

Calgary Board of Education

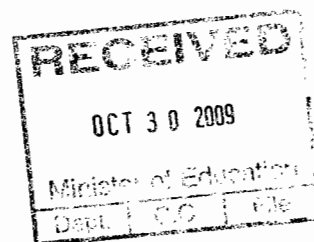
OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Education Centre

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October 28, 2009

Honourable Dave Hancock
Minister of Education
224 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6



Dear Mr. Hancock:

Thank you for the invitation to provide our Board's input as you prepare for the introduction of legislation to replace the current *School Act*. Attached, please find our written submission.

Our Board of Trustees and senior Administration have been active participants in both the Inspiring Education and Setting the Direction for Special Education initiatives. The outcomes of these two initiatives will certainly provide you with strong statements regarding the vision that Albertans have for their Kindergarten - Grade 12 public education system. We applaud you for undertaking these public engagement strategies and we look forward to seeing the outcomes of these initiatives reflected in a policy framework that will guide the operation of our public education system.

We believe that the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) is well positioned to embrace the transformational change that is required in our public education system. Over the past ten years, our Board has worked hard at turning great challenges into great opportunities. We have done so by clearly defining our role, imposing discipline and by focusing on student learning, our core business. We are seeing the significant results of this work today.

Our Board, through our Ends policies, has described why our school system exists, what the school board's contribution to the work is to be along with the justification for the resources it consumes. Our school system focuses on the success of all students: *That every student, in keeping with his or her individual abilities and gifts, will complete high school with a foundation of learning to function effectively in life, work and continued learning.*

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This statement incorporates our four Ends policies (Ends 2: Academic Success, Ends 3: Citizenship, Ends 4: Personal Development and Ends 5: Character). In our work, we have defined clear accountabilities. We hold ourselves accountable to Calgarians and we hold our Chief Superintendent accountable for interpreting the Ends and ensuring incremental progress towards achieving them.

Student success is the primary goal of the CBE, with the Board and the Provincial Government having defined responsibilities to provide the structure and support in order to support student learning. Focus, discipline, role definition, monitoring and reporting are key. We believe that this philosophy and practice can be easily translated into the provincial domain.

Once again, we thank you for this opportunity to comment.

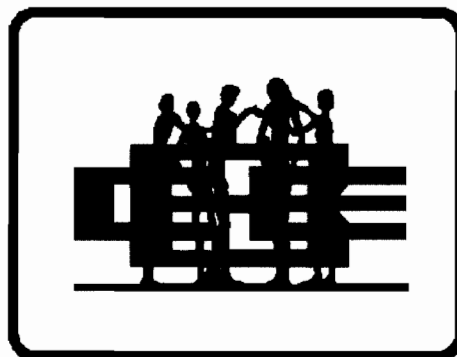
Yours truly,

Pat Cochrane, Chair
Board of Trustees

Attachment

Envisioning a New Education Act:

The Calgary Board of Education Perspective



Calgary Board of Education

The Calgary Board of Education is pleased to have the opportunity to collaborate with Alberta Education in considering ways in which to revise the current School Act so that we may better prepare students for future success. We have outlined here our key aspirations for what the new Act might become.

The Name Counts

It is our belief that it is limiting to call a document as significant as this the "School Act" because our focus as educators extends far beyond the physical school to encompass the entire process of lifelong learning and the many settings in which that might take place. So, our first recommendation would be to change the name to the Education Act.

Outcomes Come First

All sections of the new Act should be crafted in a way that demonstrates a clear focus on the desired outcomes to be achieved. The outcomes should be focused primarily on student success and so by putting outcomes first, we are in essence putting students first.

Minimal attention should be paid to the means by which the ends are realized, to allow public school districts the freedom to personalize student learning in an optimal way. This will help encourage innovation and creativity, which are critical to preparing our students for the future.

Open to Opportunity

As we look ahead ten, twenty or thirty years and try to imagine how teaching and learning might evolve, we know that the changes will be significant and we know we must prepare for tomorrow today. To do this, it is essential that public school districts be able to respond to changes as they occur. A flexible and fluid Education Act would allow us to be responsive in this way.

In order for the Education Act to address the changing needs of students into the future, it must be broad enough to allow educators the opportunity to embrace the innovations of greatest benefit to students. The Act should be constructed in a way to enable each and every student to reach their fullest potential within the current context while also anticipating what is yet to come. We must be prepared to deliver instruction to students at any time, anywhere. Our society is becoming increasingly diverse, and there is a growing need to provide learning environments that are inclusive of diversity.

For example, broadening the focus of the Act could provide opportunities to increase high school completion rates by being less restrictive about the timing of completion. This kind of openness has enabled past successes in areas such as offering full-day Kindergarten for at-risk children and providing much-needed wrap around services to special education students. We look forward to continuing to enhance our delivery in this way to meet the needs of our diverse student population.

Another way to open up opportunities would be to amend the Act to grant boards natural person power. We must seek to empower, rather than restrict, learners, educators and boards in developing a new Education Act.

Clear Accountabilities for Decisive Delivery

Organizations of all kinds have the best chance for success when their mandate is clear and all members of the organization understand what their particular role is in achieving the organization's goals. The same can be said of public education.

We will be able to positively impact the lives of our students if we are able to set out clear accountabilities for those involved in educating Alberta's youth. This involves defining:

- outcomes
- curriculum standards
- the role of elected school Boards in ensuring outcomes are realized
- executive limitations
- the role of Alberta Education
- the role of administrators, support staff and teachers
- the role of service providers for wrap-around services

Keeping Quality Top of Mind

Provisions to address the re-credentialing and ongoing professional development of those engaged in educating our youth would be beneficial in ensuring we have a high quality public education system. This would help ensure administrators, teachers and other staff are staying on top of the latest innovations and developments available.

If we avoid being overly prescriptive and detailed in providing a long list of what people must do and instead focus our attention on being open to future opportunities, we can shift the focus to providing a high quality education to Alberta's youth.

Taxes Back to Boards

Consideration should be given to devolving local taxing authority to boards in context of an overall equitable base funding framework for boards so as to help minimize dramatic provincial funding swings. We would also recommend that Boards be able to raise funds through local debt financing (e.g.: bonds, other financial instruments).

The New Education Act Should Be:

- **Responsive**
- **Empowering**
- **Broad**
- **Flexible**
- **Focused on outcomes**
- **Values-driven**
- **Inclusive**
- **Student-focused**
- **Innovative**
- **Visionary**