

For immediate release

Two thousand backpacks, one big goal: helping Calgary public students start school ready to learn

EducationMatters and CBE bring community together to Pack Hope for students facing financial barriers

CALGARY, AB (August 20, 2026) – Two thousand Calgary students will head back to school with new backpacks and essential school supplies this fall, thanks to a group of volunteers and donors joining forces today for the EducationMatters’ Pack Hope Backpack Challenge.

The annual event brings together corporate partners, community supporters and volunteers in a race to fill 2,000 backpacks with the supplies Calgary Board of Education students need to participate fully in school.

For families facing financial pressures, the cost of back-to-school supplies can be a significant burden. The Pack Hope campaign helps alleviate this barrier while giving students the confidence of knowing they have what they need to start the school year.

“A backpack filled with school supplies is about so much more than pencils, notebooks and other essentials,” says Stephanie Washbrook, Executive Director, EducationMatters. “It’s about making sure CBE students walk into their classrooms feeling prepared, confident and included. No child should have to worry whether they have the supplies they need to learn. Our community is helping make sure all Calgary public students can show up feeling ready to succeed.”

EducationMatters Pack Hope campaign: By the numbers

- 2,000 backpacks filled with supplies
- 11 corporate and community sponsors supporting the campaign
- Dozens of volunteers coming together to help students start the year prepared

“Every student deserves the opportunity to start the school year on equal footing with their peers,” says Joanne Pitman, Chief Superintendent of Schools, Calgary Board of Education. “We are incredibly grateful to the donors and volunteers who are making a difference for CBE students and families.”

The campaign is supported by Suncor Energy, Direct Energy, belairdirect, PC Corp, Whitecap Resources, KSBK Charitable Foundation, Neo Financial, Fraternal Order of Eagles, and Graeme Wada Foundation.



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“The Pack Hope campaign demonstrates what can happen when our community comes together with a common purpose,” says Washbrook. “We are grateful to every sponsor, donor, and volunteer who is helping us pack hope for Calgary students.”

The Pack Hope Backpack Challenge takes place from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Thursday, August 20, 2026, at Highfield Warehouse, 3610 9 St. SE, Calgary. Media are invited to attend for interviews, photographs and video of volunteers packing the 2,000 backpacks.

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About EducationMatters

EducationMatters is the dedicated charity for the Calgary Board of Education. Working alongside donors, community partners and educators, EducationMatters invests in opportunities that remove barriers, enhance student experiences, and help every CBE student reach their full potential.