

Frequently Asked Questions

Why was EducationMatters created?

Leaders in Calgary's education sector saw a need to more fully engage the community in its public education system. As a result, EducationMatters was created in May 2003 (launched under its former name The CBE Foundation) to support excellence in Calgary's public school system and to provide elementary, junior and senior high school students with more opportunities to learn, succeed and excel.

What does EducationMatters do?

We secure funding for innovative public education enhancement programs (not offered as core curriculum) that help Calgary's public education students achieve their potential. We also fund and manage an array of student awards. Our Trust provides opportunities for people to get involved in public education in ways that are meaningful to them.

We champion the importance of public education in the community and encourage Calgarians to support public education now and in the future. We are that extra plus that gives students more. We believe that a strong public education system is the cornerstone of a healthy, vibrant society and that the best public education happens when the community can participate in its development.

How is EducationMatters different from other charitable organizations that support education?

No other organization in Calgary acts as a gateway for involvement in such a diverse and comprehensive range of enhancement programs for public education. We show Calgarians how to translate their passion for public education into support, and provide a wide range of opportunities for ongoing involvement. We currently manage 100 special interest, donor directed, scholarship and school specific endowment and flow-through funds.

What is the relationship between EducationMatters and the Calgary Board of Education (CBE)?

EducationMatters operates at arms length from the CBE however it collaborates with them so that it can carry out its work effectively. CBE Trustees always hold at least two of the seats on EducationMatters' Board of Governors, but they cannot make up more than half of the board. EducationMatters primarily funds CBE enhancement programs. These programs are given priority consideration for grant support. The Trust has supported other groups or organizations, with a charitable registration number, that are offering or delivering a program, project or initiative that directly supports Calgary K-12 public education students and enhancements, not part of the core curriculum.

What are the goals of EducationMatters?

To help Calgary's public education students succeed. We support enhancement and enrichment programs that give students the knowledge, skills and attitude they need to succeed in a rapidly changing world. We work to improve the achievements of all students, especially those who are in challenging circumstances or have special needs. We also encourage people to stop and think about how a strong public education system makes a difference to Calgary. One way is by graduating global citizens and community leaders who are equipped to make positive contributions to society throughout their lives.

What kinds of initiatives does EducationMatters support?

The projects we support through our annual grant programs are as diverse as the K-12 students involved in public education in Calgary. Some projects develop leadership skills and encourage students to become global citizens while others introduce new ways of learning and offer exciting learning experiences. Still others give students in challenging circumstance what they need to make the most of their classroom experience and fulfill their potential. Some programs help students through critical life transitions while in schools. We support literacy programs, programs that offer career development, and ELL supports and diversity programs, mentorship, arts and athletics. We support programs that keep students in school. Plus, we fund and manage a number of student awards, scholarships and bursaries.

How does EducationMatters decide what is or is not core programming?

Typically, we do not support areas that are already supported by government and school boards such as capital or infrastructure projects, regular textbooks, equipment and supplies, and regular salaries.

Before any program is accepted for funding, it is carefully reviewed by EducationMatters' Grants Committee. The committee is made up of community and business leaders, EducationMatters Board members and staff, CBE representatives and other educators. The committee ranks the program on how closely it fits with EducationMatters' mission, mandate and areas of focus, and gives priority to enhancement programs that are innovative and have system-wide potential.

Aren't we letting the government off the hook?

There are increasing expectations of public education in our rapidly changing world. Private donations can fund innovative school projects not covered by tax dollars. In the U.S., there are already more than 4,800 education foundations and the number is growing every year. Public education foundations are relatively new to Canada, but they have already been established in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and 14 other cities in Alberta and Ontario. EducationMatters has some lofty fundraising ambitions over the next 5 years. Our intention is never to replace government funding, which currently sits at over \$1 billion annually just to the CBE alone - we never should replace it nor can we. Our intention instead is to engage our community in the value of public education and in the importance of community support and participation.

How are the Board of Governors for EducationMatters appointed?

The nominating committee of EducationMatters board identifies prospective governors and submits the names of candidates to the CBE Board of Trustees. New EducationMatters Governors are appointed at a public meeting of the Board of Trustees.

How is EducationMatters funded?

EducationMatters currently receives an annual operating grant from the Calgary Board of Education with the expectation and long-term goal that we will eventually be self-sustaining. Thanks to the CBE grant, 95% of all donations go directly towards helping students succeed.

Where does the money come from for program and scholarship support?

Our donors are of all ages and come from all walks of life. They are ordinary Calgarians who might have been educated in the public system or have children or grandchildren in school. They might want to support their alma mater and be alumni of a CBE school. They are business or community leaders who are passionate about education and our students, and see their support as building a healthy vibrant community. They are corporations or institutions whose community investment values are aligned with supporting children, youth and education. Or they are other foundations with a similar mandate. These donors might make a gift specially requesting the monies support a specific school or existing program. They might wish their gift to go into a specific fund such as the Schools Helping Schools Fund or the Dr. Croskery Aboriginal Culture Fund. A donor might wish to establish a scholarship.

How does EducationMatters go about fundraising?

We promote EducationMatters to professional financial advisors and encourage them to share the story of EducationMatters with their clients. These efforts will eventually lead to major gifts and planned gifts from individuals and their families. We focus our fundraising on support for Literacy, Leadership and Life Transitions to include supports for early literacy, mentoring, career development, athletics, etc. We are happy to work with potential donors to match their wishes with the needs in the student community.

We accept donation over the phone, in person, by mail or online.

What about other non-profits, businesses and social service agencies that fund CBE programs?

We believe it's essential to build partnerships and coordinate our efforts with other organizations involved with youth and public education. We seek to maintain a strong pulse on the need and demand in our community. We continue to build collaborative and mutually-beneficial relationships with other funders, non-profit organizations, social service agencies, government departments, corporations, businesses and other educational institutions to ensure the best use of charitable dollars.