



East Preston Empowerment Academy (EPEA)

224 Upper Partridge River Road
East Preston, Nova Scotia B2Z 1H3
Founded in 2014

The East Preston Empowerment Academy (EPEA) is a 'labor of love' of the East Preston United Baptist Church, in which we seek to empower and equip members of our community with the necessary skills, tools and confidence to fulfill their lifelong dreams. This programme began in September 2014, and we are now into its' third year of operation, with a vibrant student population, dedicated instructors and staff members, a committed Board of professionals and the support of the East Preston Church. Our programme began as a traditional Adult Learning Programme, and was then expanded to include a preparation course for the Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) Exam. Last year, we expanded to include a Trade Apprenticeship Programme, the *EPEA Pathways Initiative*, in which we train tradespeople to qualify for Red-Seal Certification with the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA). Additionally, we have added an academic enrichment component for our Youth.

We are partnered with and primarily funded by the Department of Labor and Advanced Education, the Black Educators Association, the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, and the East Preston Church. We also receive various individual contributions of time and resources from private individuals. Because of our level of funding, our students are able to attend our programme free of charge.

EPEA's focus is on **#InvestingInMinds** and **#EmpoweringLives** by providing basic skills, coupled with encouragement and confidence-building, and an extra dose of love and faith in our students. Our mission is to assist people in upgrading their skills and qualifications for future employment and entrepreneurial pursuits. We also actively encourage and equip our students to seek the highest level of education possible, regardless of their lack of past accomplishments or the barriers that kept them from achieving their goals in the past.

Our course curriculum includes instruction in Communications – English and History, as well as Mathematics – Theory and Applied, along with several Professional Development Seminars in Computer Training, a Library Sciences Project, a History Project, Public Speaking, Professionalism, Career Choices, etc. Recently, after discovering the low voting rate in our community, we conducted an E-Voting programme in which we assisted residents in online voting. We provided computers and trained volunteers to walk through the process of voting with many who were then able to confidently cast their votes at their Church, utilizing the resources of our programme. We also enrolled new students for our computer class from this experience! We worked with the HRM Elections Office to register and assist people in voting for the first time in their lives, and who may otherwise, not have done so, had they not had the assistance of the programme. Another highly effective event was a Legal Information Session

we held this past year, where we partnered with the Stewart McKelvey Law Firm (Halifax), in which lawyers from top law firms and provincial government presented in our community on the different law careers and discussed various legal matters that affect our people. This is a regular addition to our programme and we will be holding periodic legal workshops on various areas of the law every year.

We are greatly concerned about the reported test scores and achievement levels of our youth, as well as the low rate of our youth attending University. And as a new initiative of EPEA, we last year expanded our reach to the academic needs of our youth. We now actively provide a weekly tutoring service and career counselling service. We are also in the process of developing a Career Day Project, where interested youth will accompany professionals to their offices and learn from observing these practitioners at work. It is our goal to intervene into the lives of our youth, in a positive way, and to equip and empower them to pursue non-traditional occupations and careers, as well as other entrepreneurial ventures.

We work with people who have not been engaged in formal education for many years, those who never completed their high school education, and many who never had the privilege of pursuing higher education because of family and work needs, and other barriers. We have seen all of these people fully embrace the importance and necessity of education through a commitment to study and diligence in working through complex problems, for educational excellence. The student response has been highly indicative of the needs in our community, and we look forward to continuing to expand our reach, in order to provide the kind of education that people really need and benefit from.

EPEA has been an amazing walk of faith and we see God's hand moving within our student body, and throughout our community, as we empower people to be the absolute best they can be! Our foundational scripture is: *Understanding is a wellspring of life...to those who have it. Proverbs 16:22b.* It is our goal to serve as an equipping arm to assist our people in their forward movement and progress. We are keenly aware of the barriers that have slowed the progress of many, but we are also certain that those barriers cannot stop those who are adequately equipped and determined to reach their goals.

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#InvestingInMinds #EmpoweringLives

East Preston United Baptist Church

www.epubc.ca

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EPEA Board

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