

Frequently Asked Questions: The Education Act

Parents and Students

Who may access an education in the K-12 system in Alberta?

Under the proposed Education Act, every person who at September 1 in a year is six years of age or older and younger than 21 years of age who is a resident of Alberta and has a parent who is a resident of Canada is entitled to have access to an education in Alberta.

The present *School Act* provides access to every person who at September 1 in a year is six years of age or older and younger than 19 years of age who is either a Canadian citizen, lawfully admitted to Canada for permanent residence, a child of a Canadian citizen, or a child of an individual who is lawfully admitted to Canada for permanent or temporary residence. Under the proposed Education Act, the age at which a child begins school will not change, however the age at which they may continue to attend school has been extended.

A school board may continue to provide an early childhood services program to a child who as of September 1 is younger than six years of age.

Who must attend school in Alberta?

Under the proposed Education Act, every person who is a resident of Alberta, has a parent who is a resident of Canada, and is six years of age or older at September 1 in a year and younger than 17 years of age must attend school in Alberta. The proposed Act will raise the compulsory age of attendance for Alberta students from 16 to 17 years which, along with the raised age of access, will encourage more Alberta students to complete their high school education.

How do I know where my child can go to school?

Under the proposed Education Act, residency will now be determined by where the student lives, as opposed to the present situation where residency is determined by where the student's parents live. This change will create a more student-centered system and enhance student access to a funded education. It remains up to school boards to determine school boundaries.

Does the proposed Education Act set out expectations for students and parents?

Yes, under the proposed Act student responsibilities include actively participating in their learning and in the learning of those around them. Student responsibilities will focus on the pursuit of their own educational success. The new responsibilities also emphasize that students are expected to contribute to a caring, respectful, and safe environment.

Defining parental responsibilities recognizes the crucial role that parents play in their children's education and supports greater cooperation and communication between parents and school personnel. The proposed act states that parents have the responsibility to make decisions respecting the education of their children and to play an active role in their child's educational success.

What will a safe, respectful and caring environment mean for my child?

The proposed Education Act places an emphasis on caring, respectful and safe schools. School boards will be required to establish, implement and maintain policies necessary to provide a caring, respectful and safe environment for all students and staff. Boards will need to address bullying behaviour both in and outside of the school and share their policies with students, teachers, and parents. As a result, Alberta's schools will be more able to respond to bullying and to promote the best possible environment for students to succeed.

Will student transportation be affected by the new Education Act?

Under the proposed Act, school boards will have greater flexibility in determining the transportation needs of students. This will allow boards to be more responsive to the needs of their community when determining how best to provide safe and appropriate transportation. Specific requirements, including the 2.4 km walk distance, will no longer be legislated.

What is an inclusive education system?

In an inclusive education system, we create an educational environment where each and every student can find success and receive a quality education. In each school staff will, working together with parents, determine the best placement for the student. Where it is determined by a board that a student's behavioral, intellectual, learning, communications or physical characteristics, or a combination of any of these, impair the student's ability and opportunity to learn, the student is entitled to specialized supports and services in an education program.

How is Early Childhood programming changing?

The proposed Education Act outlines certain provisions that apply to a 'student' which apply to a child enrolled in an ECS program. These provisions include: the establishment and maintenance of a student record, the parent's right to appeal to the board regarding the child's programming, and the parent's right to request a Ministerial review regarding the specialized supports and services being offered.

What minority rights are protected in the Education Act?

The proposed Education Act confirms the Government of Alberta's commitment to a publicly funded education system that provides a choice of educational opportunities to students and that through the dimensions of public, separate and Francophone schools, honours the rights guaranteed under the Constitution of Canada in respect to minority language (French or English) and minority denominational (Protestant or Roman Catholic) education.

Can I continue to home school my child?

Yes. There have been no changes to the section on Home Education in the proposed Education Act.

Will charter schools continue to be one of the educational choices available to parents and students?

Yes, charter schools will continue to be a part of the educational choices in Alberta. The proposed Act provides criteria for the establishment of charter schools, expands who may establish them and provides that the Minister may by regulation establish criteria by which a charter may be issued on a permanent basis.

What impact will the new Education Act have on private schools?

Private schools will continue to be part of the educational choices for parents and students in Alberta.

What is an independent student?

The proposed Education Act defines an independent student as a student who is 18 years of age or older or 16 years of age or older and living independently. When determining whether a student is living independently a board may consider a number of issues including financial independence, responsibility for significant decision making and the student's living arrangements.

Will boards be able to charge fees to students for their instruction and learning?

The proposed Education Act states that the Minister may make regulations respecting school fees and that school boards may charge a parent fees in accordance with those regulations. Following the passage of the Education Act a regulatory review, including consultation with stakeholders, of all present and new regulations will take place prior to implementation. Any changes to fees and what they may be charged for would be contained in future regulations.