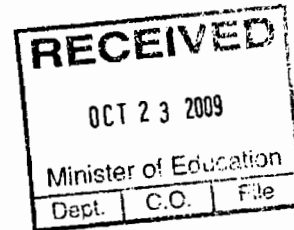




21 October 2009

Honourable Dave Hancock  
Minister of Education, Government House Leader  
Member of Executive Council  
Executive Branch  
224 Legislature Building 10800 - 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6



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Dear Minister Hancock,

On behalf of the Board and Senior Administration of Parkland School Division #70, I am pleased to be able to respond to your invitation to be a partner in the process of developing a new Education Act that will provide the framework for developing our Alberta Education system. We need a framework which will allow education and schooling to grow in new and more flexible directions to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner.

In general, the Board agrees that the five foundational statements provide an appropriate framework for new legislation. On the attached chart I have, with the able assistance of our Superintendent, Mary Lynne Campbell, summarized our discussion on each statement in the hope that these comments will guide you in your task.

The Distributed Decision-Making Model (attached) which Parkland School Division has employed for the past 16 years has enabled the robust, flexible, responsive learning environment that encourages success for every child. It is not to be confused with Site Based Decision-Making, which does not necessarily carry the same responsiveness or accountability.

Having recently participated in one of the most amazing forums of my career, Inspiring Education, I hope that you and your government colleagues have the courage to change the current model and give our students the Alberta Advantage they will need to assure prosperity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In conclusion, we applaud your leadership and will continue to support and assist you in any way we can.

Sincerely

Richard Gilchrist  
Board Chair

RG/ds

c/ Board of Trustees  
Senior Executive  
The Honourable Doug Horner, Minister of Advanced Education and Training  
The Honourable Fred Lindsay, Solicitor General  
Heather Wellwood, President, ASBA  
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# School Act Review

## Foundation Statement

1. All Alberta children have a superseding right of access to the ECS-12 public education system which is not dependent on where they reside.
2. Students should be able to access instruction at any time, any place, and at their own pace.
3. Student success is the primary goal of the education system and government has a responsibility to provide the structure and supports to maximize it.

## Parkland Recommendations

- Access should apply equally to all publically funded / supported school jurisdictions ;
- Access will need to continue to have some limitations related to resource availability and accommodation;
- Students need to remain the centre of decisions regarding placements, rather than the allocation of dollars driving those decisions;
- Consideration needs to be given to the impact that access will have, given current rural de-population trends;
- Learning sites need to be more flexible to meet the changing needs of learners.
- School entry ages should provide multiple entry points for early learners, rather than arbitrary grades;
- Outcomes should be measured on the basis of learner readiness (online testing) rather than the current provincial testing schedule;
- Time should be the variable, learning the constant – thus eliminate the 950 hours / 1000 hours requirements;
- Targetted outcomes should be identified and measured, rather than the current structured grade configurations;
- Define school leaving outcomes and competencies rather than a school leaving age;
- Learning should measure the creative aspect of student progress rather than the single dimension outcomes.
- Student success should be the primary goal of all government departments engaged in working with / supporting young people;
- All partners at the table need to bring resources to support the important work of educating and growing good citizens;
- Wrap around services can be provided to students, provided all partners share the same values (example: Parkland Sunrise Support Program);
- School Jurisdictions can serve as the ‘case manager’ of the wrap around service programs for students and families;

- Early intervention is critical to student success, thus 30 month screening of children in all community centres needs to be reinstated;
  - Once a child has identified needs the team assigned to the student and family at 30 months, should follow the student into / through the public school system.
4. The connection of locally elected school authorities to their communities is an important element of our public education system. Government has a responsibility to support maximizing trustee and board competence, and to set provincial standards for the roles and responsibilities of boards.
- Further regionalization will not strengthen, but will sever the close connection that currently exists between the locally elected Trustees and their constituents;
  - Children are not commodities – they are individuals whom need those closest to them (Trustees, family, staff and students where appropriate) making the decisions regarding programming and resource allocations;
  - The election of local Trustees needs to continue;
  - Provision may be made for the ‘appointment’ of Service Department representatives – such as Health Services, Childrens Services, Justice – as members of the Board of Trustees;
  - Said appointees, should be selected by the locally elected Trustees, through a posting / interview / appointment process;
  - Appointee terms should align with the election of the local Trustees;
  - Locally elected Boards alone should be able to hire their own CEO / Superintendent;
  - Consideration might be given to the creation of an Education Ombudsman – one whom would provide parents with an avenue of appeal as per the provisions of the School Act, Section 123;
  - Government has a role in providing expert advice to Boards and Trustees to help them maximize their competence.
5. There must be a balance between local autonomy and fiscal responsibility.
- Locally elected Boards should be granted Natural Person Status;
  - Locally elected Boards should be charged with the authority / responsibility to determine the placement and type of instructional space required within their school communities;
  - Move decisions regarding Capital funding back into the hands of locally elected Trustees;
  - The creation of instructional spaces will need to driven by the advent of new learning / teaching experiences, rather than the current ‘in the box’ design of school facilities.



# Distributed Decision-Making

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The Parkland School Division Board of Trustees believes that a resilient, effective organization is managed best by employing all expertise, knowledge and resources available. Therefore, the Board is committed to an organization that is based on a distributed decision-making model.

The Superintendent shall determine the distribution of decision-making responsibility throughout the organization based on the following guiding beliefs:

1. The distribution of decision-making responsibility will create, and draw upon, leadership capacity within our organization.
2. The Division's staff will have the responsibility to make decisions about activities within the scope of their authority.
3. Individuals who have critical knowledge and expertise about a certain activity are best suited to make the necessary decisions regarding how to best achieve the goals and objectives for that activity.
4. Decision-making responsibility must be supported by equitable resource allocation.
5. Equity is established through a process of collaboration and consensus building.
6. External and internal conditions affecting an organization must be shared to all parties engaged in decision making.

Distribution of Decision-Making responsibility shall encompass the following guiding principles:

1. Those who are closest to the activity will have the major influence in decision-making surrounding that activity.
2. Informed decisions will be made with attention to balancing choice, responsibility, and accountability, while maintaining alignment with the organization's mission, vision and principles.
3. Individuals will accept responsibility for their decisions.