

# SUCCESS FOR EVERY CHILD

## IMPROVING EDUCATION OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL CHILDREN & YOUTH

The Alberta Commission on Learning (ACOL) was appointed by the Minister of Learning in 2001 to conduct a comprehensive review of Alberta's Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system. The report, *Every Child Learns: Every Child Succeeds*, issued in 2003, provided recommendations and advice to ensure a sustainable, basic learning system that supports the lifelong learning needs of students and the societal and economic well-being of the province.

Alberta's classrooms are very diverse, with an array of languages, backgrounds, cultures and religions. A variety of effective programs, strategies and resources must be in place to:

1. ensure programs, supports and services support a spectrum of student needs; and
2. inform the teaching practice in meeting diversity needs within classrooms.

With the understanding that 'every child deserves every chance to succeed,' the ACOL report outlined several recommendations to improve education outcomes for all Alberta students, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. The goals for Aboriginal students' success include:

### Goals:

- All children have the opportunity and support they need to succeed in schools that recognize and celebrate diversity.
- Aboriginal students achieve the same levels of success at school as non-Aboriginal students, in an environment where their cultures and values are respected and reinforced.
- Flexible programs and placements are designed to meet students' needs and give them the best chance for success. For students with special needs, the options range from full integration to specialized programs, depending on the individual needs of students.
- Direct actions are taken to identify vulnerable children and improve their chances of success at school.
- Teachers are well prepared, both through their pre-service training and through ongoing professional development, to address the diverse needs of all of their students, including Aboriginal students, students with special needs, students who are gifted, and students with other languages, cultures and backgrounds, and students who are at risk.

Recommendations were outlined to improve education outcomes for Aboriginal children and youth. They include:

27. Implement and provide adequate resources for the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Policy Framework.
28. Ensure that, when a First Nations student who resides a reserve attends provincial school, he or she is funded at the same level as any other student.
29. Ensure that, where significant numbers of First Nations parents send their children to provincial schools off-reserve, they have a role in the governance of those schools and the school jurisdictions responsible for the schools their children attend.
30. Initiate discussions with treaty region governments and the federal government to address the governance of education for First Nations students.
31. Establish appropriate incentives to encourage more First Nations and Métis to become teachers.
32. Ensure that at-risk Aboriginal children are identified early and get the support they need before they begin school.
33. Take steps to ensure First Nations and Métis youth are well prepared for post-secondary education and the workforce:
  - Provide career counselling to provide information on career options.
  - Provide access to elders, mentors and positive role models.
34. Ensure smooth transitions for students moving from reserve and Métis Settlement schools to other public schools.
35. Establish parenting centres to make a positive link with parents and reinforce the strong parenting skills required to help their children come to school ready to learn.
36. Require all schools with a significant population of First Nations and Métis students to have well-trained home school liaison workers to assist in integrating the school into the community and developing sound communication between Aboriginal homes and schools.
  - Positive connections between schools and parents are key to the success of students.
37. Explore and implement new governance models for schools in Métis Settlements.
38. Develop and implement expanded Aboriginal language and cultural programs.
  - Ensure that language is taught by fluid speakers and qualified teachers; if a language speaker is not a teacher, they should work closely with a teacher to offer effective language instruction in the classroom.
  - It remains important for all students to have the opportunity to learn more about the richness of Aboriginal language and culture to build greater understanding and respect.

39. Ensure that First Nations and Métis are directly involved in the development of curriculum and learning resources for and about Aboriginal people in all subject areas:
  - Method to ensure direct involvement in curriculum and learning resources.
  - Provides an accurate portrayal of Aboriginal history and culture.
40. Continue to provide choices for Aboriginal parents regarding the education of their children.
41. Establish a provincial centre of excellence in Aboriginal education.
  - To provide a centre for research, innovation and sharing of best practices;
  - Resource for Aboriginal educators; and
  - Opportunity to learn from elders.