ballot, on two possible motto statements. They also voted to select which animal will represent the school in the school's new logo. Teachers created an environment that simulated a real life election, including a check in station, ballots, voting booths, and a ballot box. Before students came for a vote, teachers shared a lesson with their classes so that students would understand what they were voting for.

When they went to vote, students were choosing between either a bear or a wolf. The options they were considering for the motto were: 1. Inspiring minds, empowering hearts or 2. Growing together, learning forever.

Grade 9 students from Penhold Crossing Secondary School came to JDES to assist their younger counterparts in the voting process. Each JDES student walked with a Grade 9 buddy to the voting area. The Grade 9 buddy made sure to read the options to their JDES buddy, and help them, if needed, to mark the ballot. The Grade 9 students walked their buddy back to class, and then when all the students had voted, the Penhold Crossing group stayed to tally the results.

“It was fun to help out and interact with the kids. It’s nice to see the little kids,” said Scarlet Lepard, a Grade 9 Penhold Crossing student, ***“and I think it’s fun for them to hang out with the big kids.”***



Anabelle Meyer, a Grade 9 Penhold Crossing student, observed that “some of the kids like to talk a lot,” which she enjoyed. Meyer also said she thought it was good for her class to be involved.

“It’s good for us to give back to our community and help out,” said Meyer.





Jessie Duncan students enjoyed the process too. Toshi Pauly, a Grade 3 JDES student said he gave the idea of a chickadee to represent the school, in the original round of feedback. ***“Chickadees are kind and committed,”*** said Pauly. Even though chickadee didn’t rise to the top of the considerations, he is still enjoying the process and liked voting.

“It was pretty interesting,” said Pauly. ***“Being able to contribute to something the whole school is going to see is exciting.”***

Pauly also enjoyed the Penhold Crossing students helping with the process. ***“I think it’s good especially for the littler kids,”*** said Pauly. ***“I noticed that my buddy is also on the bus I go on.”***

“I believe strongly in community connections, and in building community,” said Vanda Schesnuk, a teacher from Penhold Crossing School. ***“Although the Grade 9 students aren’t the same age as the Jessie Duncan students, we have a common goal: a safe place for everyone to learn.”***

Schesnuk said she reminds students that volunteering is important in the experiences they enjoy. ***“Without coaches, sponsors and people willing to give of their time, students wouldn’t have the opportunities that they do. Our students volunteering to help at Jessie Duncan School is just one way to give back to our community who has given so much to us. If everyone does one small thing, it makes a huge difference,”*** said Schesnuk.

Next steps and timeline

The results of last week’s vote will remain confidential for now, except in the hands of the school principal and the graphic designer, who will create several logo options based on the animal students and staff selected.

Once there are several logo options to consider, students and staff will get to vote again. Also, parents will get to weigh in on the logo options and motto options, through a google form, likely distributed in early May. The student vote will be given the heaviest weighting. Staff will vote on two possible mission statements at their staff meeting in April.

The school plans to unveil the new Jessie Duncan brand elements at a school wide assembly in June.

“We are excited to see where this journey takes us, and for the opportunity it is giving us to celebrate our wonderful learning community,” said Sholdice.

