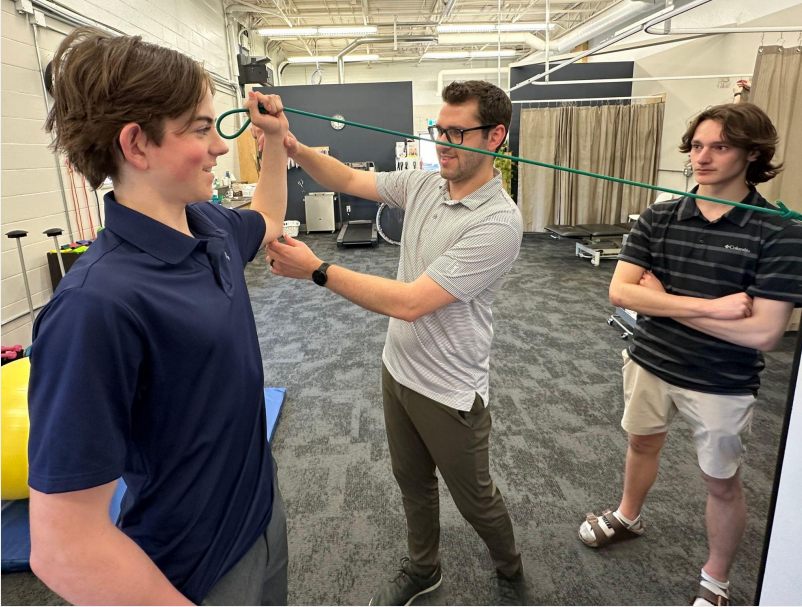


Carstairs Grade 10 students gain real-world experience through unique internship program



Cooper Nielsen (left) and Blair Bosomworth (right) learn from Andrew Klassen (centre), physiotherapist at Collegiate Sports Medicine

“Students are more motivated to select classes they need for post-secondary programs even if the courses are academically challenging for them, students work harder in their classes, and are more likely to transition to post-secondary,” said Nielsen.

Nielsen said the idea for the internship came from a visit he made to High Tech High School in San Diego California several years ago. The school has a high transition rate to post-secondary. When Nielsen asked staff why that is, they told him it was the meaningful, real-world internships students experienced there. Nielsen has wanted to implement the idea since, but knew that in a community smaller than San Diego, there might be limitations.

Hugh Sutherland School, in Carstairs, has launched a unique career internship program meant to inspire students as they consider what they want to do for a career in the future. The program involved having 81 Grade 10 students be placed into three full days of internship in the community last week. Students were placed with adult mentors such as lawyers, trades people, medical professionals, a police agency, aviation workers, a radio announcer, and schools and preschools.

The school found specific placements, by first asking each student what they were interested in, and then finding appropriate community businesses or organizations to work with. Also, the school worked with businesses and organizations to ensure students would have a hands-on learning experience that was as close to ‘real world’ and as hands-on as possible. This approach is unique in Alberta.

“Our internship program is about connecting students with their ‘why,’” said Dean Nielsen, Principal of Hugh Sutherland School. “When students find something they are interested in pursuing, it helps them make many other good choices.”



Michael Young (left) at Ford Mechanics



Ben Bannister at Champion Ford

“The real hero of this story is our staff, who first worked with students one-on-one to find out what they might want to explore, and then they worked tirelessly to approach businesses and organizations to find good internship placements for each student,” said Nielsen.

Also, Nielsen said HSS’s School Council members were very supportive in connecting the school with community partners. ***“We are very grateful to our community for their support,” said Nielsen.***

The school chose to send Grade 10 students because they were finding that students in Grade 11 sometimes wished they had made different course selections. ***“We are hoping this experience for our Grade 10 students will clarify for them what courses are needed to support their career aspirations,” said Nielsen.***



Carter Jochems (middle) and Aidan Penner (right) interned with Dan Reaman, in heavy duty mechanics, at Olds College



Jesse Longeway, Dustin Smith, Quinton Richardson, Logan Parker, Grayson Provencher, and Holly Coates interned with the Calgary Police Service

Nielsen said while some students will find passion areas, another successful outcome from the internship would be a student deciding a career pathway isn’t for them. ***“At this stage, it’s all about exploration and students coming to understand what they are really interested in. If a student can rule something out, that is one step closer to finding what they want to do,” said Nielsen.***

“It was an honour to be a part of this project,” said Rachel Cunningham, HSS’s Career Navigator. “The idea and concept around the internship is so important and meaningful. To get real-life experience and understand their ‘why’... I think it will make a huge difference for students.”

“This project has been exciting,” said Sarah Reaman, the Career Counselor at HSS. “We’ve had such a positive response from our community. Parents are talking about it and like this opportunity for their children. Businesses and organizations have been amazing too.”

Future businessman learns that communication is the key to success

Ben Bannister, an HSS student, was placed at Carstairs Champion Ford Dealership for his internship.

“I’ve always been interested in business. I have thought sales might be something I’d like to do,” said Bannister. “I am glad I got to be at the dealership.”

Bannister said he has been able to learn about how sales happen, he’s worked with the lot attendant to keep an eye on inventory and learn about the visual placement of vehicles for sale, and he has spent time learning about accounting.





Grace Diegel and Cassie Mulder at Mountain View Smiles



Laura Ivan at Carstairs Hair Company



Whitney Taylor at Carstairs Elementary School

“Selling a vehicle is more complicated than you realize. What I’ve learned is that most of it comes down to how well you communicate with a customer,” he said. “I have enjoyed seeing this in the real world and how a sale actually plays out. I like getting out into the workforce and going in depth.”

Bannister said the internship has confirmed what he was considering for a career. ***“I do see myself in sales or business, and working towards a business degree.”***

Internship confirms sports medicine and physiotherapy a good career choice

Blair Bosomworth and Cooper Nielsen were both placed at Collegiate Sports Medicine in Olds, where they spent time with a physiotherapist as he treated clients.

“I like sports and I’m interested in sports injuries, so I was interested in this internship,” said Bosomworth. “I liked watching how the physiotherapist works on people’s bodies. I find it interesting hearing how people got injured and knowing what can be done.”

“I’ve been a part of sports for years and in my family there are people in medicine, so I was interested in that too,” said Cooper Nielsen. “It’s definitely made me more interested in this area. I liked learning about the human body. It was cool to see how the physiotherapist could diagnose and help clients find improvements.”

Both Bosomworth and Cooper Nielsen said the internships confirmed this career pathway, as well as their goals to take high level math and sciences.

Internships renews commitment to academics

Carter Jochems and Aidan Penner, both HSS students, spent their internship with a heavy duty mechanics instructor at Olds College of Agriculture & Technology. Both students had participated previously in dual credit learning at the College, but wanted to expand their knowledge and experience.

“I’ve learned a lot - even on the first day,” said Aiden Penner. “I wanted to do this internship because I want to get as much trades experience under my belt as possible.” Penner said the experience confirmed to him his goal of getting good marks in academic classes is important.

Jochems agrees and said, ***“Having experiences like this remind me I need to focus on school, so I don’t need to repeat anything.”*** Jochems said the internship experience makes him more interested in a career in the trades. ***“I am looking to go into heavy duty mechanics after graduation. The internship was good for more experience in the shop.”***

Wrapping it up

The school will next take the time to consider the experiences of students, checking in with each participant. Grade 10 students will soon register for next year’s classes, and the school hopes the internship experience will positively impact their choices. The school intends to offer this opportunity annually.

“Thank you again to staff, our school council and community for working together to create this incredibly meaningful opportunity for students,” said Dean Nielsen.



Chinook's Edge teacher - Erin Holt - honoured as Mentor of the Year

Chinook's Edge teacher, Erin Holt, has been named the [Town of Innisfail's Mentor of the Year](#). Holt teaches Grade 5 and 6 at Innisfail Middle School. She implemented a ski program for IMS students, taking students to the Innisfail ski hill, and arranging for instruction from certified instructors including herself. Over the past two years, more than 200 students have participated. Holt also volunteers after school in various coaching roles, she volunteers regularly at the Innisfail ski hill, and is on the Board of Directors there.

Two Educational Assistants at IMS - Kari Fox and Candi Martin - nominated Holt.

"We could both see the impact that the ski program was having on students," said Fox. "It's fun for kids and we saw their improvement."

Fox said she admires that Holt is *"bringing an awareness to the sport, and making it feasible for students and their families to experience it. We're fortunate to have a ski hill in Innisfail, and someone like Erin to help kids enjoy it."*



Top: Erin Holt receives Mentor of the Year Award from the Town of Innisfail. Photo credit: Town of Innisfail
Bottom 2 images: Photo credit: Dan Evans Media



"This award is well deserved," said Ted Hutchings, Principal of Innisfail Middle School. "Erin had this amazing vision to create an opportunity for students that extends into our community. And she did the hard work of making it happen. She planned, worked with the ski hill, got volunteers in place, and created this amazing and special opportunity for students."





“It’s been fascinating to watch the students progress in their skills. Athletic students as well as students who haven’t been as involved in sports have all progressed and found success. That has increased students’ confidence, and when kids realize they can be successful that is valuable. The ski program opens another opportunity for students to enjoy the outdoors and to have an active lifestyle,” said Hutchings.

When she found out she was nominated, Holt said ***“I felt so happy. I am not doing what I do for recognition, but it’s nice to know that people see what I’m doing and they see positive changes as a result.”***

Holt said her motivation is all about providing opportunities for students. ***“If a student’s family doesn’t do sports, or they haven’t tried skiing before, then the ski program creates an opportunity to try something new, and it might be something they want to continue doing.”***

Holt loves seeing students continue to try skiing on their own time, after she has introduced it to them. ***“It’s my favorite thing, on a Wednesday night, to be at the top of the tow rope saying hello to students who are there enjoying skiing.”***

In her spare time, Holt likes to hike, backpack, scuba dive and participate in sports. Her passion for an active lifestyle is something she hopes rubs off on her students. ***“I am pretty proud when students start to embrace their athleticism. I love introducing students to new sports, and showing them they are never too old to learn a new skill and develop a passion.”***

Photo credit top 2 images: Dan Evans Media
Bottom 2 images: Erin Holt coaching volleyball at Innisfail Middle School.

Holt was [in the news in 2023](#), as well, as she was featured in “Forecast Ski”, a national magazine for her passion for the sport and for introducing the ski program at IMS. In the article, Holt explains that she tried skiing once when she was 12 years old, and not again until she was 35. Since then and for the last seven seasons, she has spent every weekend during the winter skiing. During that time, she has met many ski professionals and enthusiasts and has embraced the sport. Also, she has become a brand ambassador for several ski related businesses.



Ecole Olds High School students to implement eco-projects after national UNESCO conference



Left to right: Laurel Cummings (EOHS teacher), Lorelai Smith, Keianna Aubin, Ross Sadlemyer, Ashton Bird, Shelby Schekk, Bev Toews (EOHS Academic Coach)

Five students from École Olds High School are thrilled with the experience they had at a UNESCO conference in Toronto recently, and are getting ready to implement an action plan.

The students traveled to Toronto for the conference, held April 9 to 11, 2024. The UNESCO conference for Canadian high school students focused on “Sustainable Development Goals and Climate Change.” UNESCO stands for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. École Olds High School has been a UNESCO affiliated school for 19 years. Approximately 200 students attend the national conference annually.

“It felt very empowering to attend the conference,” said Ross Sadlemyer, a Grade 10 EOHS student. “I’m motivated to make a difference. It was great to see what so many others are doing.”

“It gave me much more hope,” said Shelby Schekk, a Grade 11 EOHS student, “knowing that we can take action.”

“I felt seen... being around people who care about the climate as much as I do,” said Keianna Aubin, a Grade 10 EOHS student.

“It was eye opening seeing other people’s perspectives, how climate challenges differ across the country, and that there are people who care and want to help,” said Ashton Bird, a Grade 9 EOHS student.

Students attended a variety of sessions all focused around the theme of climate change and sustainability.

Schekk said she enjoyed learning about water filtration and Indigenous storytelling connected to climate change.

Sadlemyer said the session on fast fashion ***“really showed me how much fashion comes through exploited people.”***

The fast fashion session stood out to Bird too, who said he also feels frustrated about the exploitation of workers.

“Also, I learned about greenwashing - and how companies sometimes market themselves as environmentally friendly but are just doing that to make themselves look better,” said Bird. “I liked hearing different ideas about what we can do.”



Aubin liked hearing from student presenters who shared what they have done to make a difference.

“It took courage for them to share their projects in front of everyone,” said Aubin. “It helped us see what you can do for your own action plan in your school.”

The five EOHS students have several projects in mind, following the conference. First, they plan to create planter boxes that they will place around their school, containing plants native to Alberta. Their hope is that students and staff who see the planters will come to understand more about the environmental impact of what plants they choose to use. Also, the group is interested in creating environments favorable to pollinators. Finally, the students are hoping to add an additional clothing swap to the one the school is already doing.

“I feel a strong connection to the earth,” said Schekk. “I have my own garden box and I want to learn more about Indigenous plants.”

Sadlemyer echoed the sentiment, when she said, “I feel a strong connection and love for the earth and Indigenous plants. I want to learn more.”



Bev Toews, an Academic Coach and Indigenous Liaison at EOHS, traveled to Toronto with the students, along with Laurel Cummings, a teacher at EOHS. Lorelai Smith, a Grade 11 student, not quoted in this article, attended the conference as well.

“It was wonderful to see the students come together and become friends through this experience,” said Toews. “And now this group of students, who cared about climate change before they went to the conference, are armed with ideas and connected with each other so they can take action. It’s empowering for them.”

“Climate change is an issue that can be overwhelming and can cause eco-anxiety. An experience like the UNESCO student conference empowers students with action. I am excited to see where this can go and how we can involve the rest of our school community,” said Toews.

Toews said she hopes to work with the five students to involve other EOHS students and staff to work on their projects together. ***“Bringing people together is powerful, and it can plant seeds that grow into positive change.”***

Toews is also excited about next year, as EOHS plans to host either the national or a regional UNESCO student conference in the spring of 2025.

