

education  
 Matters

# Nourishing Potential

**2025** Report to Community

# Message from the Executive Director & Board Chair

In a year that was economically challenging for many individuals, EducationMatters supporters stepped up to give us another record year of fundraising in 2025. Together with our generous donors, **we raised \$3.58 million to support Calgary Board of Education students**, helping them realize their full potential in schools where they are cared for, supported and guided towards a bright future.

Sustaining a strong public education system requires support that goes beyond government funding. Through EducationMatters, Calgarians have removed barriers, levelled the playing field, and enriched learning experiences across our city's public schools.

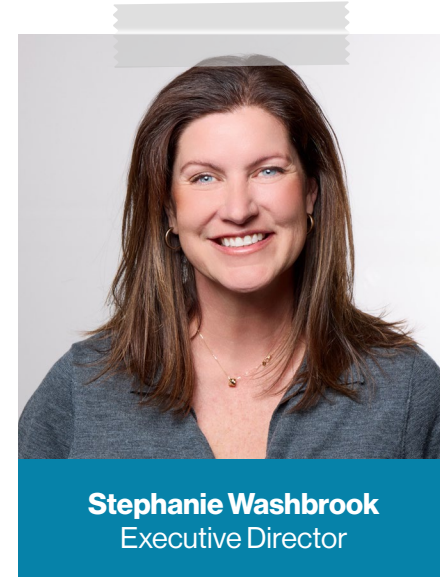
In the year ahead, our organization will harness the power of community support to do more: continuing community outreach, championing our public school system, and deepening partnerships by sharing the impact of donor support on our students.

Inside this Report to Community, you'll find meaningful stories of the lasting impact made possible by our donors, partners, and community.

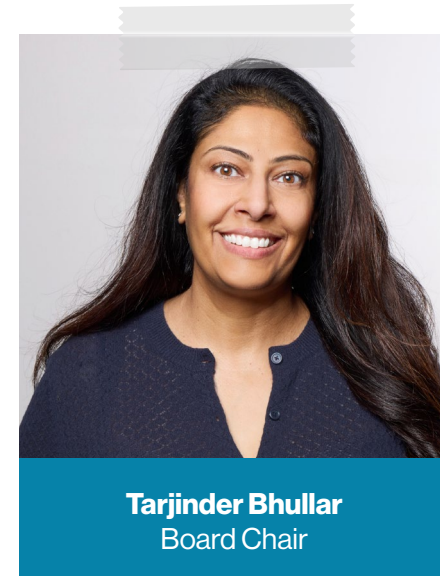
It is a reminder that together we can nourish the potential of Calgary Board of Education students, helping them thrive in our schools, knowing the community has their backs.

**Stephanie Washbrook**, Executive Director

**Tarjinder Bhullar**, Board Chair



**Stephanie Washbrook**  
Executive Director



**Tarjinder Bhullar**  
Board Chair

# Message from the Chief Superintendent

At the Calgary Board of Education, we believe every student deserves the opportunity to flourish. This year's theme, Nourishing Potential, reflects a simple but powerful truth: when students' basic needs are met and their passions are sparked, their potential grows in extraordinary ways.

**That growth is made possible, in large part, because of you.**

Through your generosity, EducationMatters continues to remove barriers and open doors for students across our system. Whether it is a backpack filled with essentials, a grocery gift card that brings stability to a family, or access to enriching learning experiences, your support reaches students in meaningful and lasting ways. These opportunities and moments of dignity are when confidence and curiosity bloom.

Every day, we see the impact of this support in our classrooms and school communities where students are engaged and feel a sense of belonging. They can focus on learning because their basic needs are being met and their interests are being nurtured.

On behalf of the Calgary Board of Education, I want to thank EducationMatters and every donor and partner who contributes to this important work. Together, we are nourishing potential, strengthening our community today and shaping a brighter future for our students tomorrow.

**Joanne Pitman**, Chief Superintendent



**Joanne Pitman**  
Chief Superintendent

# EducationMatters' Core Ingredients

EducationMatters ensures every Calgary Board of Education student can thrive by addressing barriers to learning and opening doors to future success. This support is delivered through three interconnected pillars that help students succeed today while preparing them for tomorrow.



**Extraordinary Experiences** enrich education beyond the classroom by giving students access to meaningful, hands-on learning opportunities they might not otherwise have. These include field trips, onsite cultural and artistic programs, Indigenous learning experiences, and technology enhanced activities. Such experiences spark curiosity, build confidence, and foster a sense of belonging, helping students connect learning to the real world and discover new interests and possibilities.

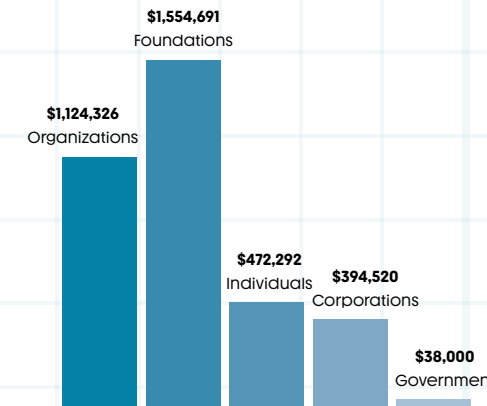


**Essentials for Learning** meets students' most basic needs so they can fully participate in school. EducationMatters helps provide food, school supplies, warm clothing, backpacks, and transit support, while also investing in student wellbeing initiatives. By removing financial stress and addressing day to day challenges, this pillar helps students show up ready to learn, engage, and succeed.



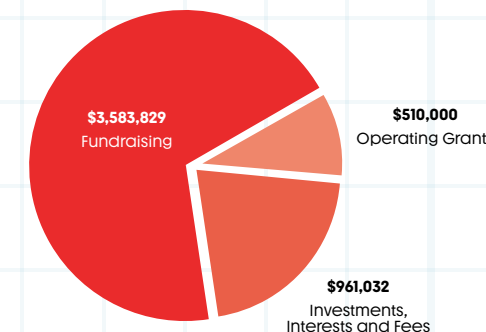
**Preparing for the Future** supports students as they explore career pathways and post-secondary options. Through dual credit and exploratory programs, students gain practical skills, industry exposure, and early credentials while still in high school. EducationMatters helps reduce barriers by supporting program costs, equipment, transportation, and learning materials, empowering students to graduate with confidence and a clearer path forward.

# By the Numbers



**\$3,583,829**

**\$5,054,861**



**\$955,733**  
Operating & Sustainability

**\$1,101,679**  
Student Awards

**\$2,278,131**  
Funding to CBE Schools

**\$4,335,543**

## Distributed to CBE Schools

Essentials for Learning	Amount
Basic Needs	\$566,940
Well-being	\$71,076
Literacy Supports	\$50,296
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$688,312</b>

Extraordinary Experiences	Amount
Off-site Activities & Residencies	\$370,388
Academic Enhancements	\$292,221
STEM & Technology	\$243,064
Outdoor Enhancements	\$18,486
Other	\$13,156
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$937,315</b>

Preparing for the Future	Amount
Dual Credit & Exploratory Programs	\$513,250
Provincial & National Skills	\$139,254
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$652,504</b>

**OVER 160**  
Schools Received Funding

**\$3,379,810**  
Distributed to Support Calgary Students

**404**  
Student Award Disbursements

**Fund Development Costs Per Dollar Raised = \$0.09**



# Extraordinary Experiences

Inside every lunchbox are the ingredients students need to nourish and fuel their bodies each day. EducationMatters supporters provide the ingredients students need to **nourish their potential.**

Every lunchbox should contain a piece of fruit or a vegetable to bring a little colour and flavour to the meal. For students, extraordinary experiences play a similar role. They add variety to learning, spark curiosity, and introduce kids to opportunities they may never have imagined.

In 2025, students explored museums, science centres, and cultural institutions; attended outdoor schools; participated in Indigenous land-based learning; learned to swim, skate and play lacrosse; and discovered new passions through performing arts.

- More than **14,000** students benefited from EducationMatters funding that made these experiences possible.
- A total of **\$370,388** enriched education through off-site experiences.

Trying something new can elicit many emotions: excitement, fear, curiosity, even a little dread. But **those first experiences often lead to the most meaningful growth.**

The learning that happens on these trips isn't always measured in facts about history or science, or in mastering a new skill like archery or cooking. Often, the most important lessons are quieter ones — building resilience, confidence, independence, leadership, compassion, friendship, and belonging.



*“ Outdoor School was a transformative experience for many Grade 5 students. Students who are usually quiet and reserved in class were leading nature hikes and initiating group problem-solving during the orienteering activity. The trip provided more than environmental learning — **it offered students a chance to take risks, build friendships, and develop leadership.** A few students struggled with homesickness initially, but peers were encouraged to check in with one another, creating a strong sense of community and care.”*

– Sherwood School teacher

*“ Finally... **you understand me.** I'm Indigenous.”*

– Douglas Harkness School student (school trip to Heritage Park's Indigenous: Bison and Building Connections program)



*“ Students were observed having a ton of fun during swimming lessons, but also some discomfort trying something new. Many of the students had never been to a pool before or tried swimming, and many were nervous. But **all of them left more confident** and willing to try new skills in the water.”*

– Abbeydale School teacher

# Essentials for Learning

The sandwich is the heart of every lunchbox, providing the foundation for the rest of the day.

For many students, however, the basic ingredients they need to learn, such as food, warm clothing, school supplies, or a way to get to school, are not always available. When families face financial hardship, these necessities are sometimes out of reach.

In 2025, EducationMatters helped ensure students had the foundational support they needed to succeed by providing school supplies, grocery gift cards, and transit passes. This allowed kids to focus on what matters most: **learning, growing, and participating in school.**

*“Thanks to the generous support of this grant, several deserving families in our small, high-needs school community received gift cards that will allow them to purchase essential groceries. Many of our families face significant financial challenges, and this support came at a time when it was truly needed. For our community, **this grant offered dignity, stability, and a powerful reminder that our families are cared for and supported.**”*

– Alaina Crone, Assistant Principal, Vista Heights School



- Over **5,000** students across **67** Calgary Board of Education schools received support for basic necessities, including more than **2,000** backpacks filled with supplies.
- A total of **\$566,940** in essential supports helped remove barriers to learning.

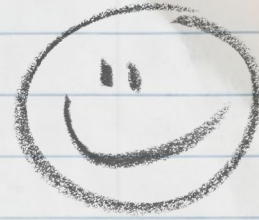
Another simple but powerful essential is a backpack. More than just notebooks and pencils, **the backpacks EducationMatters provided in 2025 represent confidence, belonging, and the reassurance** that students are arriving to class prepared to learn.

Students who are equipped with the essentials can focus on learning instead of worrying about what they're missing.

*“When students feel unprepared or different from their peers, it can diminish their confidence and willingness to engage in learning. Thanks to the generosity of EducationMatters, we were able to provide fully stocked school supplies to students who needed them most. The effect was immediate: instead of worrying about what they didn't have, students could focus on learning, building friendships, and feeling a genuine sense of belonging. **This support doesn't just fill backpacks, it lifts burdens.** For families, it brings relief. For students, it brings dignity, readiness, and joy. And for our school community, it ensures every learner has what they need to start the year with hope and possibility.”*

– Cindy Chin, Assistant Principal, École Georges P. Vanier School

# Student Well-Being



Sometimes the most meaningful thing in a lunchbox is the small note tucked inside. It's a simple gesture that reminds a child they are cared for, supported, and not alone.

Calgary Board of Education's Well-Being Framework **promotes student well-being for lifelong success and provides professional learning for staff.** Several schools used support from EducationMatters in 2025 to help achieve these goals, including creating calmer classrooms, providing basic necessities, and ensuring students have the tools they needed to participate fully in school.

- In 2025, EducationMatters, through anonymous grants, provided flexible **funding to 50 schools** to respond directly to barriers affecting student well-being and learning.
- A **total of \$240,466** from these anonymous grants provided spaces where every student can participate and succeed.

## These investments provided:

### Assistive Technology and Learning Tools.

Reading pens, iPads, communication apps, technology carts, and hands-on math and literacy tools to make learning more accessible for all students.

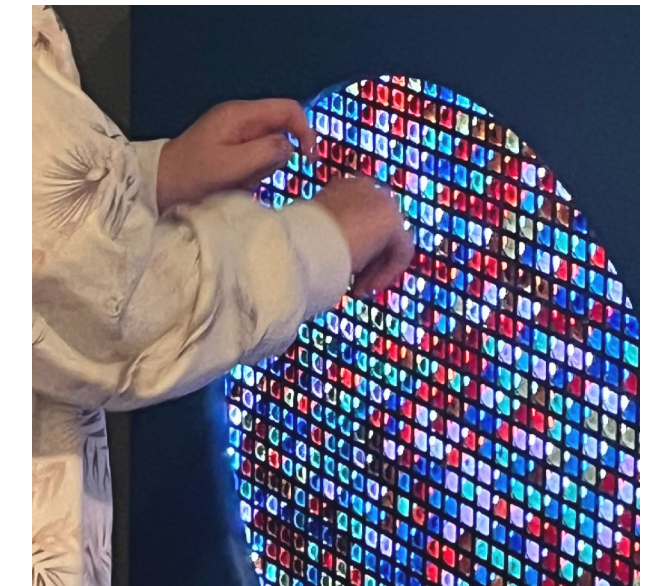
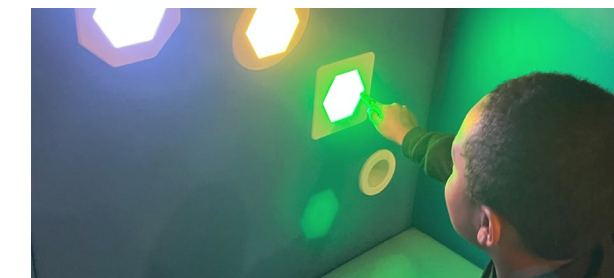
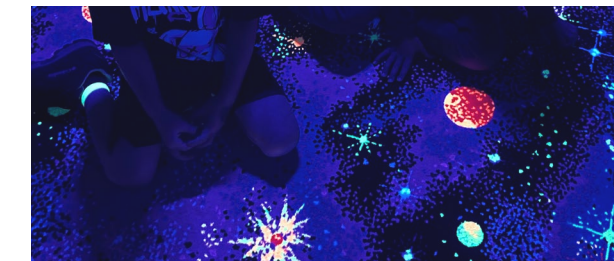
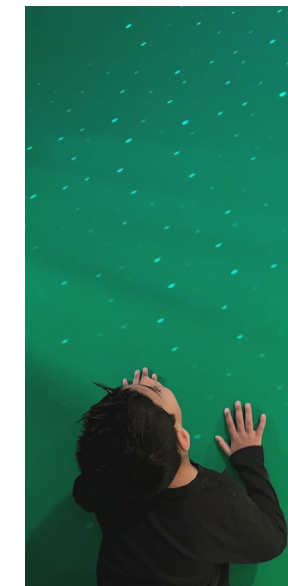
**Sensory and Regulation Spaces.** Sensory rooms and calming spaces with tactile tools, movement supports, sensory kits, and calming lights so students can reset and regain focus.

**Enriched Learning Environments.** Maker spaces, STEAM tools, robotics kits, and art supplies to encourage creativity, exploration, and engagement in the classroom.

**Basic Needs Supports.** Winter clothing, indoor shoes, hygiene supplies, snacks, and emergency gift cards to ensure students feel comfortable and cared for at school.

At one school, a dedicated sensory room is now used daily by students from Kindergarten to Grade 6. Staff report calmer classrooms and improved self-regulation, while teachers using new math and literacy carts report hands-on learning tools help students engage more deeply with lessons.

Students themselves describe sensory spaces as places where they can pause and take a breath before returning to learning. These supports send an important message to students: **you matter, you belong, and you have everything you need to succeed.**



*“What I have observed is the powerful impact that our sensory room has on students with autism to students who have experienced some sort of trauma in their lives. When they enter the room, they are often feeling overwhelmed or close to being dysregulated. **You can see their bodies begin to relax and their breathing slow as they engage with the calming environment.** When we leave the sensory room, students often say they feel much better and more relaxed. It is amazing how a simple 10-minute break in this space can bring students back to a regulated state and ready to go back to learning.”*

– Resource teacher, Annie Foote School

# Preparing for the Future

Every good lunchbox includes something that fuels the rest of the day.

For many students, dual credit and exploratory programs are that fuel, giving them the skills, confidence, and real-world experience they need to power their future careers.

Through hands-on learning and authentic industry experiences, students explore career pathways while still in high school. From technical trades to emerging industries, these opportunities help students build momentum toward what comes next.

In fall 2025, a **\$260,000 investment through Suncor's Energizing Youth initiative** helped EducationMatters expand access to these opportunities for students facing financial barriers.

This support is helping power several key initiatives with the Calgary Board of Education, including:

**Dual Credit and Exploratory Programs**, helping high school students to earn post-secondary credits and gain industry experience.

**Provincial and National Skills competitions**, where CBE students will represent Calgary in 2026.

**The 2025 and 2026 Backpack & Essentials Campaign**, ensuring K-12 students have the backpacks and school supplies they need to learn.



These programs help students discover what they're capable of doing, both today and in the future. Because when students have the right fuel, there's no limit to where they can go next.

During the 2024/2025 school year:

- **341 students received financial support** from EducationMatters to participate in dual credit and exploratory programming.
- **94% successfully completed** their dual credit program.
- **76% were employed or enrolled in post-secondary** programs within six months of graduation.

*“During the program, I enjoyed learning how different piping systems work and which ones are used for different applications. It **gave me a better understanding of how the systems are used in the real world.** I also learned a lot about safety. I plan to continue work towards my Red Seal endorsement. Dual credit gives you real experience and helps you see if a career path is right for you, so you can be successful after high school.”*

– Jack, Pipe Trades student

# Calgarians Improving Society Award

The highlight of every lunchbox is the sweet surprise at the end. EducationMatters' Student Awards are a little like that dessert.

They celebrate students who go above and beyond, recognizing not only academic achievement but the character, kindness, and leadership that make school communities stronger.

The **Calgarians Improving Society Award** reflects the Cooke family's longstanding belief in the transformative power of education and community engagement.

Originally created to celebrate Richard Cooke's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2021, the award has grown into a lasting **investment in students who are committed to making positive contributions to Canadian society**. By supporting individuals who care deeply about their communities, the Cooke family believes the impact extends well beyond a single recipient.

Education has always been central to the family's values, shaped in part by Fran McGilvray Cooke's career in teaching and school leadership. This foundation inspired the family to partner with EducationMatters to support Calgary students in meaningful and practical ways.

"Creating a student award with EducationMatters was a way to honour my parents, who both strongly believe in the value of education, while also supporting Calgary students who are dedicated to shaping the community," says Ian Cooke, who leads the family's award initiative.

The award has also become a unifying family experience. Multiple generations participate in reviewing applications and discussing candidates, sparking thoughtful conversations about purpose, philanthropy, and youth potential.

These discussions are now influencing younger family members, reinforcing the idea that **investing in education builds a more vibrant future for everyone** through a ripple effect.

*"Investing philanthropically in education allows those ripples to turn into big waves that uplift others and create a cycle of lasting community benefit,"* says Ian.



## Land Acknowledgement

At EducationMatters we believe that education is the cornerstone of our society. In the spirit of reconciliation, recognizing, and thanking our Indigenous friends and neighbours honours their history and builds the conditions of respect for all peoples. EducationMatters board, staff, and volunteers acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional Treaty 7 territory of the Blackfoot Nations, which include the Siksika, the Piikani, and the Kainai. We also acknowledge the Tsuut'ina and Stoney Nakoda First Nations (including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations). The City of Calgary is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta - Districts 5 and 6. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who have cared for these lands for generations.

## Why we are here

To **encourage financial support for public education, enhance student experiences** and **remove barriers to learning** in partnership with the Calgary Board of Education.

## What we do

As the dedicated fundraising partner for the Calgary Board of Education, **we invest in empowering students to reach their full potential.** With your support, we provide valuable experiences, materials and technology that help shape their future.

## We are...

**Student-centered + Collaborative + Accountable**



[educationmatters.ca](http://educationmatters.ca)

[info@educationmatters.ca](mailto:info@educationmatters.ca)

403.879.7855

12218 Street SW  
Calgary, AB T2R 0L4

