



The Alberta government recognizes the crucial role that parents play in their child's education. The new Education Act increases clarity and accountability among all partners of the education system for the benefit of all students, and the government's ten-point plan for education takes a number of steps to increase parents' input into and information about the education system.

Creating a stronger voice for parents

Parents are their child's first teacher and a key source of information about what is working and what is not working in their child's learning. In addition to having good ideas about how to improve the student experience, parents have a duty to make informed decisions about their child's education.

Expanded communications with parents

To share the work of Alberta Education more directly with parents, to better inform parents, and to hear more directly from them, the Minister of Education will communicate more frequently with parents.

For example, teleconferences between the Minister and parent school council representatives to discuss education priorities will continue. Introduced in late 2011, this forum with the Minister provides parents with accurate information about education initiatives, projects and topics of concern.

More details for more informed decision making

To be actively engaged and make informed decisions, parents need information about what the school system is doing, accomplishing, and spending.

Parents will have access to additional information about school boards and charter schools in their communities including identification of trustees and the superintendent, student demographics, capital planning announcements and recent projects, number of

schools and certificated teaching staff, operating budgets, and accumulated surpluses.

The information sheets will also summarize data collected to support school jurisdiction accountability including high school completion, performance on provincial assessment programs, and parental involvement.

The information sheets are available at <http://education.alberta.ca/parents/educationsys.aspx>.

The "stay in school rule"

The proposed Act will raise the compulsory age of attendance for Alberta students from 16 to 17 years which, along with the extended age of access, will encourage more young Albertans to complete their high school education.

Raising the age for completing high school

The age at which a child begins school will not change, however the age to which they may continue to attend school has been extended. Now, individuals under 21 years old who meet residency requirements are entitled to a publicly funded high school education in Alberta. In addition to removing a financial barrier to high school completion for some students, extending the access age will provide students who need specialized supports and services additional time to be successful.

However, providing access to high school courses does not require boards to place 21-year olds in the same school as 15-18 year olds. Boards will decide how to meet the needs of older students in the service area.

A sense of belonging

All people benefit from a sense of belonging, and in childhood it is the key to developing a healthy sense of physically, mentally and emotionally.

The Education Act provides the framework for an inclusive education system, where all students are supported in finding success through a quality educational experience.

It focuses on ensuring that students have access to educational programs, supports and services regardless of their ability, economic circumstances, location or cultural background.

By working together parents and school staff can determine what specialized supports and services are required for students to be successful.

Opportunity knocks – open the door

Educational choice is an important feature in the Alberta education system. Students and parents will continue to have the option to receive education in English or French, enroll in alternative programs offered by a school board, to be homeschooled, or to attend a charter or private school.

Bullying Awareness and Prevention

The proposed Education Act places an emphasis on welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environments.

School boards will be required to establish, implement and maintain policies necessary to provide a caring, respectful and safe environment for all students and staff.

These policies will need to address bullying behaviour, whether physical, verbal or online, both in and outside of the school. The policies must be provided to parents and students every year, and must also be reviewed every year. This frequent review will help to keep lines of communication and feedback open amongst parents, the school, and the board.

As a result, Alberta's schools will be more able to respond to bullying and to promote the best possible environment for students to succeed.

Setting expectations

The new Act highlights that education is a shared responsibility. In addition to the responsibilities of school boards and trustees, the Act sets out responsibilities of parents and students as partners in education.

Students will be responsible for actively participating in their learning, and they are expected to contribute to a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe environment.

The Act also emphasizes that parents have the responsibility to play an active role in their child's educational success, and supports greater cooperation and communication between parents and school personnel.