



New collegiate school opens career pathways for Lakeland high school students

June 13, 2025 - High school students across the Lakeland region will soon have exciting new opportunities to explore careers in health care, education, and the skilled trades thanks to a \$2.3 million grant from Alberta Education to establish the Northeast Alberta Collegiate Institute (NACI).

NACI is a collaborative initiative between Northern Lights Public Schools, St. Paul Education, Conseil scolaire Centre-Est, Lakeland Catholic School Division, and Portage College. This collegiate school will offer specialized programming designed to help students build clear pathways to post-secondary education and future careers.

The five partners submitted a joint application to the province earlier this year and received approval in May, with programming set to begin this fall.

NACI will expand learning opportunities for students and support regional workforce development by allowing students to train for their future careers in their communities. The Education, Health Care, and Trades pathways were selected based on student interest surveys, labour market data, and local workforce needs.

Starting in September, Grade 11 and 12 students will be able to enroll in courses that will allow them to earn high school and post-secondary credits simultaneously:

- Education Pathway: Five courses toward an Early Childhood Educator diploma or a Bachelor of Education degree.
- Health Care Pathway: Five courses toward an LPN diploma or RN degree, also transferable to Portage College's Emergency Medical Responder program.

Courses will be delivered online, allowing students flexibility in managing their schedules.

The Trades Pathway will launch in February and will feature electrical, heavy equipment technician, and welding options. The provincial grant includes funding for specialized equipment and supplies needed to deliver hands-on, in-person training after the online component is completed.

Students who are interested in exploring NACI programming are encouraged to connect with their local high school to learn more and plan their pathways.

"This partnership opens the door for students to begin pursuing their career goals before graduation. We're excited to continue collaborating and expanding the available pathways so even more students can explore their futures while still in high school."

– Rick Cusson, Superintendent, Northern Lights Public Schools

"It is a privilege to collaborate with Portage College and our school division partners to improve access to trades programming for students across the region. I appreciate Rick Cusson's initiative in bringing this important project forward. This partnership helps create new opportunities for students to explore meaningful, hands-on career paths."

- Sheldon Germain, Superintendent, Lakeland Catholic School Division

"We are proud to be part of this collaborative effort to expand meaningful opportunities for students in our region. The Northeast Alberta Collegiate Institute will open new doors for young people to explore careers in education, health care, and the trades, right here in our communities. This initiative reflects what's possible when school divisions and post-secondary institutions work together to put students first."

- Dr. Peter Barron, Superintendent, St. Paul Education

"We're excited to partner with Portage College and the surrounding school boards to create new opportunities for our students. Collaborations like this allow us to expand access to hands-on, career-focused learning that helps prepare students for life after high school. Le parcours scolaire de nos élèves pourra être enrichi par ce partenariat."

- Dolorèse Nolette, Superintendent, Conseil scolaire Centre-Est

"Now more than ever, we need to ensure the kids are given exposure to trades careers while they are in school. Portage College is so honoured to be a partner in this

collaborative opportunity with the four school divisions. Many thanks to the Government of Alberta for funding this regional approach."

- Nancy Broadbent, President and CEO, Portage College