



***Forging the Future –  
Career Pathways That  
Inspire Student  
Success***

Turning Points Program

# Overview of the Session



INTRODUCTIONS



WHY WAS TURNING  
POINTS CREATED?



WHAT STUDENTS  
LEARN & EXPERIENCE



BREAKOUT GROUPS



SAIT'S YOUTH  
ENGAGEMENT  
STRATEGY



TURNING POINTS –  
SAIT APPLICATION  
BURSARY PROGRAM



GOAL SETTING



QUESTIONS

# Introductions



Gabby Valenzuela  
Youth Programs Coordinator



Taelor Oman  
Youth Programs Coordinator

**Southern Alberta Institute of Technology is a leader in creating the future workforce by delivering life-changing experiences for youth.**

# Underlying Principles

- A sense of excitement about their education
- A sense of belonging in their program and within SAIT
- A sense of preparedness with their immediate needs address
- A sense of confidence that they can succeed
- Authentic, engaging, meaningful, learning experiences



# Areas of Focus

Dual-Credit Programs

Pathways for Indigenous Youth

Digital Youth Programs

Transition & Foundation Programs

Engage with Community Partners

Engage with Educators

Community Outreach

Camps

## Reflect:

**Put yourself back into the shoes of your high school self.**

- What did you want your career to be when graduating high school?
- What career options did you think were out there?
- Did you feel that you were supported when graduating high school to make informed decisions about your career choices?

# Turning Points Program



- Began in 2018
- Introduces students to intentionally constructed post-secondary transition strategies, including exposing students to career options and helping them feel comfortable in post-secondary
- Allows high school students to explore post-secondary program and content areas in a low-risk manner
- Help students become aware of options
  - Confidence building
  - Over-coming trepidation and anxiety associated with schooling
  - “I belong”
  - “I can do it”

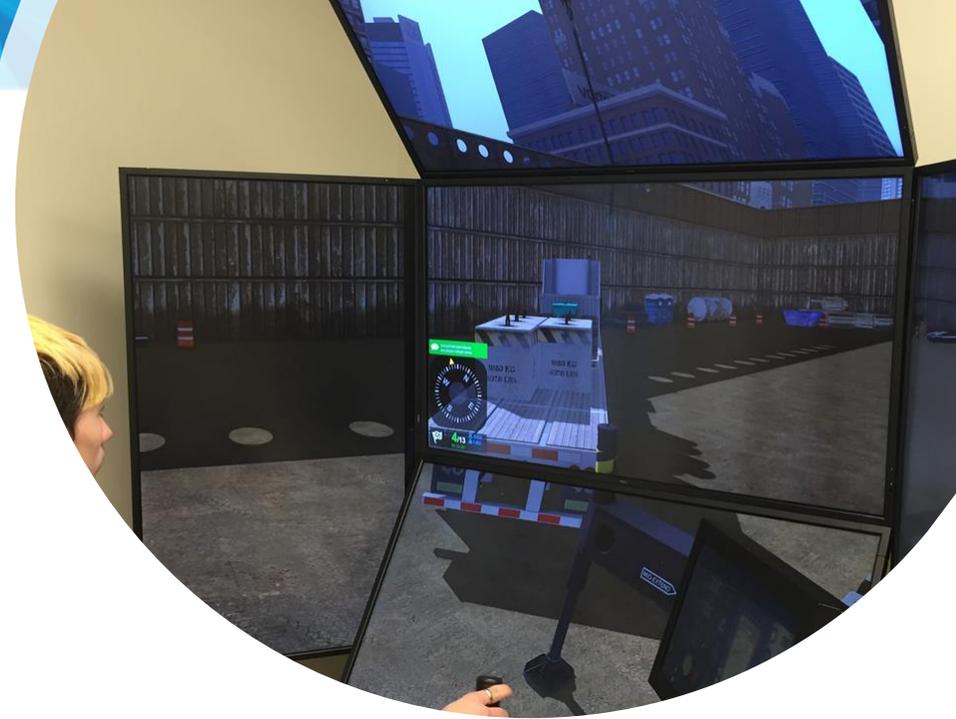


# Turning Points Program

- Program cohort consists of students who have not had success in typical high school learning experiences or students facing barriers in other aspects of their lives
- Can help vulnerable high school students who are at risk of not graduating to earn high school credits while developing an interest in, and awareness of, post-secondary program and future career options
- Supports student transitions
- Flexible in terms of program areas demonstrated; changes each year based on interests of the cohort.

# What Students Learn & Experience

- Program consists of PREP-100 content and hands-on activities and projects
- PREP-100 – series of non-credit modules all students entering SAIT must take
- Utilize content to help support preparation for high school students
- Content includes:
  - Setting goals
  - Organizing your time
  - Active learning and reading skills
  - Note-taking and memory tools
  - Staying motivated
- Career Exploration
- Next Steps document
  - Courses needed either to complete high school or necessary pre-requisites
  - Future goals
- Hands on projects and activities



# Turning Points Program

- Past examples of program areas included:
  - Aviation program – tour the Art Smith Aviation campus
  - Crane and Hoist programs
  - Welding
  - Carpentry
  - Culinary
  - Pharmacy Assistant
  - Technology programs
  - Automotives
- Students earn credit in Learning Strategies 25 and 35 (issued through the high school)





# Turning Points Program

- Cohort of 12 – 16 students
- PREP-100 component can be delivered online
- Compact the on-campus projects/activities over 8-9 days
- Dedicated coordinator at SAIT
- Dedicated off-campus coordinator
- School selects student participants
- Funding to support program costs available
- Length of program determined by school partner
  - Fits needs of schedules
  - Student interest
- Program areas
- Pre/post-program survey with students
- Many former students have transitioned into either dual-credit or post-secondary successfully; some have returned to school for subsequent year

# Turning Points Program

---

- Funding to support program costs through donors
- Opportunity for students to come to SAIT campus
- Support interests of students
- Collaboration between SAIT and your school board/division

*"I really liked all the different opportunities that were offered. All the programs were very fun and helped me narrow down what I want to do for post-secondary."*

- Turning Points Participant



# High Prairie School Division

Students from Kinuso, Slave Lake, and High Prairie travel to SAIT for a customized two-day Turning Points experience.

## The Experience:

- **PREP-100** is delivered online in advance with the final session completed in person at SAIT.
- We provide **transportation and hotel accommodations** to remove travel barriers.
- The experience gives students from rural and Indigenous communities hands-on exposure to a wide range of program options.

# Jack James High School & Forest Lawn High School – Calgary Board of Education

**Jack James High School** supports students in a personalized learning community with an emphasis on providing authentic, engaging, hands on, and practical opportunities for all learners.

**Forest Lawn High School** serves a diverse and often at-risk student population, offering alternative supports and flexible learning environments.

## The Experience:

- Students from both schools attend SAIT on the same schedule but **experience the program in separate cohorts.**
- Programs typically run for **5–7 days.**
- Students' complete orientation and three PREP-100 modules before attending and finish the remaining content at SAIT.

# Nelson Mandela High School – Calgary Board of Education

**Nelson Mandela High School** serves a large number of newcomer and immigrant students, many of whom are navigating the Canadian education system for the first time.

## The Experience:

- The Turning Points program is delivered over **5 full days at SAIT.**
- Students' complete orientation and three PREP-100 modules in advance finishing the final sessions in a SAIT classroom.
- Activities focus on **building confidence, understanding Canadian post-secondary pathways, and exploring hands-on careers.**

# Louise Dean School – Calgary Board of Education

**Louise Dean School** is a centre for young pregnant or parenting teens. The school personalizes academic and lifestyle learning for every student to ensure that each young parent reaches their maximum potential.

## The Experience:

- The Turning Points program is delivered over **5 full days at SAIT.**
- Students' complete orientation and three PREP-100 modules in advance finishing the final sessions in a SAIT classroom.
- Activities focus on **building confidence, understanding post-secondary pathways, and options for funding their education.**

# Student Testimonials



- *“I really liked all the different opportunities that were offered. All the programs were very fun and helped me narrow down what I want to do for post-secondary.”*
- *“Baking and the Hospitality program were intriguing.”*
- *“I liked the Automotives and the Pipe Trades.”*
- *“I liked the variety of programs and how it was mostly hands-on and when it wasn’t they made it fun.”*
- *“I used to not want to go to post-secondary, but after Turning Points I saw what SAIT had, and now I want to go there for Electrical.”*

# Teacher Testimonials



- *“The program was an inspirational success for the Louise Dean School students once again this year, mainly through the connections made with key instructors during their visits to the campus. **The students can now envision a positive future for themselves and their children through access to post-secondary opportunities.** Although many of the students are still unsure of their career pathways, they were all extremely pleased with the opportunity to explore a variety of career options and experience success at the post-secondary level.”*

# Teacher Testimonials



- *“Student feedback and the number of students applying to SAIT, other post-secondary institutions and Dual-Credit Programs indicated that the program was a life-changing experience. **The recognition that they were capable of becoming a post-secondary student as well as expanding their knowledge of possible life choices was transformative.**”*

## Group Discussion:

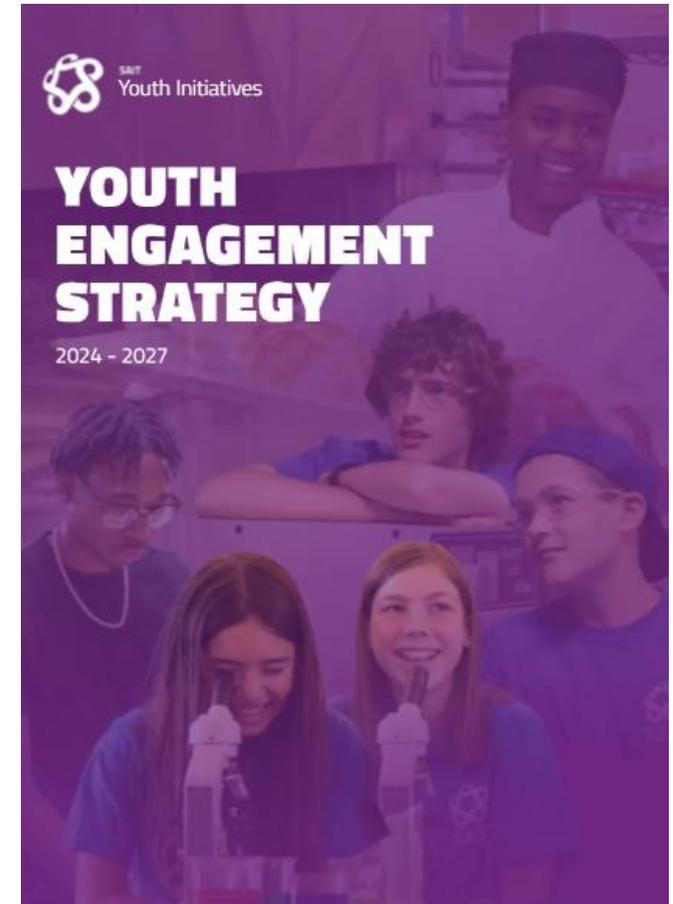


1. *How many of you have a program similar to this?*
2. *What challenges do students in your district face when transitioning from high school to post-secondary? How might a program like this support them?*
3. *Who are your key stakeholders? How would you engage school leaders, instructors, or industry partners in a similar initiative?*

# SAIT Youth Engagement Strategy

SAIT's Youth Engagement Strategy is designed to:

- **Inspire** young people to explore careers and post-secondary pathways early.
- **Create** equitable access through outreach, funding, and flexible programming.
- **Build** confidence through hands-on learning and industry exposure.
- **Empower** diverse youth populations including Indigenous and underrepresented students.



# How Turning Points Fits In:



**Equity & Access:** Turning Points specifically targets vulnerable youth who may not succeed in traditional systems, directly aligning with SAIT's equity goals.



**Early Engagement:** Students earn credits and get exposed to post-secondary before they graduate, reducing transition anxiety.



**Hands-on Confidence:** The program leverages SAIT's facilities (e.g., aviation, culinary, green tech) for experiential learning.



**Flexible & Responsive:** Every cohort is tailored based on student interest—demonstrating responsiveness at the heart of the strategy.

# Turning Points – SAIT Application Bursary Program

As part of our commitment to creating equitable access to post-secondary education, we launched the **Turning Points – SAIT Application Bursary Program**.

This bursary is designed to reduce the financial barriers students face when applying to SAIT:

- Covers the full **\$120 application fee** for eligible high school students.
- If accepted, the **\$500 tuition deposit is also deferred**, giving students and families more time to plan financially.

By removing upfront costs, we help students take their next steps with greater confidence and less stress.

# Think:



If you could launch a “Turning Points-style” pilot next semester, what’s one small but meaningful step you could take today?

Thank you!

E-mail: [youth.programs@sait.ca](mailto:youth.programs@sait.ca)