

## Flying high: Chinook's Edge students embark on aviation adventure



Left to right: Jonathan Schafer (Grade 12, Ecole Olds High School), Silas Marks (Grade 12, Ecole Olds High School), Ashton Shaitel (Grade 12, Innisfail High School), Tyrell Mackenzie (Grade 12, Spruce View School), Thatcher Usciski (Grade 12, Spruce View School), Kiera Dux (Grade 11, Spruce View School)

Six Chinook's Edge students are cleared for takeoff as they embark on a career pathway learning opportunity, in aviation, that became open to Grade 11 and 12 students last spring.

Chinook's Edge School Division and Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools - partners through the Central Alberta Collegiate Institute (CACI) - re-established a relationship with Sky Wings Aviation last school year. In April 2024 both divisions selected six students to participate in the aviation ground school program, with a total of 12 students enrolled.

The program was successful and the school divisions decided to offer two more sessions of the program in the 2024-25 school year, with one cohort operating in each semester. The current session began October 8 and will wrap up on October 26.

***"We are pleased to be offering the aviation program again this year," says Brianne Fletcher, Chinook's Edge Career Connections Coordinator.***

***"A key focus in our work through CACI is helping students transition to post secondary. We want students to have the confidence that they can pursue a certificate or degree and be successful. Last year, students in the aviation program did gain confidence, and we are happy to provide the opportunity again for more students this year," says Fletcher.***



Chinook's Edge aviation students with their peers from Red Deer Catholic Regional School Division

Jonathan Schafer, a Grade 12 student at Ecole Olds high School, says, ***“I was interested in the program because of my love of airplanes and my experience from air cadets. Cadets helped develop my interest in aviation. I also saw this as an opportunity to gain ground school hours in order to get my license.”***

Schafer says he is looking forward to more personal instruction with the small cohort size. He anticipates being able to ask more specific questions.

Kiera Dux, a Grade 11 student at Spruce View School says, ***“Many people I am close to have talked about their experiences with planes and their stories about flying them. The more I listened, the more interested I became in learning how to fly.”***

***Dux says, “The thing I am most looking forward to in ground school training is getting the chance to learn more about planes, listening to stories from the instructors and pilots, and meeting new people.”***

Thatcher Usciski, a Grade 12 student at Spruce View School says he was interested in the program because he wanted to ***“learn about the way an airplane works, and also to gain a pilot’s perspective on how they would feel about an aircraft.”***

Usciski says he plans to go into aerospace engineering and hopes to design an aircraft system. ***“What I am looking forward to most within ground school is achieving my radio license, as well as learning what makes an airplane work.”***

Participating students attend classes at Sky Wings Aviation, located at the Red Deer Airport, on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. They learn the Theory of Flight, Air Law, Meteorology, Engines and Airframes, Weight Balance, Performance Charts, Communications, Navigation, Human Factors, Pilot Decision Making, and Flight Operations and Instruments. Program fees of \$350 per student are sponsored by Sky Wings Aviation. Students are responsible to purchase their own textbooks.

Students in the program are in Grade 11 or 12. Selection considered student attendance, current marks and other school achievements, an interest in an aviation career, and excitement for learning. Students who complete the program gain two credits toward their high school diploma. Also, they qualify to register in ground school and can pursue a private pilot license.





# Career Connections student feature



## Didsbury High School student explores skilled trades as a possible future career direction

Annessa-Rae Jones is enjoying the opportunity to learn more about heavy duty equipment and about welding this semester, at Olds College of Agriculture and Technology. She is enrolled in Skilled Trades Level 1, a dual credit program offered to Chinook's Edge high school students.

Jones is a Grade 12 student attending Didsbury High School. She connected to dual credit learning through a school counselor. Jones is interested in a possible career in the trades sector as well as the medical field. The dual credit program is a great chance for her to start navigating what she would like to do after high school graduation.

Jones's shop teacher, Cassandra Quick, was also critical in Jones's experience at the school, and helped her gain the confidence she needed to participate in dual credit.

Jones says, *"So far my experience in college has been very informative and has opened up new experiences and possibilities for me. I am very grateful to have the opportunity to come to Olds College."*

Students participating learn and experience those two trade focuses, and they learn about safety and about tools and materials. They receive four high school credits towards their high school diploma.

