

Submission to the Minister of Education

Regarding

School Act Review



The Alberta Teachers' Association
2009 10 30

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Preamble

The Alberta Teachers' Association (the Association) appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the dialogue and to provide advice regarding revisions to the *School Act*. This submission is based on the Association's long-standing beliefs and policy positions in key areas of the discussion and has been vetted over time through an extensive democratic process at the Annual Representative Assembly.

The Association is assured that, as a result of its 2007 11 15 memorandum of agreement with the Government of Alberta and the 2007 11 23 letter it received from Premier Ed Stelmach, *School Act* or related regulatory revisions affecting teachers' employment conditions will not be undertaken before 2012 without the consent of the Association.

As a caveat to this submission and in recognition of the aggressive timelines for advice to the minister of education, the Association requests that further consultative opportunities be made available to provide further advice, especially after the initial bill is drafted by legislative counsel.

Notwithstanding the 2009 10 30 deadline, the Association may provide Alberta Education with more detailed submissions on specific issues related to the *School Act* revisions as deemed appropriate or where such action appears vital to the interests of public education and Alberta teachers.

Valuing Public Education in Alberta

The Association believes that public education must be free and accessible to every child; must be accomplished by certificated, highly skilled and knowledgeable teaching professionals; must be appropriately funded to ensure that every child learns and succeeds; and must be a responsibility shared by all Albertans. Public education in Alberta is represented by the public, separate and francophone school systems (ie public education), and is fully funded by Albertans. Public education must provide students from

Public education conditions

Certificated teachers

Provisions

all backgrounds with learning experiences to discover and develop their human potential, their passions and their gifts, and it must allow them to make significant contributions to their communities.

The Association believes that public education is responsible to society through government, including publicly elected school boards, and that education governance should continue to be provided by publicly elected school boards. The Association also believes that teachers and other school board employees have the democratic right to run for, or serve in, the office of school trustee without resigning their employment with their board as long as their employment does not put them in direct conflict with the board with which they are seeking office. Indeed, a strong public education system must foster the development of a robust, democratic citizenry and society.

Publicly elected school boards

Ability of teachers to run for the office of trustee

Alberta's public education system has historically supported professional, highly educated teachers in providing students with a broad range of learning experiences in addition to the basic subjects of language arts, science, mathematics and social studies. The public education system has benefited generations of rural and urban students by providing them with opportunities to develop ingenuity, creativity, critical-thinking skills and a strong sense of local and global citizenship.

Certificated teachers

The Association believes that the province's charter school movement has failed to achieve its primary goals of increasing choice and innovation within the education system. Since their establishment, charter schools were intended to be a mechanism to stimulate innovation throughout the education system. As an Alberta Education study on the impact of charter schools indicates, "one of the original purposes of charter schools was that they would be centres of innovation and would share innovations with the rest of the system. This purpose has largely not been realized."¹ Such a

Charter schools' failings

¹ Alberta Education, 2007, *Charter School Concept Paper: Consideration of a Vision for the Future of Charter Schools*, Edmonton, Alta: Alberta Education, 2.

failure must not go unnoticed as the charter school concept continues to drain financial resources from a robust public education system, thereby fragmenting an education system designed for all (see Appendix F). Charter schools do not provide significant choice—their programs already exist in many public and separate schools. Further charter schools have not been held to their charter commitments.

The Association opposes public funding of private schools. At the same time, the Association understands that it may be possible to incorporate existing private schools into public school jurisdictions subject to certain conditions as articulated in our policies (see policy 8.A.38 in Appendix A).

Private schools

Private and charter schools should not be allowed to discriminate against students on the basis of race, language, colour, national origin, religion, gender, geographic location, sexual orientation, disability or economic status. In a revised *School Act*, the Association would oppose the establishment of publicly funded charter schools or private schools that exclude students on any basis that implicitly or explicitly violates Canadian human rights legislation or that implicitly or explicitly takes into account the economic or social circumstances of students' parents or guardians. That includes any claims of authority by a charter school to remove students for purported violations of a special agreement and to deny further responsibility for those students after they are already enrolled in a program.

Potential for discrimination and selection in private and charter schools

The public education system in Alberta has served the people of this province well for over a century and has created a method of providing equitable access to a high quality education for all students. This public education system must continue to be supported in any revisions to the *School Act*.

For more detailed policy statements related to the Association's positions valuing public education in Alberta, see Appendix A.

Valuing Students

A revised *School Act* must recognize that within the fabric of our province, children are valued, important and treasured. To ensure a successful future for Albertans, the Association believes that students must be the beneficiaries of a rich and meaningful educational program that occurs in a safe, supportive and stimulating learning environment. Students should enjoy circumstances in their homes and communities that will enable them to arrive at school physically, socially and emotionally ready to learn.

Value of children

Safe learning environments

Any revisions to the *School Act* must support students with the right and the ability to access a high-quality public education in their local community and, where practical, the ability to choose from a range of alternative education programs within the public education system that will meet their unique learning needs. The integrity inherent in Alberta's ability to provide a high-quality public education system must be enshrined in legislation so that every child has an opportunity for a free and accessible education. Parents should be informed about, and participate meaningfully in, decisions concerning the education of their children and the operation of their children's public schools. In these same environments, teachers have a right to work as professionals free from abuse or harassment by students, parents or members of the public.

Right of access in local communities

Parental involvement

Teachers' right to safe environments

The *School Act* must allow for learning experiences that assist students in acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes that contribute to continued learning, social awareness, cognizance of a complex society, responsible local and global citizenship, and personal well-being. Teaching emphasizes the human and social relationships that develop within a community of learners, and the profession of teaching is concerned with student development in the affective, psychomotor and cognitive domains of knowledge.

Learning experiences

Acquiring knowledge, skills and attributes

Learning is a collective and highly relational activity that is dependent on a community of learners, in which certificated teachers create the conditions for student engagement to flourish. As highly skilled and knowledgeable professionals, Alberta teachers endeavour to support students in active and inquiry-oriented processes that engage them socially, emotionally, culturally and intrapersonally. The curriculum content, activities and resource materials that support these learning experiences need to be developmentally appropriate and to allow for suitable differentiation according to the learning needs and capabilities of the student.

Learning as a collective activity

Differentiated learning

In his 2007 11 23 letter to the Association, Premier Stelmach recognizes that “reducing class sizes goes a long way in laying the foundation for a positive learning environment for our students.” The Association knows that small class sizes are critical to effective student learning and, to this end, advocates for a class size target of 20 students for Grades 4 to 12 and a maximum class size of 17 students for early childhood education to Grade 3. Large class sizes reduce the quality of education students receive, especially in regions of Alberta that experience dramatic population increases and other demographic changes. The Association also cautions Alberta Education that the classroom teacher–student ratio should not be increased in the event that school boards are forced to reduce educational services due to provincial spending restrictions.

Benefits of small class sizes

Students should receive an education that helps each individual reach his or her full potential as a learner, thus providing all Alberta students with equal opportunities for success. Students with special physical, emotional, intellectual or developmental needs should receive, as a right, specialized support and instruction that meets their individual needs. The Association recognizes that sufficient funding is necessary if society is to meet the educational needs of physically challenged students; students with special needs (including mild/moderate cognitive disability, emotional/behavioural

Equal opportunity

Sufficient funding to meet learning needs

disability and learning disability), fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and pervasive developmental disorders; and students identified as gifted or talented.

For more detailed policy statements related to the Association's positions valuing students, see Appendix B.

Valuing Teachers

The Association has spent decades to improve and secure teaching as a profession and to represent this trust of a society for the betterment of all Albertans. To maintain this standard, all teachers within the public education system must possess a bachelor of education degree as a minimum standard, or its equivalent, and an Alberta teaching certificate. This professionalization of teaching continues to be promoted through professional learning communities, advocacy for educational change and an inquiry stance and responsibility among teachers for improving student learning.

Quality of teachers

Teachers are cognizant of the deeply interdependent and interconnected nature of learning within and among the school, home and community contexts. To this end, certificated teachers carefully conceive, and are highly responsive to, the many diverse learning needs of students. Certificated teachers' dedication to the profession and their professional knowledge, skills and attributes are represented in a broad repertoire of educational practices that are constantly being improved on to enhance student learning in Alberta. Teachers bring a habit of mind to classroom activities that nourish creativity, collaboration, inquiry, innovation and 21st century literacy and skills.

Certificated teachers responsive to students

In Alberta, teacher leadership thrives through the formal role of the principal, who is, in fact, considered to be the principal teacher and provide instructional leadership. Leadership is also provided informally through the

Teacher leadership

teacher leadership activities that permeate our public school system. Leadership is not confined to an office of administration; it is emergent and spread throughout Alberta schools, where it maintains a deep connection with student learning and educational practices. In many Alberta public schools, teachers work together at the grassroots level to articulate site-based research that highlights the concerns, interests and perspectives of the many educational stakeholders (eg students, parents, administrators, government, teachers) in their unique school community, a process that is a democratic and professional path to educational change.

The Association believes that teachers should have the major voice in curriculum decision making, including the prescribed program of studies. Alberta Education should continue to rely on the professional judgment of certificated teachers in choosing specific teaching materials to achieve the objectives of the curriculum without restricting teachers' right to select instructional materials. The Association believes that all schools should be organized to provide structures that ensure teacher involvement in decision making related to program development; mode of instruction; use of technology; allocation of educational resources; staffing policies; policies related to student, staff and program evaluation; and any other matters that concern teachers.

*Curriculum
development*

Teacher involvement

All of the Associations' policies look toward valuing teachers; however, for specific policy statements related to this section of the discussion, see Appendix C.

Valuing Inclusive Learning

To ensure that students flourish in inclusive learning communities, a revised *School Act* must address discrimination, harassment, racism or other threats to equity and human rights protection in an environment that fosters inclusive learning. Education must be characterized by values of cooperation, trust, caring, sharing, respect and responsibility, and school

*Inclusive learning
communities*

cultures must reflect a commitment to racial harmony; gender equity; First Nations, Métis and Inuit education; poverty issues; peace and global education; violence prevention; and respect for differences.

The Association fosters the development of schools as inclusive learning communities by encouraging and supporting teaching practices that promote the principles of respect for diversity, equity and human rights and that foster and support the intellectual, social, physical, emotional and spiritual development of each child. These inclusive learning communities should exhibit and model systemic and sustainable school, family and community partnerships. The Association supports inclusive learning initiatives in schools through its local associations, specialist councils and other subgroups and actively engages in partnerships with organizations that share these values and concerns.

Supportive teaching practice

Partnerships supporting children

Choice should be based on meeting the learning needs and addressing the learning differences of all students rather than on a notion of choice based on religious, ethnic or socioeconomic differences. Choice is not about extending privileges or benefits to one segment of society that could not feasibly be extended to all similar segments of society. The *School Act* should preserve expectations of choice within the public, separate and francophone school systems, which are fully funded by the public and which have historical and constitutional legitimacy, rather than contributing to the fragmentation of the system through private and charter schools. The focus of alternative education programs should be student learning needs, not market niches designed to recruit students (or their parents).

Choice based on learning needs

Public, separate and francophone schools

The Association supports the development of alternative programs within the public education system in ways that equitably meet the interests and needs of students. For example, the Association supports outreach education and recognizes its importance in providing educational opportunities for students whose needs are not met through traditional

Alternative programs within public education

Outreach education

school environments. To this end, the provincial government should fully fund and support outreach schools' facilities, operation, maintenance and program costs.

Career and technology studies is a vital program in our education system and is valued by Albertans as an educational opportunity that contributes to the prosperity of our citizenry. The Association believes that a revised *School Act* must ensure that all students enrolled in career and technology studies courses have access to instruction from a certificated and appropriately qualified teacher. The Association calls for the provision of sustained adequate funding for the maintenance, renewal and purchase of equipment and facilities to support the widespread availability of the career and technology Studies program.

For more detailed policy statements related to the Association's positions valuing inclusive learning, see Appendix D.

Valuing a Publicly Funded and Adequately Resourced Education

Public education is a long-term investment in people and society. It is a commitment made by the people of Alberta to the children of the province, and it is justified by Albertans' concern for individual development; their desire to maintain and foster a democratic state, an informed public and a spirit of free inquiry; and their need to provide society with the requisite knowledge and skills to cope within an increasingly complex world.

*Public education
long-term investment*

Fostering democracy

*Providing the
requisite knowledge,
skills and attributes*

Investment for the future requires social and governmental commitment to a funding framework designed to withstand short-term economic dislocations. The attainment of educational goals (and, by extension, individual, social and economic objectives) must be seen as related to investment in education. Therefore, education investment cannot be tied solely to economic variables or cyclical revenue streams. Education funding should not be subject to the vagaries of the political landscape. The

Educational skills

Finance stability

qualitative aspects of education that lead to the development of an intelligent and sophisticated citizenry require funding that is not restricted to the immediacy of current provincial revenue.

The adequate resourcing and funding of public education are a provincial responsibility that must be safeguarded in the *School Act* revisions. The obligation of the provincial government to its populace should be constitutionally guaranteed, organizationally elaborated through governance structures and financially secured through the use of a funding program based on the widest possible access to revenue sources.

Financing education as a provincial responsibility

Widest possible access to revenue sources

The Association recommends that a revised funding framework and eligibility criteria be developed for the new *School Act* in order to better reflect the individual needs of students who qualify for funded special needs programs. In making that recommendation, the Association hopes to provide greater accessibility within the public education system for physically challenged students and students with learning disabilities, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, pervasive developmental disorders, emotional/behavioural disabilities and other emerging developmental issues.

Funding framework responsive to meet student needs

The Association also recommends that the revised funding framework and eligibility criteria provide for fully funded, full-day kindergarten programs of 950 hours taught by certificated teachers. School boards should be mandated to deliver these programs, which should be available to all children who are five years of age by December 31.

Full-day kindergarten

The government should also standardize the normal Grade 1 entrance age throughout Alberta so that the minimum Grade 1 entrance age is six years of age as of December 31. A firm date for entrance to school is needed to provide consistency throughout the province. Having school jurisdictions make individual determinations regarding entrance age creates a hardship when children transfer from jurisdiction to jurisdiction in that they can find

Established Grade 1 entrance age

themselves with peers who vary significantly in age and maturity. Early entrance as a strategy for dealing with the educational needs of a gifted child presents a separate special education issue that should not deter from the need for consistency regarding entrance age throughout the province.

The nature of the education program and its success in meeting the needs of children are best determined at the local level. Those responsibilities cannot be met through a finance plan that prescribes the education program.

Local decision making

Teachers at all levels of a public education system must participate in the establishment of priorities and related expenditures for education. A new funding mechanism is also needed that will provide adequate funding for school jurisdictions that addresses the unequal costs of educating all students.

Address unequal costs

The Association believes that the essence of teaching is a personal and pedagogical relationship between teacher and student that may be assisted, but not replaced, by technology. It also believes that any vision of the role of technology in a public education system should be based on humanistic and democratic principles. The Association recognizes that face-to-face instruction is the preferred option.

Learning and technology

Pedagogic relationship

Face-to-face instruction

While the Association believes that certificated teaching personnel are the final authority on the administration, application and monitoring of educational technology and distributed learning, issues related to the cost of, complexity of, access to and support for educational technology require a provincial commitment to funding and adequate resourcing.

Teachers final authority

Insofar as the Association advocates for teachers' use of technology as an instructional tool and believes in the potential for technology to enhance the practice of teaching and learning, a revised *School Act* must provide a funding mechanism for school jurisdictions to secure adequate educational technology resources and professional development. Such a mechanism would give schools and school jurisdictions an opportunity to address the

Cost of technology

total cost of ownership of technology, including technical support, software acquisition, infrastructure, subscriptions, upgrading and teachers' professional development. The Association believes that such financial support must be provided without detriment to other valuable aspects of the education system.

With regard to the Association's perspectives on distributed (or distance) learning environments, there are many significant issues related to adequate resourcing and support. Educational approaches designed to render the learning experience more flexible than traditional classroom instruction in terms of time and place impose a unique set of responsibilities on teachers and students. Before formulating legislation in support of distributed learning, the government should consider Appendix H, an executive summary of *A Research Study of Teachers' Workload in Alberta* *Distributed Learning Environments: Flexibility, Accessibility & Permeable Boundaries*.

Distributed learning

The effective use of technology in instruction requires equitable access to the technology for all students and equal opportunity for each student to learn, along with evidence that the student's learning needs are appropriately met in this way. Additional funding is therefore necessary for assistive technology supports for students with special needs, including the necessary technical support required by students with learning barriers to enable these students to more easily meet the learner outcomes of the programs of studies, foster independence for those not on any graded curriculum and meet the goals and objectives stated in their individual program plans. The Association believes that, when educational technology is used to enhance teaching and learning for all, an appropriate student-teacher ratio and teaching assignment are important, as is the teacher's control of the instructional program and the use of the technology.

Equitable access to technology

Technology enhances learning

Public funding must serve public needs. Those needs cannot unilaterally be determined by any single agency involved in the educational process but

Serves the public

must be the subject of intense study and consultation among all interested and qualified parties. Their common objectives should be the maintenance of a high standard of education for all children and the improvement of those aspects of the education system in which a better quality of service can be provided. The distribution of public funds to private schools must not be supported in a revised *School Act*.

Consultation among interested and qualified parties

The Association is concerned when private and/or charter schools attempt to recruit students by offering financial or other incentives not generally available to students in public schools. That concern is especially relevant when such recruitment threatens the survival of local public schools by diminishing their enrolment or when charter schools ask for or are granted permission to operate under provincial regulations less restrictive than those applicable to public schools. As noted previously in this submission, the Association opposes public funding of private schools or financial arrangements that are more favourable than those applicable to the public education system.

No advantage to private and charter schools over public schools

Grant systems must be concerned with resources, innovation and equity. Grant structures should be designed to foster consistent upgrading of facilities, equipment and programs. The objective of quality improvement must be realized, in part, through provincial experimental funding available at the level of both the public, separate and francophone school jurisdiction and their schools. Equalization should be an inherent part of any distribution plan for basic education.

Grant systems

Equalization in distribution

The Association recommends that Alberta Education require school boards to make available to the public financial statements detailing the revenue and expenditures of funds collected through fees, fundraising, gifts and donations for each school operated or supervised by a school board. The same requirements should apply to charter schools.

School boards and charter schools transparent to the public

For more detailed policy statements related to the Association's positions

valuing a publicly funded and adequately resourced public education system, see Appendix E.

Valuing Responsibility

Educational responsibility and accountability are the process through which the partners in the education system each take responsibility for their actions and report to those who are entitled to the information.

Responsibility for actions through reporting

Educational accountability includes an obligation to improve the capacity and performance of all those responsible to achieve the broad goals of education. An effective educational accountability system is guided by seven broad principles:

Principle 1

Education partners have a shared understanding of and commitment to fairness, openness, respect for diversity and stewardship, key values underlying accountability in education.

Principle 2

The primary purpose of accountability in education is to support the broad goals of education and the diverse learning needs of children and youth.

Principle 3

Information for accountability purposes is gathered in various ways from all relevant sources, and reported and used in ways that respect the limitations of the data.

Principle 4

Sound educational research and practice guide the design and implementation of an accountability system in education.

Principle 5

Accountability in education enhances the capacity of education partners to

fulfill their respective roles and responsibilities and leads to sustained improvement of the system.

Principle 6

Each education partner is accountable for those areas of the system within its authority and expertise. Legislation defines specific roles and responsibilities for many of the education partners. It is important, however, that the partners' roles and responsibilities are developed together and understandings, shared.

Principle 7

The system of accountability in education is evaluated on an ongoing basis. The education partners participate in a review of the various aspects of the accountability system and reflect on its processes, the guiding principles and any opportunities for improving the system on an ongoing basis.

Alberta's teachers are committed professionals who view educational accountability as an important opportunity to improve learning for students. Teachers use multiple sources of information in the ongoing assessment, evaluation and reporting of student progress. However, the government's current accountability initiatives tend to undermine attempts by teachers to provide high-quality assessments of student achievement and by schools and school jurisdictions to develop meaningful measures of their performance.

*Accountability
opportunity to
improve learning*

The Association affirms its belief in the professional judgment teachers exercise in diagnosing, assessing and responding to the learning needs of students. In a revised *School Act*, Alberta has an opportunity to shift the accountability processes now found in regulation from ones that rely on large-scale external tests to ones found in legislation that would allow for a responsible focus on teacher-developed student assessments that conform to professional standards of practice and foster the conditions necessary for optimal teaching and learning. This revised understanding of educational

*Professional
judgment of teachers*

*Teacher-developed
student assessment*

accountability as a notion of responsibility would better support student learning and improve the ability of Alberta teachers, schools and school jurisdictions to respond to the growing complexity and diversity of classrooms.

A revised *School Act* must provide for a framework regarding the obligation of students to abide by appropriate behavioural expectations. This obligation in a revised *School Act* would, in turn, form the basis for school expectations of behaviour as well as disciplinary measures for students, up to and including suspension and expulsion. As noted previously in this submission, parents and guardians who have the right to make decisions respecting the education of their children also have responsibilities to the safe and caring spaces where public schooling is enabled. To this end, parents and guardians have a responsibility for their children's behaviour and their own behaviour if it interferes with the proceedings of the school and/or jeopardizes the physical and mental well-being of others. An appropriate balance must be struck between the right of individuals to due process and the responsibility of students and parents for their educational community. Through school boards, the advisory and collaborative role of school councils can support a shared responsibility for shaping or reshaping safe and caring learning environments for all.

Student responsibilities

Parental responsibilities

Balance between rights and responsibilities

School councils

In terms of the education system's responsibility to the public interest of Albertans, the Association believes that revised legislation must make teachers employed by private and charter schools active members of the Association. Doing so will serve the public interest by ensuring that teachers in all Alberta schools are certificated and subject to both practice review and the Code of Professional Conduct.

All teachers members of the Alberta Teachers' Association

For more detailed policy statements related to the Association's positions valuing responsibility in the public education system, see Appendix F.

Concluding Statements

As the Alberta government opens the *School Act* for revisions focused on transforming education, the Association advocates the continued growth of a robust provincial public education system that engenders inclusivity, is publicly funded and adequately resourced, promotes responsibility, and above all, recognizes our mandate to support Alberta's students.

The *School Act* must provide a clear framework in which these concepts can flourish unimpeded within a strong public education system, under the authority of the minister of education, governed by publicly elected school boards. The Government of Alberta must value teachers to be successful in this essential goal.

Appendix A

Selected Policy Statements Valuing Public Education in Alberta

Curriculum, Student Assessment and Evaluation

1.B.11 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to take immediate action to address the incorporation of private schools within the public school system by enforcing the requirements identified under the School Act relative to:

1. right of access to education,
 2. prohibition against tuition fees,
 3. right to access alternative programs, and
 4. limits on parent fees for non-instructional costs of an alternative program; and
- by ensuring that there is public consultation and full disclosure when a private school incorporates into a public school jurisdiction.

[2007]

Education Finance

7.A.22 The Alberta Teachers' Association opposes public funding of private schools.

[1981/86/89/96/2006]

General

8.A.5 The Department of Education should affirm that the mission of public education is

1. to develop the potential and gifts of each child;
2. to develop a foundation of learning that enables individuals to function effectively in further learning, work and life; and
3. to foster the development of active and contributing citizens of a democratic society.

[1998/2001/04]

8.A.37 The Alberta Teachers' Association opposes the establishment of publicly-funded charter schools that

1. exclude students on any basis that violates human rights legislation,
2. exclude students because of the economic or social circumstances of their parents,
3. threaten the survival of local public schools by diminishing their enrolments,
4. ask for or are granted permission to operate under provincial regulations less restrictive than those applicable to public schools,
5. recruit students by offering financial or other incentives not generally available to students in public schools,
6. admit only students of higher levels of ability or achievement,
7. claim to have the right to remove students for purported violations of a special agreement and to deny further responsibility for those students,
8. seek to engage members of staff under agreements that are not subject to collective bargaining,
9. employ teachers who are not active members of the Association,
10. are dominated by any special interest group.

[1994/97/2000/03/06/09]

8.A.38 The Alberta Teachers' Association supports the incorporation of existing private schools into public school authorities subject to the following conditions:

1. All undertakings made by the public school authority and the private school relating to the incorporation of the private school into the public school authority must be documented and made publicly available on the website of the public school authority.
 2. Incorporation into the public school authority must require that the formerly private school admit students and employ teachers without injurious discrimination on the basis of race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical characteristics, disability, marital status, family status, age, ancestry, place of origin, place of residence, socioeconomic background or linguistic background.
 3. Once incorporated into the public school authority, the formerly private school must be precluded from charging tuition or extraordinary school fees or establishing any other financial requirement for admission.
 4. The public school authority must undertake to facilitate the participation of teachers in the formerly private school in the activities of both the profession and the local of the Association.
 5. The formerly private school must be able to equitably access jurisdiction resources, including financial resources.
 6. The formerly private school must be subject to board governance and policies of the public school authority.
- [2009]

8.B.8 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that all private schools meet the requirements for accreditation, including the requirements that these schools

1. implement the Alberta Program of Studies,
2. employ certificated teachers,
3. ensure student eligibility to earn credits toward an Alberta graduation diploma and
4. meet public accountability and reporting standards.

[1989/92/95/98/2001/04/07]

8.B.16 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to immediately apply all accountability measures required of public schools to private schools that receive public funds.

[1998/2001/04/07]

Nature of Teaching Profession

10.B.1 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to amend the School Act to make teachers employed by charter schools active members of the Association.

[1996/99/2002/05/08]

Political Engagement

14.A.13 The Alberta Teachers' Association believes that teachers and other school employees have the democratic right to run for or serve in the office of school trustees without resigning employment as a board employee.

[2009]

Education of Students with Special Needs

17.B.5 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to amend its policy on funding for special education private schools to ensure that there is no automatic right for parents to choose a private school education, paid for with public funds, for students with special needs where a program appropriate to that child's needs is available in the public system.

[1998/2001/04/07]

Diversity, Equity and Human Rights

18.A.1 A primary role of public education in a democratic society is to foster the principles of equity, human rights, social responsibility and justice.

[2003]

18.A.4 The Alberta Teachers' Association is guided by its commitment to

1. respect for diversity, which is

- a) adhering to beliefs and practices that demonstrate acceptance,
- b) understanding, accepting and respecting differences in people and their unique circumstances,
- c) recognizing differences as positive attributes around which to build educational experiences and
- d) recognizing the complex and changing nature of individual identities;

2. equity, which is

- a) treating all people with fairness and justice,
- b) ensuring that each person has equitable opportunity to reach his or her full potential and
- c) ensuring the inclusion and fair treatment of oppressed and marginalized individuals and groups; and

3. human rights, which are

- a) the equal and inalienable rights and responsibilities of all persons to live in a free, just and peaceful society without regard to race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical characteristics, disability, marital status, family status, age, ancestry, place of origin, place of residence, socioeconomic background or linguistic background; and
- b) based on the recognition of, protection of and commitment to the inherent dignity of all persons at the individual, organizational and public policy levels.

[2003/05/08]

18.A.5 The Alberta Teachers' Association recognizes four elements that support and guide its work in the areas of diversity, equity and human rights:

1. School culture that

- a) is supported by a safe and caring school environment,
- b) is based on schools as inclusive learning communities and
- c) provides students with a broad range of educational experiences that reflect the diversity of the community

2. Student learning based on

- a) equitable opportunities for all students to meet high standards,
- b) curriculum and assessment that reflect the socially constructed nature of knowledge,
- c) using our differences to enrich learning and
- d) engaging students as active citizens

3. Teacher learning that

- a) provides supports for reflective practice and research,
- b) assists teachers in accommodating diversity in the classroom and
- c) assists in understanding how social class and power relationships affect sexism, racism and other forms of marginalization and

4. Educational governance and administration that

- a) provide adequate and equitable funding,
- b) regard resources for education as an investment in the broader community,
- c) use a broad range of accountability measures that reflect the complex nature of learning and
- d) support research that improves understanding of the complex relationships among poverty, racism and all forms of marginalization.

[2003]

18.A.20 The public and separate school systems are publicly funded and have historical and constitutional legitimacy.
[1985/94/2004]

18.A.21 The Alberta Teachers' Association endorses the right of the official language minority to manage its own schools.
[1990/93/94/2004]

Corporate Presence in Schools

19.B.3 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to ban commercial advertising in schools.
[2000/03/06/09]

Public Education Facilities

20.A.1 The Alberta Teachers' Association maintains that provision of reasonable access to publicly owned education facilities is an essential element of a democratic society and believes that

1. reasonable access to public school facilities must be available to Albertans;
2. the ownership of public school facilities should be retained in the public domain;
3. the public school is a significant part of the identity of a community;
4. the closure, construction and modernization of a school is a matter of such consequence that the closest cooperation between school authorities and the community is necessary; and
5. in planning, constructing, maintaining, modernizing and closing a school, the impact on teaching and learning should be the primary consideration.

[2003]

20.B.8 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that participation of private-sector interests, including public-private partnerships, in the construction, ownership or operation of a school facility be subject to the following criteria:

1. The initial project plan must demonstrate how the total cost of construction, ownership and/or operation of the facility, including interest and finance charges and provisions for normal profit to the private interest, will be less than the cost of a fully publicly funded alternative.
2. The construction or renovation must meet or exceed the 50-year standard for government-built schools.
3. The school facility must be designed, built and maintained so as to provide an environment that enhances the quality of teaching and learning.
4. Teachers, students and community members must be able to use the facility during and after the school day and on noninstructional days for preparation, professional development, cocurricular and extracurricular activities at no additional cost.
5. Any fees charged to groups and individuals not associated with the school for the use of the school facility must not exceed the additional marginal cost of providing access to the facility.
6. All aspects of the management, operation and maintenance of the facility must be subject to the direction of the principal and school board.
7. The construction or renovation of a facility must be aligned with the school board's infrastructure plan and priorities and must not compromise potential funding for other infrastructure projects identified by the board. Funding for construction or maintenance of a facility must not be contingent upon the school board's consenting to participate in a public-private partnership.
8. Freehold ownership of the facility must revert to the school board at the conclusion of the project at no additional cost to the school board.
9. Documentation relating to the construction, ownership or operation of the facility must be publicly available.

p 22

10. The criteria above must form an integral and enforceable part of any contract for the construction, ownership or operation of the facility in conjunction with a private-sector interest or partner.

11. Upon completion, an evaluation will occur to determine the cost performance of the project.

[2008]

Appendix B

Selected Policy Statements Valuing Alberta Students

Curriculum, Student Assessment and Evaluation

1.A.1 The basics in education are those learning experiences that assist students in acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes that contribute to continued learning, social awareness, cognizance of a changing society, responsible citizenship and personal well-being.

[1978/88/98/2008]

1.A.15 Curriculum content, activities and resource materials should be developmentally appropriate to provide for sequential development in a given subject, to provide for appropriate articulation between subjects and to allow appropriate differentiation according to the learning needs and capabilities of the student.

[1967/68/72/73/88/98/2008]

1.A.60 Alternative schools and alternative programs within the public education system must meet the following criteria:

1. They are designed to meet learning needs and address learning differences, rather than religious, ethnic or socio-economic differences and do not result in excessive fragmentation.
2. On balance, they demonstrate a net educational benefit, are financially and administratively feasible, and do not assess non-instructional or program fees.
3. They do not extend privileges or benefits to one segment of society that could not feasibly be extended to all similar segments of society.
4. They do not violate the following basic principles:
 - a) Public education is publicly funded and universally accessible by all students.
 - b) Public education is directed toward developing the potential of every student.
 - c) Public education is accountable, through government, including publicly elected school boards, to society.
 - d) Public education fosters the development of a democratic citizenry and society.

[1985/88/96/98/2007/08]

Working Conditions for Professional Service

5.A.69 Teachers should have a right to a work environment free from abuse or harassment by students or parents.

[1994/2001]

5.A.70 Safeguards essential for the protection of teachers from abuse or harassment by students or parents should include

1. a district policy for sites under its jurisdiction developed in accordance with principles established by the Association;
2. recognition of the teacher's right to know all accusers and to address all accusations;
3. a teacher evaluation system that places responsibility for the evaluation of the professional performance of the teacher on the teacher's colleagues as identified in Association policy;
4. identification of individuals convicted under the *Young Offenders Act* and in the teacher's care, including knowledge of the general nature of the offence;
5. the support of community service agencies when harassment or abuse are threatened or occur;
6. enforcement of those sections of the *School Act* dealing with student and public conduct in schools; and
7. the teacher's right to exclude from class students who (a) pose a physical safety risk to themselves or others including the teacher and (b) continue to disrupt the operation of the classroom or the learning program of other students.

[1994/96/2001]

5.B.27 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge Alberta school boards to ensure the personal safety of teachers who are at risk from student or parent behaviour.
[2003/06/09]

5.B.31 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge all levels of government to encourage appropriate conduct of parents toward teachers in an effort to ensure the overall well-being of teachers and students.
[2007]

Education Finance

7.A.18 The classroom teacher–pupil ratio should not be increased if school boards are forced to reduce educational service due to provincial restrictions on spending.
[1976/81/89/96/2006]

7.A.24 The Government of Alberta should increase substantially its funding to school boards to provide for adequate professional staffing of schools so that an average weekly instructional time of 20 hours and an average class size of 20 students can be realized.
[1979/80/82/86/89/96/2006]

7.A.25 The Government of Alberta should provide extra funding to those areas experiencing significant population change to ensure that the quality of education and working conditions are not adversely affected.
[1982/83/84/87/89/91/96/2006]

7.A.26 The Government of Alberta should fully fund special education based on the number of students served and the nature of the needs to be served.
[1993/96/99/2006]

7.A.27 The Department of Education should introduce into the school financing program sufficient funds to enable school boards to establish and maintain a maximum class size of 17 students per classroom teacher for Early Childhood Education through Grade 3.
[1983/84/85/86/89/96/99/2006]

7.A.42 The Department of Education should ensure that provincial and federal grants for minority language and bilingual education are used only for the benefit of students enrolled in those programs.
[1991/94/97/2000/06]

7.B.3 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education to review its funding framework and eligibility criteria to reflect the individual needs of students who qualify for funding for special needs programs in order to provide greater accessibility for physically challenged students, students with learning disabilities, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, pervasive developmental disorders, emotional behavioural disabilities and other emerging developmental issues.
[1992/96/99/2002/05/08]

7.B.4 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to fund special education on a basis that recognizes the number, program needs and support services of special needs students who are being served within each jurisdiction.
[1986/89/92/95/96/99/2002/05/08]

7.B.7 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education to fund programs that address the growing incidence and severity of challenges demonstrated by the increasing number of students with behaviour disorders.

[1990/93/96/99/2002/05/08]

7.B.8 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education to ensure that "specially funded" students receive the full benefit of their allocation.

[1990/93/96/99/2002/05/08]

7.B.9 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education to develop guidelines for the identification of English as an Additional Language students eligible for funding and for the provision of appropriate service to those students.

[2002/05/08/09]

7.B.11 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to provide sufficient funds to meet the educational needs of all students identified with special needs, including those identified as having mild/moderate cognitive disability, emotional/behavioural disability, learning disability or as being gifted or talented.

[2003/06/08]

7.B.12 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to provide sufficient funding to school boards for the specific purpose of providing adequate student counselling services offered by counsellors with teaching certificates.

[1992/95/96/99/2002/05/08]

7.B.13 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to allocate substantial additional increases in funding to school boards to enable them to

1. establish classroom conditions that allow teachers to meet the learning needs of all children,
2. negotiate teacher salary increases that reflect the value of the contribution made by the profession and
3. attract and retain qualified members of the teaching profession.

[2001/04/07]

7.B.18 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education to create a funding code to address the needs of refugee students with limited formal schooling.

[2004/07]

7.B.19 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to provide sufficient funding to school boards to allow for major reductions in class size.

[1998/2001/04/07]

7.B.23 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to increase funding to provide more teachers to work in the classroom with children who are at risk due to mathematical literacy, language and early literacy needs.

[1999/2002/05/08]

7.B.24 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education to ensure that school boards are adequately funded for all students with special needs including those enrolled after September 30.

[1999/2002/05/08]

General

8.A.7 In the event that the Minister of Education should choose to overturn a board's decision to expel a student, the school board should be permitted to provide an alternative form of education.

[1992/95/98/2001/04]

8.A.12 The minimum Grade 1 starting age, standardized across the province, should be six as of December 31.

[1979/84/87/94/2004/08]

8.B.7 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to standardize the normal Grade 1 entrance age throughout Alberta so that the minimum Grade 1 entrance age is six years of age as of December 31.

[1998/2001/04/07/08]

Processes of Teaching

11.A.1 Teaching processes aim to develop students to become self-directed, responsible citizens of a democratic society.

[1971/92/2002]

11.A.2 Teaching emphasizes human and social relationships and guides students in the development of values.

[1971/92/2002]

11.A.3 Teaching is concerned with student development in the affective, psychomotor and cognitive domains of knowledge.

[1971/92/2002]

Education of Students with Special Needs

17.B.6 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association encourage teachers to request that placement of students with behaviour disorders occur only following the provision of appropriate resources, professional development and support services so that teaching and learning can occur in a safe and caring environment.

[1993/96/99/2002/05/08]

Diversity, Equity and Human Rights

18.A.5 The Alberta Teachers' Association recognizes four elements that support and guide its work in the areas of diversity, equity and human rights:

1. School culture that

- a) is supported by a safe and caring school environment,
- b) is based on schools as inclusive learning communities and
- c) provides students with a broad range of educational experiences that reflect the diversity of the community

2. Student learning based on

- a) equitable opportunities for all students to meet high standards,
- b) curriculum and assessment that reflect the socially constructed nature of knowledge,
- c) using our differences to enrich learning and
- d) engaging students as active citizens

3. Teacher learning that

- a) provides supports for reflective practice and research,
- b) assists teachers in accommodating diversity in the classroom and

c) assists in understanding how social class and power relationships affect sexism, racism and other forms of marginalization and

4. Educational governance and administration that

a) provide adequate and equitable funding,

b) regard resources for education as an investment in the broader community,

c) use a broad range of accountability measures that reflect the complex nature of learning and

d) support research that improves understanding of the complex relationships among poverty, racism and all forms of marginalization.

[2003]

18.A.6 The Alberta Teachers' Association advocates that schools should be inclusive learning communities that

1. reflect the principles of respect for diversity, equity and human rights;

2. foster and support the intellectual, social, physical, emotional and spiritual development of each child;

3. are characterized by values of cooperation, trust, caring, sharing, respect and responsibility;

4. have school cultures which reflect a commitment to racial harmony, gender equity, First Nations, Métis and Inuit education, poverty issues, peace and global education, violence prevention and respecting differences; and

5. exhibit systemic and sustainable school–family–community partnerships.

[2003]

18.B.1 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education and Alberta school boards to adopt policies that foster the development of schools as inclusive learning communities and to address discrimination, harassment, racism or other threats to equity and human rights protection in an environment that fosters inclusive learning specific to these areas.

[2003/06/09]

Appendix C

Selected Policy Statements Valuing Alberta Teachers

1.A.8 The Department of Education should plan, fund, implement and evaluate a thorough orientation and inservice program for teachers required to teach any new curriculum authorized by the Minister of Education.
[1980/81/82/83/86/88/98/2008]

1.A.9 The Department of Education should employ certificated teachers with expertise in curriculum design to supervise curriculum or program development and implementation.
[1990/93/98/2008]

1.A.11 Local autonomy and local participation should be a major consideration in curriculum development.
[1967/70/72/77/88/98/2008]

1.A.14 Teachers should have the major voice in curriculum decision making within the prescribed course of studies.
[1978/88/98/2008]

1.A.15 Curriculum content, activities and resource materials should be developmentally appropriate to provide for sequential development in a given subject, to provide for appropriate articulation between subjects and to allow appropriate differentiation according to the learning needs and capabilities of the student.
[1967/68/72/73/88/98/2008]

1.A.16 The Department of Education should provide specific teaching materials to achieve the objectives of the curriculum without restricting the right of the teacher to select instructional materials.
[1984/85/88/98/2008]

1.A.42 Credits toward a high school diploma should be awarded only for those courses or activities under the supervision of certificated teachers.
[1967/68/69/74/79/84/88/89/98/2008]

2.A.6 The administration of faculties of education of Alberta universities should ensure that all academic staff members

1. are certificated teachers;
2. have demonstrated excellence in teaching experience in elementary or secondary school; and
3. have frequent contacts with schools and teachers through such means as classroom visits, collaborative research, attendance at conventions and other meetings, and membership in specialist councils.

[1973/74/79/84/87/97/2007]

2.A.18 Prior to the implementation of any field experience program, sufficient resources, including time and inservice, are to be provided so that school-based certificated personnel can meet regular commitments to students and program commitments to student teachers.
[1976/81/87/97/2007]

2.A.32 A recommendation on permanent certification should be made by a panel of at least three certificated persons, which shall include representation appointed by the Association.
[1972/77/80/85/88/97/2007]

5.A.15 School boards and others must recognize that high-quality education, attractive schools and favourable working conditions are important in the recruitment and retention of teachers. Negotiations should include all matters which affect the quality of the educational system and the teacher's ability to provide a high level of

professional service. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, collective agreements negotiated by the Association should make provision for

1. a single preparational scale based upon the extent of teacher education and of teaching experience following certification;
2. evaluation of years of teacher education by the Teacher Qualifications Service of the Association;
3. definition of what constitutes a year of teaching experience;
4. allowances for administration, supervision, additional responsibilities and special functions;
5. continuous 90 days of sick leave;
6. leaves of absence;
7. no reduction in salary in whole or in part for any teacher by the coming into effect of a new agreement;
8. an arbitration process as required by the *Labour Relations Code* and a joint teacher–employer grievance committee;
9. inclusion in the collective agreement of all teachers employed by a school board, except the superintendent;
10. adequate time and facilities during the school day for administration and supervision and for preparation of materials for classroom work by principals, assistant principals, vice-principals and teachers;
11. assistance to teachers in the form of teachers’ assistants;
12. time with full pay for curriculum-making or writing of new curricula;
13. teacher representation at such meetings of the board as is required to maintain satisfactory teacher–board liaison;
14. the establishment of teacher–board committees to discuss educational matters;
15. travel allowances for teachers travelling on school business;
16. notice of increases in teacherage rentals to be given in time to allow a teacher to resign if the individual so desires;
17. time with full pay for inservice education;
18. a maximum load per teacher covering instructional and assignable activities;
19. moving expenses to be borne by divisional boards in all cases of transfer of teachers not requested by the teacher;
20. liability insurance for teachers;
21. accident insurance to protect teachers injured in the course of their duties;
22. membership in the Association as a condition of employment;
23. a procedure for transfer of teachers that includes appeals to persons other than those making the decisions;
24. provision for negotiations concerning noon-hour supervision in keeping with other policy of the Association;
25. negotiation concerning extra duties and responsibilities;
26. a group insurance program;
27. transferability and transportability of teaching service;
28. payment of location allowances;
29. payment of substitute teachers at a rate of not less than 1/200 of the salary according to years of teacher education and years of experience for each day taught;
30. natural attrition to be the method used to compensate for staff reduction necessitated by declining enrolment;
31. long-service allowances for teachers whose service has taken them beyond maximum grid experience;
32. class size appropriate to type of learning situation;
33. inclusion of a cost-of-living adjustment clause;
34. at least a day free of instructional duties for scheduled parent–teacher interviews for each reporting period;
35. a continuation clause;
36. a benefit package for substitute teachers that provides board premium contributions;
37. adequate maternity leave provisions;
38. an early retirement incentive plan;
39. other provisions pertinent to local situations consistent with Association policy;
40. the time required to conduct negotiations at no loss of salary to teacher representatives and no reimbursement of salary to employers;
41. a deferred salary leave plan;
42. leave for the purpose of attending citizenship court to acquire Canadian citizenship;

43. continuation of employer contribution to benefit plans for the duration of leaves;
44. provision for the protection of salaries and allowances in the event of an imposed transfer;
45. the employment of a substitute teacher when a teacher is absent;
46. the daily rate of remuneration for a teacher performing professional tasks during a holiday period or on other than normal teaching days, as the equivalent of at least 1/200 of the annual salary of that teacher;
47. the continuation of contracts between boards and part-time teachers from year to year without variations in the amount of time that the teacher is required to teach except by mutual agreement and the writing of a revised contract;
48. the definition of seniority as all periods of employment as a teacher;
49. recognition of each half day of early childhood instruction as 0.5 full-time equivalent;
50. identification of 400 enrolment credit units in a distributed learning program as equivalent to 1.0 FTE for salary purposes;
51. no reduction in certificated teachers as a result of the implementation of distributed learning or home-schooling programs;
52. provision of full-time benefit contributions for part-time teachers, paid by the employer;
53. a pupil-teacher ratio for distance and online education that is equal to the average PTR in the jurisdiction;
54. participation in extracurricular activities only on a voluntary basis;
55. payment of kilometrage for travel when the teacher is unable to live near the school site and the school site is more than 30 km from the teacher's residence;
56. an appropriate number of substitute teachers available for service with the school jurisdiction;
57. an appeal process for substitute teachers whose service is discontinued;
58. sick leave for substitute teachers; and
59. substitute teachers to be assigned the regularly scheduled supervision duties and workload of the teacher being replaced.

[1970/73/76/78/79/80/82/83/84/85/86/87/90/91/92/96/97/98/
2000/01/02/03/07]

5.A.24 School boards should hire noncertificated personnel to provide noon/lunch supervision.

[1979/80/85/91/2001]

5.A.73 All teachers, principals and other certificated personnel employed in publicly-funded schools shall be members of the bargaining unit.

[1995/98/2001/04]

5.B.3 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge school boards to avoid or eliminate differentiated staffing policies or school-based staff development practices that result in the replacement of certificated teachers with noncertificated personnel.

[1997/2000/03/06/09]

8.A.11 The legal framework for education should stipulate that all schools be open to inspection, teach approved curriculum, employ certificated teachers and meet safety regulations.

[1977/78/83/85/88/94/2004]

8.B.20 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that the educational components of school-based early intervention programs are planned, delivered, supervised and evaluated by certificated teachers.

[1993/96/99/2002/05/08]

9.A.17 Designated administrators of specialist services should be certificated personnel with preparation in the relevant specialization.

[1974/79/84/85/96/2006]

10.A.6 Persons employed by agencies to offer instructional services under contract to school boards should be certificated teachers and members of the Association.
[1976/81/92/2002]

10.A.25 The certificated teacher is the essential element in the delivery of instruction to students regardless of the mode of instruction.
[1994/2001/2002]

10.A.26 The Alberta Teachers' Association opposes the use of noncertificated personnel to supervise classes when the regular teacher is absent.
[1989/96/2002]

10.B.3 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to require that all counselling positions in schools be filled with certificated teachers.
[2004/07]

12.A.7 The Alberta Teachers' Association opposes the utilization of teachers' assistants when such utilization may effect a reduction of certificated professional staff.
[1985/93]

13.A.11 Planning, implementation and evaluation of early childhood education programs are the responsibility of certificated teachers.
[1974/86/90/95/2005]

15.A.14 Supervision of teachers is conducted by school-based administrators; supervision of school-based administrators and central office certificated staff is conducted by the superintendent.
[1980/85/90/2000]

15.A.25 All information concerning a teacher is maintained in the teacher's personnel file, access to which is limited to the teacher and certificated personnel with administrative responsibility directly related to that teacher.
[1980/85/90/91/93/2000]

16.A.6 Certificated teaching personnel are the final authority for administration, application and monitoring of educational technology and distributed learning.
[1997/98/2001/04/07]

Appendix D

Selected Policy Statements Valuing Inclusive Learning

Curriculum, Student Assessment and Evaluation

1.A.9 The Department of Education should employ certificated teachers with expertise in curriculum design to supervise curriculum or program development and implementation.
[1990/93/98/2008]

1.A.11 Local autonomy and local participation should be a major consideration in curriculum development.
[1967/70/72/77/88/98/2008]

1.A.14 Teachers should have the major voice in curriculum decision making within the prescribed course of studies.
[1978/88/98/2008]

1.A.16 The Department of Education should provide specific teaching materials to achieve the objectives of the curriculum without restricting the right of the teacher to select instructional materials.
[1984/85/88/98/2008]

1.A.59 The Department of Education is responsible for making provision for and adequately funding alternative public education programs for students who are not succeeding in regular school programs.
[1978/83/86/88/98/2008]

1.A.60 Alternative schools and alternative programs within the public education system must meet the following criteria:

1. They are designed to meet learning needs and address learning differences, rather than religious, ethnic or socio-economic differences and do not result in excessive fragmentation.
2. On balance, they demonstrate a net educational benefit, are financially and administratively feasible, and do not assess non-instructional or program fees.
3. They do not extend privileges or benefits to one segment of society that could not feasibly be extended to all similar segments of society.
4. They do not violate the following basic principles:
 - a) Public education is publicly funded and universally accessible by all students.
 - b) Public education is directed toward developing the potential of every student.
 - c) Public education is accountable, through government, including publicly elected school boards, to society.
 - d) Public education fosters the development of a democratic citizenry and society.

[1985/88/96/98/2007/08]

1.B.21 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education to provide sustained adequate funding for the maintenance, renewal and purchase of equipment and facilities to support the delivery of the Career and Technology Studies curriculum.

[1993/96/99/2002/05/08]

1.B.26 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to amend section 21(1)(a) of the School Act to eliminate the words "culture, religion."

[1996/99/2002/05/08]

1.B.35 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education to ensure that all students enrolled in high school Career and Technology Studies modules have access to 25 discrete hours of instruction from a certificated teacher for each credit unit offered.

[1998/2001/04/07]

Education Finance

7.A.2 Financial support for education must be sufficient to permit the realization of individual, social and economic objectives.

[1967/79/89/96/2006]

7.A.10 The distribution of funds for public education should provide for equalization of opportunity.

[1967/72/73/89/96/2006]

7.B.3 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education to review its funding framework and eligibility criteria to reflect the individual needs of students who qualify for funding for special needs programs in order to provide greater accessibility for physically challenged students, students with learning disabilities, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, pervasive developmental disorders, emotional behavioural disabilities and other emerging developmental issues.

[1992/96/99/2002/05/08]

7.B.5 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to develop a formula that provides adequate funding for school jurisdictions that addresses unequal costs of delivery.

[1999/2002/05/08]

7.B.26 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to immediately provide school boards with sufficient funds to prevent reductions in service and to support quality improvements to public education.

[2002/05/08]

General

8.A.9 School boards should provide general policies and resources for local initiatives for schools within the framework of provincial legislation.

[1985/94/2004]

8.A.15 The Alberta Teachers' Association supports the community school concept.

[1987/90/94/2004]

8.A.17 The Government of Alberta should provide adequate funding for community schools.

[1987/90/94/2004]

8.A.37 The Alberta Teachers' Association opposes the establishment of publicly-funded charter schools that

1. exclude students on any basis that violates human rights legislation,
2. exclude students because of the economic or social circumstances of their parents,
3. threaten the survival of local public schools by diminishing their enrolments,
4. ask for or are granted permission to operate under provincial regulations less restrictive than those applicable to public schools,
5. recruit students by offering financial or other incentives not generally available to students in public schools,
6. admit only students of higher levels of ability or achievement,
7. claim to have the right to remove students for purported violations of a special agreement and to deny further responsibility for those students,
8. seek to engage members of staff under agreements that are not subject to collective bargaining,
9. employ teachers who are not active members of the Association,
10. are dominated by any special interest group.

[1994/97/2000/03/06/09]

8.A.38 The Alberta Teachers' Association supports the incorporation of existing private schools into public school authorities subject to the following conditions:

1. All undertakings made by the public school authority and the private school relating to the incorporation of the private school into the public school authority must be documented and made publicly available on the website of the public school authority.
 2. Incorporation into the public school authority must require that the formerly private school admit students and employ teachers without injurious discrimination on the basis of race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical characteristics, disability, marital status, family status, age, ancestry, place of origin, place of residence, socioeconomic background or linguistic background.
 3. Once incorporated into the public school authority, the formerly private school must be precluded from charging tuition or extraordinary school fees or establishing any other financial requirement for admission.
 4. The public school authority must undertake to facilitate the participation of teachers in the formerly private school in the activities of both the profession and the local of the Association.
 5. The formerly private school must be able to equitably access jurisdiction resources, including financial resources.
 6. The formerly private school must be subject to board governance and policies of the public school authority.
- [2009]

8.B.8 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that all private schools meet the requirements for accreditation, including the requirements that these schools

1. implement the Alberta Program of Studies,
2. employ certificated teachers,
3. ensure student eligibility to earn credits toward an Alberta graduation diploma and
4. meet public accountability and reporting standards.

[1989/92/95/98/2001/04/07]

8.B.15 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge school boards to develop policies that implement the requirements for students' conduct contained in the School Act.

[1994/97/2000/03/06/09]

Administration of Schools

9.A.8 Schools should be organized to provide structures that ensure teacher involvement in decision making related to program development, mode of instruction, allocation of educational resources, staffing policy, use of technology and policies related to student, staff and program evaluation, and any other matters that concern teachers.

[1985/88/96/2001/06]

Nature of Teaching Profession

10.B.1 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to amend the School Act to make teachers employed by charter schools active members of the Association.

[1996/99/2002/05/08]

10.B.2 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association request that the Government of Alberta require all teachers employed in schools receiving public funds to be members of the Association and subject to the Code of Professional Conduct.

[1995/98/2001/04/07]

Diversity, Equity and Human Rights

18.A.7 The Alberta Teachers' Association fosters the development of schools as inclusive learning communities by

1. encouraging and supporting teaching practices that promote the principles of respect for diversity, equity and human rights;
 2. supporting initiatives in schools and within its locals, specialist councils and other subgroups; and
 3. building partnerships with organizations that share our values and concerns.
- [2003]

18.A.20 The public and separate school systems are publicly funded and have historical and constitutional legitimacy.
[1985/94/2004]

18.B.1 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education and Alberta school boards to adopt policies that foster the development of schools as inclusive learning communities and to address discrimination, harassment, racism or other threats to equity and human rights protection in an environment that fosters inclusive learning specific to these areas.
[2003/06/09]

Outreach Education

22.A.1 The Alberta Teachers' Association supports outreach education and recognizes its importance in providing educational opportunities for students whose needs are not met through traditional school environments.
[2009]

22.A.2 The Alberta Teachers' Association recognizes the importance for outreach education to maintain program flexibility in meeting students' diverse needs.
[2009]

22.B.2 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education to fully fund and support outreach schools' facilities, operation, maintenance and program costs.
[2009]

Appendix E

Selected Policy Statements Valuing a Publicly Funded and Adequately Resourced Public Education System

Working Conditions for Professional Service

5.A.36 No teacher should suffer a reduction in salary or in administrative status as a result of the amalgamation or regionalization of school districts or the formation of charter schools.
[1970/75/79/84/85/91/95/2001]

Education Finance

7.A.1 Funds allocated for education are an investment in human resources.
[1967/89/96/2006]

7.A.2 Financial support for education must be sufficient to permit the realization of individual, social and economic objectives.
[1967/79/89/96/2006]

7.A.4 The financing of education requires the stability of revenue that is available from large government units: federal, provincial, local.
[1967/89/96/2006]

7.A.5 To effect stability of revenue and equity of burden, funds for federal and provincial support for education must be derived from a variety of sources.
[1967/72/89/96/2006]

7.A.6 All levels of government should institute measures designed to finance education by revenue raised from a variety of sources.
[1967/70/72/77/82/89/96/2006]

7.A.8 The Government of Alberta should recognize that its priority in the financing of education must be public education at the early childhood, elementary and secondary levels.
[1969/70/71/76/81/86/89/96/2006]

7.A.9 The school financing program should be structured so that the major part of expenditure on early childhood, elementary and secondary education is borne by the Government of Alberta and implemented through a comprehensive education finance plan.
[1967/70/73/78/83/89/96/2006]

7.A.13 School jurisdictions should have the right to requisition sufficient funds to maintain a sound educational system.
[1970/71/76/81/89/96/2006]

7.A.16 The school financing program formula should recognize teachers' qualifications and experience.
[1969/72/73/78/83/89/96/2006]

7.A.17 The Department of Education should assume financial responsibility when additional resource materials and facilities are made necessary by changes in curriculum.
[1969/72/77/78/79/84/89/96/2006]

7.A.18 The classroom teacher–pupil ratio should not be increased if school boards are forced to reduce educational service due to provincial restrictions on spending.
[1976/81/89/96/2006]

7.A.34 The school financing program should fully fund the initial purchase and subsequent replacement of computer hardware and software necessary to implement the prescribed, authorized and approved program of studies.
[1990/93/96/2006]

7.A.36 The school finance program of the Department of Education should fund those school-related services provided by regional library systems.
[1986/89/92/96/2006]

7.A.38 The Government of Alberta should provide adequate funding for employment of teacher-librarians in Alberta schools.
[1989/92/95/96/2006]

7.A.40 The Government of Alberta should allocate funds to provide paid noon-hour supervisors in publicly funded schools.
[1990/93/96/99/2006]

7.A.41 The Department of Education should provide grants to local school boards for the purpose of upgrading equipment needed to support the curriculum.
[1987/90/93/96/99/2006]

7.B.10 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to provide funding for board-operated junior kindergarten and full-day kindergarten programs, including costs associated with

1. hiring a certificated teacher for each program;
2. providing for maximum class sizes of 15 for junior kindergarten, 17 for kindergarten and 15 for combined junior kindergarten and kindergarten;
3. educational resources to implement the approved program;
4. educational support services; and
5. administrative, transportation, capital, and operation and maintenance costs.

[2000/03/06/09]

7.B.13 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to allocate substantial additional increases in funding to school boards to enable them to

1. establish classroom conditions that allow teachers to meet the learning needs of all children,
2. negotiate teacher salary increases that reflect the value of the contribution made by the profession and
3. attract and retain qualified members of the teaching profession.

[2001/04/07]

7.B.14 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education to require school boards to make available to the public financial statements detailing the revenue and expenditures of funds collected through fees, fund-raising, gifts and donations for each school operated or supervised by the board, including charter schools.
[1995/98/2001/04/07]

7.B.20 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education to amend the funding framework for high schools by eliminating credit enrolment unit funding and reinstating funding based on student enrolment.
[1998/2001/04/07]

7.B.25 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to expand the provincial funding formula for school boards to reflect the cost of living in jurisdictions that have higher-than-average costs of living.

[1999/2002/05/08]

General

8.A.12 The minimum Grade 1 starting age, standardized across the province, should be six as of December 31.

[1979/84/87/94/2004/08]

8.B.7 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to standardize the normal Grade 1 entrance age throughout Alberta so that the minimum Grade 1 entrance age is six years of age as of December 31.

[1998/2001/04/07/08]

8.B.15 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge school boards to develop policies that implement the requirements for students' conduct contained in the School Act.

[1994/97/2000/03/06/09]

Early Childhood Education

13.A.2 Early childhood education is part of the total public educational system organized under school boards.

[1974/86/95/2005]

13.A.3 The primary function of kindergarten is the development of the whole child.

[1974/86/95/2004/05]

13.A.13 All teachers engaged in publicly funded early childhood services should be employees of a local school board.

[1974/86/95/2005]

13.A.16 The Department of Education is responsible for ensuring the availability of early childhood education programs through school boards.

[1974/86/95/2005]

13.A.17 All publicly funded early childhood education programs should be under the jurisdiction of school boards.

[1974/75/76/77/78/83/86/95/2005]

13.A.18 The Government of Alberta is responsible for the provision of early childhood services and for coordination at the provincial level.

[1974/86/95/2005]

13.B.1 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to fully fund and mandate school boards to provide full-day kindergarten programs taught by certificated teachers of 950 hours that are available to all children who are five years of age by December 31.

[1995/98/2001/04/07/08]

13.B.2 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to provide adequate funding to establish a maximum class size of 15 for junior kindergarten, 17 for kindergarten and 15 for combined junior kindergarten and kindergarten classes.

[2005/08]

Technology and Education

16.A.1 The Alberta Teachers' Association supports the use of technology as an instructional tool for use by teachers.
[1982/94/2004/07]

16.A.5 The Department of Education should provide sustainable funding to school jurisdictions for educational technology in the following areas:

1. Acquisition, maintenance, upgrading and replacement of technology for schools
2. Licensing, acquisitions and instructional development
3. Teacher professional development
4. Research
5. Technical support, including technical personnel

[1987/90/94/2000/04/07]

16.A.6 Certificated teaching personnel are the final authority for administration, application and monitoring of educational technology and distributed learning.

[1997/98/2001/04/07]

16.A.8 The effective use of technology in instruction requires

1. equitable access to the technology for all students,
2. equal opportunity for each student to learn,
3. evidence that the student's learning needs are appropriately met in this way,
4. the potential for technology to enhance the practice of teaching and learning,
5. an appropriate pupil-teacher ratio and teaching assignment,
6. teacher control of the instructional program and the use of the technology,
7. the opportunity for face-to-face contact with the teacher and
8. access to instructional time consistent with access to instructional time available in traditional instructional programs.

[1997/2004]

16.A.9 The teacher must be the essential element in the delivery of instruction to students via any distributed learning program.

[1990/98/2001/07]

16.A.10 The provincial and local approval of all teaching and learning resources, including digital resources, require teachers to be involved in their review, pilot and selection.

[1981/88/98/2004]

16.A.11 The essence of teaching is a personal, pedagogical relationship between teacher and student that may be assisted but not replaced by technology.

[1999/2004]

16.A.12 Decisions regarding the use of educational technology, including distributed learning, must be guided by the following principles:

1. The enhancement of teaching, learning and pedagogical relationships
2. Equity and accessibility for all students and teachers
3. The development of active, involved citizens of a democratic society
4. Feasibility and economic sustainability over time
5. Financial support without detriment to other valuable aspects of the educational system

[1999/2001/2004/07]

16.A.13 Educational technology can have a positive impact on teaching and learning when used appropriately and with the following necessary conditions in place:

1. A vision for the role of technology in public education based on humanistic and democratic principles
2. Proactive leadership to achieve the vision
3. Commitment to the central importance of the teacher's professional judgment in decisions about the use of technology
4. Identification of appropriate curriculum linkages
5. Access to technological resources that are specific to learner needs
6. Access to appropriate technology and connectivity
7. Timely access to technical support
8. Time for teachers to learn about technology and to develop technology-supported curriculum
9. Public funding that addresses the total cost of ownership for technology
10. School organization and culture that supports effective teaching and learning
11. Policies at the system and school levels that support the appropriate integration of technology
12. Acceptance of the teacher as final arbiter in the use and application of technology

[1999/2004/07]

16.A.14 Elementary and secondary curricula must include the development of critical literacy related to the role of technology in a democratic society.

[1999/2004/07]

16.A.15 BE IT RESOLVED, that face-to-face instruction is the preferred option for most students especially for those in K-9.

[2007]

16.B.20 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education to amend its funding formula to include additional funding for the purchase of assistive technology, including the necessary technical support required by students with learning barriers to enable these students to (1) more easily meet the learner outcomes of the programs of studies; (2) foster independence for those who are not on any graded curriculum; and (3) meet the goals and objectives stated in their Individual Program Plans.

[2006/09]

Education of Students with Special Needs

17.B.5 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to amend its policy on funding for special education private schools to ensure that there is no automatic right for parents to choose a private school education, paid for with public funds, for students with special needs where a program appropriate to that child's needs is available in the public system.

[1998/2001/04/07]

Public Education Facilities

20.A.1 The Alberta Teachers' Association maintains that provision of reasonable access to publicly owned education facilities is an essential element of a democratic society and believes that

1. reasonable access to public school facilities must be available to Albertans;
2. the ownership of public school facilities should be retained in the public domain;
3. the public school is a significant part of the identity of a community;

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4. the closure, construction and modernization of a school is a matter of such consequence that the closest cooperation between school authorities and the community is necessary; and

5. in planning, constructing, maintaining, modernizing and closing a school, the impact on teaching and learning should be the primary consideration.

[2003]

Appendix F Selected Policy Statements Valuing Responsibility in the Public Education System

Working Conditions for Professional Service

5.A.30 All functions of teacher's assistants related to students' educational needs should be determined and directed by the teacher.
[1970/91/99/2001]

5.A.69 Teachers should have a right to a work environment free from abuse or harassment by students or parents.
[1994/2001]

5.A.70 Safeguards essential for the protection of teachers from abuse or harassment by students or parents should include

1. a district policy for sites under its jurisdiction developed in accordance with principles established by the Association;
2. recognition of the teacher's right to know all accusers and to address all accusations;
3. a teacher evaluation system that places responsibility for the evaluation of the professional performance of the teacher on the teacher's colleagues as identified in Association policy;
4. identification of individuals convicted under the *Young Offenders Act* and in the teacher's care, including knowledge of the general nature of the offence;
5. the support of community service agencies when harassment or abuse are threatened or occur;
6. enforcement of those sections of the *School Act* dealing with student and public conduct in schools; and
7. the teacher's right to exclude from class students who (a) pose a physical safety risk to themselves or others including the teacher and (b) continue to disrupt the operation of the classroom or the learning program of other students.

[1994/96/2001]

5.B.27 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge Alberta school boards to ensure the personal safety of teachers who are at risk from student or parent behaviour.

[2003/06/09]

5.B.31 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge all levels of government to encourage appropriate conduct of parents toward teachers in an effort to ensure the overall well-being of teachers and students.

[2007]

Education Finance

7.B.1 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education to require school jurisdictions to report to the public on the use of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education funding allocation in their annual reports.

[2008]

7.B.14 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education to require school boards to make available to the public financial statements detailing the revenue and expenditures of funds collected through fees, fund-raising, gifts and donations for each school operated or supervised by the board, including charter schools.

[1995/98/2001/04/07]

General

8.A.7 In the event that the Minister of Education should choose to overturn a board's decision to expel a student, the school board should be permitted to provide an alternative form of education.

[1992/95/98/2001/04]

8.A.11 The legal framework for education should stipulate that all schools be open to inspection, teach approved curriculum, employ certificated teachers and meet safety regulations.

[1977/78/83/85/88/94/2004]

8.A.13 The following principles must be observed in the election of school trustees:

1. All electors must have equivalent representation on school boards.
2. All persons elected as school trustees shall have the same rights and obligations in regard to school matters.

[1986/94/2004]

8.A.25 The Alberta Teachers' Association advocates the formation of parent-teacher partnerships that

1. are based on mutual respect, honesty, openness, trust, and shared goals and responsibility for student learning;
2. involve the mutual recognition of rights, responsibilities and accountability;
3. foster the development of attitudes, understandings, and skills in effective communication and collaboration; and
4. demonstrate a strong commitment on the part of all of the education participants through time and resource allocation as well as collaborative effort.

[1997/2004]

8.A.32 School boards should adopt and monitor the implementation of guidelines that emphasize the advisory and collaborative role of school councils.

8.B.3 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to ensure that education governance continues to be provided by publicly elected school boards.

[1994/97/2000/03/06/09]

Administration of Schools

9.A.7 Educational policy decisions in schools should be made collegially by teachers, who, in making the decisions, would consider advice provided by the school council.

[1986/96/2006]

Teachers' Assistants

12.A.1 Teachers' assistants are those persons other than teachers who directly assist individual or groups of teachers in achieving educational objectives.

[1973/85/93]

12.A.2 Permitting teachers' assistants to assume any professional responsibilities of teachers is educationally unsound.

[1973/93]

12.A.3 Specific functions and duties of teachers' assistants should be determined by the teacher to whose class the teacher's assistant is assigned rather than by statute or departmental regulation.

[1971/73/75/78/83/85/93/2003]

12.B.1 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge school jurisdictions to develop enforceable standards of conduct for noncertificated staff and volunteers.
[1996/99/2002/05/08]

12.B.2 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education to develop regulations that set standards for the role, supervision and evaluation of paraprofessionals or assistants employed by school boards.
[2005/08]

Educational Accountability

21.A.1 The Alberta Teachers' Association believes that educational accountability

1. is the process through which the partners in the education system each take responsibility for their actions and report to those who are entitled to the information and
 2. includes an obligation to improve the capacity and performance of all those responsible to achieve the broad goals of education.
- [2006/08]

21.A.2 The Alberta Teachers' Association recognizes the following principles of an effective education accountability system:

1. Education partners have a shared understanding of and commitment to fairness, openness, respect for diversity and stewardship, which are key values underlying accountability in education.
2. The primary purpose of accountability in education is to support the broad goals of education and the diverse learning needs of children and youth.
3. Information for accountability purposes is gathered in a variety of ways from all relevant sources, and reported and used in ways that respect the limitations of the data.
4. Sound educational research and practice guide the design and implementation of an accountability system in education.
5. Accountability in education enhances the capacity of education partners to fulfill their respective roles and responsibilities and leads to sustained improvement of the system.
6. Each education partner is accountable for those areas of the system within its authority and expertise.
7. The system of accountability in education is evaluated on an ongoing basis.

[2006/08]

Appendix G

A Response to Alberta Education's Charter School Discussion Paper

Alberta's charter school movement began in May 1994 as Bill 19, *School Amendment Act, 1994*, was proclaimed into law. Through this legislation, Alberta became the first Canadian province to experiment with the concept of charter schools and, in so doing, to set the stage for a shift away from a universal public education system. The ideology and climate of this era were such that cutbacks were used as a mechanism to rapidly transform and reshape the education system. However, with the gift of time, we now see that the charter school movement has failed to achieve its primary goals of increasing choice and innovation within the education system. Choice has been relegated to the urban centres, and innovative practices remain unrealized.

Since their establishment, charter schools were intended to be a mechanism to stimulate innovation throughout the education system. As an Alberta Education study on the impact of charter schools indicates, "one of the original purposes of charter schools was that they would be centres of innovation and would share innovations with the rest of the system. This purpose has largely not been realized"². Such a failure must not go unnoticed, as the charter school concept continues to drain financial resources away from a robust public education system and fragments an education system designed for all.

One dimension of the public education system that has been internationally recognized as promoting innovation is the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI). According to Andy Hargreaves and his colleagues, AISI represents a model of change in educational practice that has "rekindled innovation and professional respect . . . largely addresses the urgent and focused emphasis on learning and achievement for all students [and has] reenergized professionals"³. However, AISI also draws attention to the role targeted grants have played in adding significant funds over the past decade to both charter and private schools. For example, in the 280-plus approved projects for Cycle 4 of AISI (2009–12), 105 projects represent the compelling needs of public school authorities (including charter schools), and 180 projects support private schools. Not only has the charter school experiment failed to act as a catalyst for innovation, but it also continues to draw on public subsidization through targeted school improvement and technology grants from Alberta Education.

In discussing a vision for charter schools, Alberta Education imagines that "the next generation of charter schools would act as pilots or incubators and could let the Minister test the best of these ideas. . . . [C]harter school teachers and administrators could play a more significant role in the professional development of . . . teachers and administrators in other schools"². This new vision represents an outdated approach to 21st century learning and builds upon a mechanistic and simplistic view of schools as clinical laboratories. Contemporary educational research on school improvement and educational change recognizes educational contexts as complex and dynamic entities in which a learner (embedded in a collective) is always in constant change. Therefore, a view of educational change and professional development through controlled scientific experimentation, in which a universal constant truth exists that need only be deduced to its essence and then disseminated, is a notion full of naiveté and far removed from educational research. This new vision from Alberta Education would also clearly reshape our education system into "have" and "have-not" learning spaces and professionals. Indeed, it represents a regressive understanding of educational practice that stands in stark contrast to the research and known strengths of our internationally renowned public education system.

² Alberta Education. 2007. *Charter School Concept Paper: Consideration of a Vision for the Future of Charter Schools*. Edmonton, Alta: Alberta Education.

³ Hargreaves, A, R Crocker, B Davis, L McEwan, P Sahlberg, D Shirley, D Sumara and M Hughes. 2009. *The Learning Mosaic: A Multiple Perspectives Review of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI)*. Edmonton, Alta: Alberta Education. Also available at <http://education.alberta.ca/admin/aisi/new.aspx> (accessed October 21, 2009).

Appendix H

A Research Study of Teachers' Workload in Alberta Distributed Learning Environments: Flexibility, Accessibility & Permeable Boundaries—Executive Summary (October 2008)

Authorized by the 2007 Annual Representative Assembly of the Alberta Teachers' Association, this study focused on determining what constitutes an acceptable workload in a distributed learning environment in order to ensure an optimal teaching and learning environment. The ever-changing technologies used by distributed learning teachers make their teaching environment quite different from that of conventional classroom teachers. A major conclusion of the study is that, in reality, there is no such entity as a "distributed learning teacher." Instead, there are teachers who work with students in a variety of distributed learning environments. This finding is consistent with the Association's long-standing policy that all its members are "teachers first."

The researchers involved in this study, Dr Philip McRae and Dr Stanley Varnhagen, have produced their final report entitled *A Study of Alberta Teachers' Working Conditions in Distributed Learning Environments: Flexibility, Accessibility & Permeable Boundaries*.

Introduction

This study examined the experience of Alberta teachers in a distributed (or distance) learning environment with respect to such matters as workload, amount of technical and administrative support, opportunities for professional development and collegial support. For the purposes of this study, teaching in a distributed learning environment was defined as providing instruction that relies primarily on such indirect modes of teacher–student interaction as correspondence, online learning, blended learning, teleconferencing and videoconferencing—in short, on approaches designed to render the learning experience more flexible in terms of time and place than traditional classroom instruction. However, the focus group activities demonstrated that the term "distributed learning" is ambiguous. People who work primarily with print-based resources, for example, may use the term differently than those who work in an online context and use digital resources.

To oversee the study, the Association established a Distributed Learning Working Group consisting of Dr J-C Couture (staff), Karen B Campbell (Pembina Hills), Edna M Dack (Elk Island Public), C Pat Jackson (Pembina Hills), Esther L Kupsch (Pembina Hills), Dave N Levitt (Park Plains East) and Frank M McCallum (Pembina Hills). The Association contracted Dr Philip McRae (Director of Alberta Initiative for School Improvement, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta) and Dr Stanley Varnhagen (Director of Learning Solutions, Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta) to carry out the research. Bradley Arkison and Leigh Yang, researchers with Learning Solutions, an evaluation unit of the Faculty of Extension at the University of Alberta, provided research support.

Methodology

Initial data for the study came from an anonymous online survey that the researchers developed with input from the working group and advice from Helene Fournier, project director for Alberta Education's Distributed Learning Strategy. The study was made available online from February 1 to March 27, 2008. In addition to linking to the study from its website, the Association drew members' attention to the study by announcing it in the *ATA News*, mentioning it at teachers' conventions, promoting it on listservs and networking with the Educational Technology Council. A total of 232 people responded to the survey.

Additional data came from four focus groups that the researchers organized in the spring of 2008, after the online survey was taken down. These focus groups, two of which took place in Calgary and two in Edmonton, consisted of respondents to the online survey who had expressed an interest in discussing their teaching and learning conditions

in more depth. A total of 40 people participated in these four groups. In addition to filling out a written questionnaire, focus-groups participants took part in small- and large-group discussions. The following four questions asked in the questionnaire were also the focus of the discussion groups:

1. How can distributed learning in Alberta be improved to enhance your working conditions?
2. In regard to distributed learning and your working conditions, what specifically should the ATA be advocating for on your behalf?
3. How should technology be used to support distributed learning?
4. What advice would you share with educators who are about to teach in a distributed learning environment for the first time?

Demographics of the Sample Population

The research sample displayed the following characteristics:

- *Gender*: Predominately female (64 per cent female versus 36 per cent male). Females were slightly overrepresented in the sample compared with the overall teaching population in Alberta.
- *Age*: Predominately older (77.9 per cent were 36 years of age or older).
- *Location*: Predominately rural (67 per cent rural versus 33 per cent urban).
- *Assignments*: Predominately teachers (approximately 75 per cent were teachers versus 25 per cent who were either administrators or teacher/administrators).
- *Overall Teaching Experience*: Predominately highly experienced (70 per cent had 10 or more years of teaching experience).
- *Experience in a Distributed Learning Setting*: Predominately inexperienced (81 per cent had nine or fewer years of experience in a distributed learning environment).

Findings

Distributed learning is not an adequate term to describe the uniqueness of the work we do. . . . [M]any people are [still] trying to work and plan in a “boundary” familiar [educational] setting and our work is “boundless” by nature.

— Focus group participant

Because the total number of teachers involved in distributed learning in Alberta is unknown, the researchers were unable to calculate the response rate to the survey. As a result, any conclusions drawn from the study, while valid for the study participants, cannot be applied *with certainty* to the population of distributed learning teachers as a whole. Nevertheless, the number of responses received (232) was significant enough that the experiences reported by the participants with respect to their work environment likely bear at least some similarity to those of other distributed learning teachers in the province.

A number of key findings, themes and issues resonated across the survey and focus-group conversations. These findings were identified through an analysis of the survey results and further elaborated upon via four provincial focus-group conversations. When crosstabs (the examination of two variables together) were performed, only results that were both statistically ($p < .05$) and practically significant have been reported. The researchers drew the following conclusions about the working conditions of teachers in the sample population. The key findings that follow are *not* ranked in any particular order.

Teaching in a Distributed Learning Environment Is a Positive Experience

A majority of respondents find the experience of working in a distributed learning environment to be a positive one, especially in terms of such factors as their level of responsibility in the school, their professional autonomy, their job security and the amount of clerical support that they receive. Rural instructors are more likely than their urban counterparts to view teaching in a distributed learning environment positively.

Degrees of Satisfaction with Workplace

Most respondents reported that, in general, their workplace supports student learning. Respondents were most satisfied with the professional autonomy that they experience in a distributed learning environment and least satisfied with the number of students that they are expected to teach and with the concomitant workload.

Professional Identity and Misperceptions

People not involved in the distributed learning process—including other teachers and administrators, and students—tend to regard distributed learning as “second-class” and/or lacking the rigor of regular classroom instruction.

Establishing Professional Boundaries

Many respondents reported that establishing boundaries between their professional and their personal lives is more difficult for them than for traditional classroom teachers. The absence of set hours and a specific structure sets up the expectation that distributed learning teachers will teach more students, develop their own course content and keep their courses up to date.

Levels of Support

Respondents were generally more satisfied with the support they receive for tasks directly related to student learning (such as instructing and interacting with and evaluating students) than with the support they receive for such non-instructional activities as designing course materials, obtaining relevant professional development, and making decisions about firewalls and filters.

Problematic Funding Approaches

Alberta Education’s approach to student funding is largely based on a traditional classroom model and, for that reason, seldom takes into account such unique factors as the mobility of distributed learning students (many of whom split their time between conventional schooling and distributed learning), the fact that such students may register any time during the year, the low completion rate of these students, and the fairly high number of home-schooled students and student with special needs.

Teacher Education Programs

Even though teaching by means of distributed learning differs significantly from classroom-based methods, it was perceived that undergraduate teacher education programs (including the field experiences component) currently offer only limited preparation for teachers interested in this method of delivery.

Professional Learning Opportunities

Teachers already teaching in a distributed learning environment have relatively few formal opportunities for professional development related to distributed learning technologies.

Resources, Curriculum and Course Development

When the curriculum is revised, the development of related course materials in a format that supports distributed learning lags significantly behind the development of resources for use in a traditional classroom setting.

Diversity in the Distributed Learning Student Population

Students who enrol in distributed learning are becoming increasingly diverse in terms of their requisite digital literacy, linguistic abilities (e.g., English as a second language students) and unique academic, social, medical and emotional needs.

Staffing Issues

Because teaching in a distributed learning environment involves unique skills, finding substitute teachers who can easily pick up when the regular teacher is away is extremely difficult.

Access to Technologies

Access to the technology required to support distributed learning varies widely throughout the province and, even in urban areas, is not optimal. The fact that an instructor has access to the latest technologies is no guarantee that his or her students will have the same access either from their home or school.

Web 2.0 Technologies

New interactive technologies (sometimes called Web 2.0 technologies) such as wikis, blogging and podcasting, although ideally suited to distributed learning contexts, are not widely used. Factors that impede the adoption of these technologies are the lack of professional development concerning their use (recognizing the relatively new nature of these technologies), the lack of infrastructure and the associated hardware and software costs.

Videoconferencing Technologies

Although the infrastructure to support videoconferencing is available, a majority of respondents (more than 75 per cent) noted that videoconferencing is still not widely used in distributed learning environments. Possible reasons for the low usage are (1) a lack of efficacy on the part of some students to learn in this context, (2) timetable conflicts among schools in a district, (3) the perception that videoconferencing is an initiative driven by factors outside of the local school jurisdiction (e.g., government) rather than the jurisdiction and (4) the need for students to leave home and travel to the videoconferencing location (i.e., videoconference suite).

As the voice of the teaching profession in Alberta, the Association looks forward to the ongoing dialogue related to the future of distributed learning in the province. This report will be a key element in facilitating these discussions.

The Association would like to extend a sincere thank-you to the University of Alberta research team and the numerous teachers who took part in both the online survey and the focus groups. A special thank-you to members of the Distributed Learning Working Group whose expertise and advice were invaluable to the research team.