

April 28, 2025 RDP Try-a-trade program underway

Central Alberta Collegiate Institute offers Try-a-Trade program for the first time at Red Deer Polytechnic

The Central Alberta Collegiate Institute (CACI) has launched another opportunity for students to explore possible future skilled trades careers. After the successful implementation of the Try-a-Trade program at Olds College of Agriculture & Technology previously, CACI is now offering similar programming at Red Deer Polytechnic. For the first time on that campus, CACI Grade 9 and 10 students are having the chance to explore skilled trades careers in a hands-on way, and with the instruction of post-secondary instructors.

Each of the four CACI partner K-12 school divisions have sent or will send 12 students to one of three sessions occurring through April and May 2025, for a total of 48 students participating. Each session is three days long and focuses on introductory skills such as electrical, soldering, design and threading - important in the skilled trades. Students also get to tour the RDP campus and see what facilities and learning opportunities are available for students.

“Try-a-Trade is successful for students because it gives students an earlier chance to experience the skilled trades and start to look at what to learn more about during their high school years,” says Jackie Taylor, Executive Director of CACI.

“Giving students these opportunities allows them to understand what they like, what they don’t like, and what aptitudes they have, so they make better decisions for themselves now and into the future. These experiences reinforce the CACI focus on creating strong career pathways for students,” says Taylor.

“These offerings at Red Deer Polytechnic create new opportunities for our younger students who are closer geographically to RDP, and leverage Red Deer Polytechnic’s strong trades programming and expertise,” says Taylor.

Issac A., a Grade 10 student from Hunting Hills High School in Red Deer, says “I enjoyed it a lot. It was sometimes challenging but I enjoyed that I was learning through my mistakes.”

Paige A. a Grade 10 student from Lindsay Thurber Comprehensive High School in Red Deer, says, “It has been so fun and memorable and changes my perspective on plumbing and pipe trades as a whole.”

“It’s been a tiring week and was lots of hard work, but actually really fun and engaging,” says Lilly T. a Grade 9 student from Ecole Mother Teresa School in Sylvan Lake. “It gives you an idea of what you want to do.”

Rylee B., a Grade 9 student from Ecole Mother Teresa School in Sylvan Lake, says the program “helps you know what you want to do in life, and it shows that hard work pays off. I would definitely recommend it.”

Zarghun M., a Grade 9 student attending Ecole H.J. Cody School in Sylvan Lake, says “I think this is a good program because it starts to put the mindset into kids of what you need for life and for income.” Zarghun says, “Thanks to the teachers for helping us. I liked learning the names of tools and what they do.”

“I signed up because I am trying to figure out what I want to take,” says Lucas M., a Grade 9 student from Ecole H.J. Cody High School in Sylvan Lake. “It’s been a good week and I liked it. I don’t think the pipe trades are for me, but I want to work in the trades. I liked learning about the tools and how to solder. This program is good because it helps you make up your mind and helps you decide where you want to attend school.”

“Wolf Creek Public Schools is proud to be part of this collaborative effort that brings real-world, hands-on experiences to our students,” said Sean Loughheed, WCPS Director of Education, adding that Wolf Creek students will take part in May. “Programs like Try-a-Trade are incredibly valuable because they expose students to high-demand career paths and help them make informed choices about their futures. It’s about empowering our students to explore their strengths, discover new interests, and see what’s possible beyond the classroom.”

CACI is the successful collaboration of four partnering school divisions (Red Deer Public Schools, Red Deer Catholic Regional School Division, Wolf Creek Public Schools and Chinook’s Edge School Division), two post-secondary institutions (Olds College of Agriculture & Technology and Red Deer Polytechnic) and CAREERS, a not-for-profit organization that collaborates with schools to connect youth with employers, providing valuable paid internship opportunities and the start to important apprenticeship careers.