

# Putting students first



## ALBERTA'S NEW EDUCATION ACT

Alberta's new Education Act is a significant step toward bringing to life the vision for education that thousands of Albertans like you shared with us through Inspiring Education and subsequent consultations. The Act will help us ensure that all Alberta children get a chance to reach their full potential and become engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit.

All Alberta students deserve a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe place to go to school, a place where bullying is simply not tolerated. Alberta families deserve options about what kind of educational experience is right for them and their children. The Education Act provides that and helps ensure your children have the supports and environments they need to succeed.

The Education Act is the first legislation in Canada to formally recognize the role of parents as a child's first and most important teacher. Our new legislation recognizes that all partners in education – students, parents, teachers, school boards and government – must work together for Alberta to maintain the best education system in the world.

## HIGHLIGHTS

The Education Act emphasizes the shared responsibilities of students, parents and school boards.

### Students

- » Should contribute to a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment, including reporting bullying – no matter where it happens or who is to blame.
- » Should be active participants in their learning and the education of those around them.
- » Should actively pursue their own educational success.

### Parents

- » Are the primary guides and decision-makers with respect to their child's education.
- » Must take an active role in their child's education.
- » Have choice in education, including public schools, separate schools, Francophone schools, charter schools, private schools and home education programs.
- » Have the right to be kept informed about their child's education by those with information to share: teachers, administrators, the school board and government.

### School Boards and Trustees

- » Must help children and their families feel welcomed and supported and provide specialized supports and services to students regardless of disability, economic circumstances, location or cultural background.
- » Must collaborate with post-secondary institutions and the community to enable smooth transitions for students from secondary school to post-secondary education and/or the workforce.
- » Trustees must fulfil the responsibilities of the board and comply with the board's code of conduct.
- » Trustees must engage parents, students and the community on matters related to education.



## WHAT'S NEW?

What's changing	What it means
Defines new responsibilities of students, parents, school boards and trustees	The Education Act sets out responsibilities for students, parents, teachers, principals, school boards and trustees.
It is the responsibility of schools and school boards to provide all students and staff with a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe environment.	Boards must develop policies that address bullying in and out of school and online. Boards are expected to share these policies and the consequences of unacceptable behaviour with students, teachers and parents. Boards must provide support for those who are bullied as well as those who engage in bullying behaviour.
Every child 6 years old or older as of Sept. 1 in a year and younger than 17 must attend school.	The compulsory attendance age rises to 17 from 16 to encourage more Alberta students to complete high school.
The age limit for access to publicly funded education has been increased to include individuals younger than 21 as of Sept. 1.	Students will have until age 21 to complete high school within the publicly funded education system. This increase will also give students needing specialized supports and services more time to be successful in their education programs.
References an inclusive education system and provision of specialized supports and services rather than using the term "special education."	Boards and schools have more flexibility in delivering a continuum of specialized supports and services to students with identified needs within a collaborative and inclusive education system.
School boards will have natural person powers	Natural person powers provide school boards with the authority to do any legal thing a natural person may do except when specifically prohibited by the Act or by regulation. Natural person powers gives boards more administrative flexibility to deliver educational programming.
Boards will have greater flexibility in determining the transportation needs of students and the services they provide.	The 2.4-kilometer walk limit will be removed from legislation allowing boards to be more responsive to the needs of their community when determining how to provide safe and appropriate transportation for their students.

## OTHER CHANGES

The Education Act includes several other provisions including updated processes for establishing separate school districts; clearer definitions of independent and resident students; and provides revised criteria for establishment of charter schools.

With the passage of the Education Act, we will be reviewing the corresponding regulations and policies. Stay tuned to find out how you can be part of the conversation. For more information on the regulatory review and other changes contained in Alberta's new *Education Act*, please visit: <http://www.education.alberta.ca/educationact>.

