

# **PUBLIC EDUCATION**

[2022]

## **Fundamental Beliefs**

The primary purpose of schools is to educate all students. In Alberta, *public education* refers to public, separate and francophone education. The public, separate and francophone school systems are publicly funded and have historical and constitutional legitimacy. Attitudes toward public education have been shaped by values related to equal access to high-quality education and resources and a respect for cultural pluralism. The Association supports publicly elected school authorities being responsible for governing education in Alberta.

## **Denominational Schools**

The Association recognizes the historical and constitutional legitimacy of Roman Catholic separate school authorities and the denominational education they provide and considers them a vital component of Alberta's public education system.

## **Alternative Public Education Programs**

Alternative schools and alternative programs within the public education system exist to meet the needs of students who have not experienced success in regular school programs. Alternative schools and alternative programs should be designed to meet learning needs and address learning differences, should demonstrate a net educational benefit to students, should be financially and administratively feasible without additional fees, should avoid privileging one segment of society and should adhere to the basic principles of public education by being publicly funded and universally accessible to all students.

## **Language Education**

### **1. Right to Education in a Minority Language**

The Association supports Alberta parents in exercising their right to have their children educated in either official language. The Association believes that all students who are entitled under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to receive French first language instruction and who require additional assistance to learn that language should be appropriately funded to do so. The Association recognizes the right of francophones to manage their own school divisions in the publicly funded system. The Association must be a partner in the development of legislation and regulations governing the management and control of French minority language education by francophones.

### **2. Second Language Instruction**

The Association believes that funding should be provided for students in Grades 4–9 to study at least one language in addition to their primary language of instruction. School authorities offering immersion or bilingual programs in languages other than English should employ, at the school and system levels, personnel fluent in the target language, including at least one teacher with a principal designation or a system leader who can provide assistance, professional development, and supervision and evaluation to teaching staff.

## **Private Schools, Charter Schools and Home Schooling**

The Association believes that education in Alberta should be delivered through public, separate and francophone school divisions. The Government of Alberta should not fund private schools, as this diverts essential funds away from public schools. To promote equity and consistency, charter schools, private schools and home-schooling should be subject to the same government requirements, regulations and accountability measures that apply to schools in the public system. For example, the Government of Alberta should ensure that charter and private schools meet the following requirements for full accreditation: use the Alberta program of studies, employ certificated teachers, ensure that students are eligible to earn credits toward an Alberta graduation diploma, adhere to the same measures and reporting standards as required of public schools and be operated by a nonprofit society. The Association opposes the establishment of publicly funded charter schools that exclude students on any basis that violates human rights legislation, threaten the survival of local public schools by diminishing their enrolments, operate under provincial regulations that are less restrictive than those applicable to public schools or recruit students by offering

financial or other incentives not generally available to students in public schools. When specific conditions are met, the Association supports the incorporation of private schools into public school authorities.

## **Conclusion**

The strength of Alberta's public education system is its ability to provide universal high-quality education to all learners, while addressing the diversity of learning needs that exist among students.