



The Alberta Teachers' Association

Agenda for Public Education

January 2007

Public education fosters the development of individuals, communities and society. The following conditions must be in place to ensure that all children have the opportunity to learn through a rich and demanding curriculum with appropriate assistance and support.



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Students need

- 1) **Needs-based funding** that ensures all children have the opportunity to succeed.
 - This funding is sustained and predictable, allows for long-range planning, and eliminates the need for school fees, fundraising and corporate donations. School divisions that rely on school fees, fundraising and corporate donations are creating inequities based on the abilities and socioeconomic status of parents.
- 2) **Small classes** that allow for individualized programming, differentiated instruction and individual assessment.
 - Maximum class sizes of 17 in K–3, 23 in Grades 4–6, 25 in Grades 7–9 and 27 in Grades 10–12.
- 3) **Extra resources** (time and assistance) for those whose first language is not English or those who have an English language deficiency.
 - Schools must provide services as needed on a case-by-case basis. Full funding (no caps) for English as a second language students, coupled with recognition of students with an English language deficiency, would enable teachers to effectively meet the needs of these students.
- 4) **Support** in the regular classroom for students with special needs so their learning needs can be met.
 - To meet the diverse needs of these students, teachers need access to qualified teacher assistants; access to learning resources, material and equipment; professional development and preparation focused on special needs; full funding for special education; and coordinated services in both the school and community.
- 5) **A full complement of teaching staff** in schools.
 - Teacher-librarians and guidance counsellors need to be accessible to all students.
- 6) **Accredited teaching assistants** with recognized diplomas or certificates.
 - Every student is entitled to instruction from highly qualified teachers; however, a qualified teacher assistant can provide much needed assistance to ensure that the instruction is left to the teacher.
- 7) **Comprehensive early intervention programs** and support for families to ensure that all children come to school ready to learn.
 - Comprehensive programs with enhanced screening processes need to be available through communities and schools to ensure early identification and treatment of all at-risk children.



- 8) **Prekindergarten** for those children who would benefit.
 - Children facing challenges such as English as a second language, fetal alcohol syndrome or below age-appropriate skills would benefit from prekindergarten programs.
- 9) **Full-day kindergarten** for those children who would benefit.
 - Investments in providing high-quality early childhood development programs create long-term benefits for children and society.
- 10) **Partnership with other service providers**, including Health and Wellness, Justice, Children's Services, Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, psycho-educational assessment organizations and others.
 - Students learn best when they can focus on their studies. Social, health and community services should be coordinated to meet the physical, emotional and developmental needs of students.
- 11) **Diagnostic testing**, aided by district support services, to identify student needs and allow problems to be remedied.
 - Classroom teachers can best identify specific areas of concern for their students. Classroom teachers working with district staff can best remedy identified challenges.
- 12) **Adequate and safe facilities.**
 - Students need schools that are safe from structural and electrical deficiencies; free from toxic mould and other dangers; and cleaned and maintained properly by appropriately staffed onsite caretakers. Where needed, new schools must be built.

Teachers need

- 1) **High-quality teacher education programs** at universities.
 - Professional faculties of Alberta universities should provide teacher education programs that incorporate and integrate a balance of high-quality undergraduate teacher education programs with strong field experience components, service to the professional teaching community through continuing professional development opportunities, and established research and graduate programs.
- 2) **Class sizes and class compositions** that allow teachers, as professionals, to meet students' needs.
 - Students who develop a relationship with their teachers are more likely to achieve success in school. Teachers with large or complex classes do not have the time to develop relationships with all of their students.

- 3) **A collaborative partnership between the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Alberta government.**
 - Government needs to provide structures that are genuine, collegial, consultative and facilitative, and give teachers meaningful, ongoing and effective input into the government initiatives affecting them.
- 4) **A collaborative partnership with parents**
 - Students are more successful when parents and teachers work together.
- 5) **Time** to meet with their professional colleagues to examine education issues.
 - Teachers need to be part of professional learning communities and have access to action research projects such as the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement.
- 6) **Continued investment of both time and resources** and ongoing, multifaceted professional development, including technology support.
 - Teachers should strive to improve their professional practice and should have access to professional development opportunities and resources to assist them in this endeavour.
- 7) **Recognition of their professionalism** by placing teachers in charge of student assessment and evaluation.
 - Research clearly shows that teachers' professional judgment of student progress is a much stronger predictor of success than a student's performance on single large-scale examinations such as provincial achievement tests.
- 8) **A strong profession**
 - In order to attract and retain quality professionals, teachers need competitive remuneration and classroom conditions that facilitate optimum opportunities for teaching and learning excellence.
- 9) **A professional organization** that strives to maintain high standards of professional practice, provides strong representation for educational policy and assists teachers with profession concerns.

