

April 27, 2011

New Education Act sets foundation for student success

Legislation increases student access; supports local decision-making

Edmonton... New legislation will enhance student access to education and empower local school boards to be more responsive to the diverse learning needs of students and their communities.

Bill 18, the Education Act was introduced in the Alberta Legislature on April 27. The proposed legislation will underpin the transformation of the education system to reflect expectations for high school completion, online and other flexible learning environments and a wide range of supports to students.

“Education is foundational to our province’s future,” said Minister of Education Dave Hancock. “This new legislation is one more way to enable all the partners in education - students, parents, teachers, schools and school boards - and community groups to focus on their number one priority: student success.”

If passed, the Education Act will replace the *School Act*, which is the legislative framework that currently guides the governance of education in Alberta. The last major changes to education legislation were to the *School Act* in 1988. Government actively engaged Albertans in discussions about the future of education through several key initiatives: [Inspiring Education: a Dialogue with Albertans](#), [Inspiring Action](#), [Setting the Direction](#) and [Speak Out](#). Each initiative has contributed to the ongoing transformation of Alberta’s education system and informed the development of the Education Act.

The Act is not expected to be passed in the spring legislative session, allowing it to be held over for further discussion by education stakeholders and other Albertans. An online engagement forum (www.education.alberta.ca/engage) will complement stakeholder meetings, ensuring Albertans can continue to contribute to the conversation about educational transformation.

“Albertans told us that they want all students to be inspired to achieve success and fulfilment as engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit,” said Hancock. “This legislation is another step toward achieving this vision.”

Highlights of the Education Act focus on student success:

- Increases the age of access to 21, allowing students more time to graduate.
- Raises the age of compulsory attendance to 17 from 16 years to encourage more

- students to complete their high school education.
- Articulates responsibilities for students, parents, school boards and trustees.
 - Requires school boards to ensure a caring, respectful and safe environment that addresses bullying and discrimination, in school, outside of school and online.
 - Describes the provision of specialized supports and services, recognizing that the needs of all students will be met within a single inclusive education system.
 - Enables more flexible learning opportunities and supports for students by providing school boards with natural person powers.
 - Removes specific requirements related to the transportation of students allowing boards to be more responsive to the needs of their community when determining how to best provide safe and appropriate transportation to their students.

The proposed Education Act updates processes for establishing separate school districts, clarifies definitions of independent and resident students, and outlines expectations surrounding education services agreements for First Nations students. It also provides criteria around the establishment of charter schools, expands who may establish them, and provides for regulations to establish criteria by which a charter may be issued on a permanent basis.

For more information, visit the Alberta Education website at www.education.alberta.ca/educationact

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