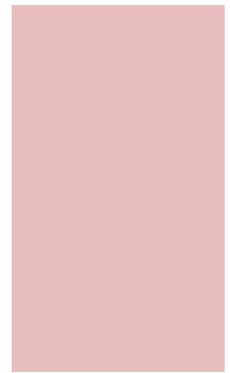

Education

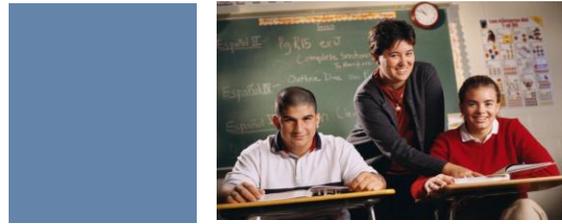
Alberta's Education Action Plan



Wildrose Alliance Caucus

Get it Right!

Education



Ensuring Alberta's children have access to a world class education is one of the most important roles provincial government can play in building our province.

In partnership with the important core values taught by parents, education provides a launching point for a healthy and contributing citizen. To deny a child a proper education is to greatly increase the risk of losing that child to ignorance, poverty and crime.

Locally-Based Decisions

The provincial government currently spends more per capita than any other province on education. The problem is that hundreds of millions of these dollars are wasted and often misallocated by what has become a massive centralized bureaucracy at the Legislature.

As we have seen with the new Alberta Health Superboard, placing control of program and service delivery in the hands of large centralized bureaucracies is a recipe for disaster.

Even more disturbing has been the current PC Government's track record of selecting new school sites based on politics rather than actual need.

It is far more transparent, efficient and effective to decentralize decision making into the hands of parents, local schools, and elected school boards. They best understand the needs of their students and would never think to play politics with our children's welfare.



Freedom to Choose

A distinguishing and important feature of Alberta's education system is that it provides parents with a greater range of educational choices than other jurisdictions in North America.

Although strong public schools are critical to our education system, Catholic schools, charter schools, private schools and home-schooling provide educational opportunities and teaching methods that are sometimes unavailable in our public system.

In fact, our public schools have responded to competition from Catholic, charter, home and private schooling by rolling out a diverse range of excellent core and optional courses that are benefiting students across Alberta.

Continuing to foster a culture of educational choice, innovation and competition will pay dividends for our teachers, parents and children for decades to come.

Did you know?

- The Edmonton Public School Board implemented an 'open boundary' system in 1974. The "Edmonton Model" is touted by public education specialists across North America.

Our Next Generation



Respecting Individuality

As most teachers and parents well know, the traditional classroom model of a teacher lecturing students of the same age is outdated.

This system often results in gifted students having their potential restricted by peers who may not learn as quickly, while students who have not grasped key concepts are moved on to higher grades and more complicated subject matter regardless of whether or not they are ready.

This can result in frustration, the domination of a teacher's time by a few struggling students, perpetual poor grades, and even behavioural problems.

Furthermore, all students respond to different teaching methods in different ways. The standard classroom lecture model may work well for some students, but for others it results in a constant battle to comprehend and learn.

Fortunately, emerging technologies and teaching methods makes it possible to centre teaching on the learning needs of each individual student. Taking advantage of these educational advances will ensure our children are able to learn at the right pace and in the right way for them, rather than participating in the traditional one-size-fits-all approach.



Support for Special Needs Students

Thousands of Alberta parents have children with special learning needs.

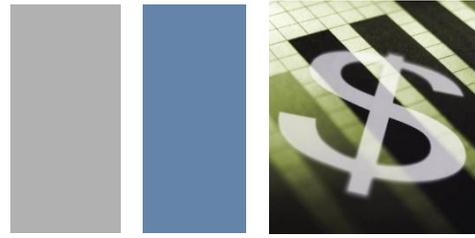
It is absolutely critical that we ensure these students and their parents are provided with the funding necessary to address these challenges as early as possible in a child's development. Failure to do so can have catastrophic consequences for the child, the child's family, and will result in massive costs to taxpayers down the road.

Unfortunately, the PC Government continues to fail to take sensible action on this issue.

Often, special needs funding is difficult to access, parents and teachers have a limited say in how it is best utilized, and there is a cost-cutting movement being undertaken to force special needs children to be integrated into regular class settings without proper supports despite the adverse learning effects such arrangements have on both regular and special needs students.



Building our Future



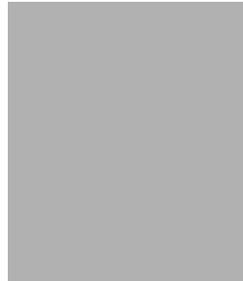
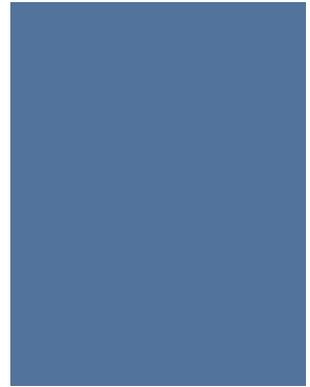
What can be done?

Alberta students and parents deserve better. A Wildrose Government would strengthen our K-12 education system by implementing the following reforms:

- *Empower individual public, Catholic and charter schools by implementing a funding model that sends per-student operational and maintenance funding directly to the school each student attends. Individual schools will then be able to determine how to allocate those resources most appropriately (i.e. more teachers, new equipment, etc).*
- *Transfer decision-making authority concerning the building of new schools away from the provincial government and place it squarely in the hands of locally elected school boards. This would be done by implementing a publicly disclosed and objective funding formula that grants capital funds directly to local school boards based on student enrollment, school utilization rates, student growth projections and other relevant factors.*
- *Establish multiple pilot projects across the province where open-enrollment and tuition-free public, Catholic and charter schools are permitted to opt into a competency-based learning and assessment education model. Students in these schools will have the opportunity to learn at a pace and in a way that is tailored to their individual needs and will not move on to more advanced material until they have demonstrated strong understanding of previously taught subject matter. Students who learn at an accelerated pace under this system will also be able to obtain college and university level course credit while still in high school.*
- *Grant public, Catholic and charter schools more flexibility to offer a specialized curriculum track in the trades, arts, music, physical education and business.*



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- *Protect a parent's right to choose what school their child attends (public, Catholic, charter, private or homeschooling) and continue the current Alberta Education practice of permitting per pupil funding to directly follow a student to a private school of the parent's choice if desired.*
 - *Mandate the public reporting of each school's graduation rate and overall subject-by-subject assessment results so parents have the information they need to make informed decisions regarding their child's education.*
 - *Work with teachers and other educational professionals to replace the outdated and inadequate Provincial Achievement Tests (PAT) with a new standardized assessment model that evaluates a student's actual improvement and comprehension of subject matter, and more effectively identifies where further learning is required. It is also important to ensure teachers are provided with the professional development training necessary to implement such a model.*
 - *Ensure students are properly assessed and any special learning needs identified as early as possible in a child's development, and mandate that adequate funding follow each special needs student to the institution of that child's parent's choice to be used in a way that the parent and the school's learning support team feels will best meet the individual needs of the child.*
 - *End the practice of forcing special needs students to attend the same classrooms as regular students unless it is clearly beneficial. High needs students generally need personalized care and attention and it is unhelpful for all involved to have a handful of high needs students dominating the time and attention of teachers and other students.*



For more information, please visit: www.wildrosealliancecaucus.ca