

Background: Private and Charter Schools

Private schools in Alberta

Alberta Education offers the following description of private schools:

- The Government of Alberta recognizes that parents have the right to choose a private school for their children and has provided financial support for private schools since 1967. There are over 250 private schools and private Early Childhood Service providers in Alberta.
- The School Act, Section 28, authorizes two kinds of private schools to operate in Alberta: registered private schools and accredited private schools ... There are three categories of accredited private schools. [**Accredited Non-funded, Accredited Funded, and Designated Special Education Private Schools.**]
- **Accredited funded** are entitled to partial provincial funding for meeting educational standards... Students write the provincial tests and are taught the *Alberta Programs of Study* by Alberta certificated teachers. Schools receive either Level 1 or Level 2 funding, as per the *Funding Manual*. [Accredited funded schools receive 60 to 70% of base funding]

Questions and Answers re Private Schools (*Alberta Education*)

- *Can a private school operator refuse to enrol my child?* Yes. A private school operator can refuse to enroll a student. This is because the School Act does not require private school operators to provide education programs to every student.
- *Do private school operators offer special education programs?* Private school operators are not required to admit students with special needs. However, once an accredited funded private school enrolls a student with special education needs, Alberta Education requires the private school operator to provide appropriate education programming for that student for the school year in which that student is enrolled.
- *If I'm not happy with a decision made by the private school operator, can I ask the Minister of Education to review that decision?* Parents do not have the right, under section 124 of the School Act, to ask the Minister of Education to review a private school operator's decision. Private school operators are encouraged to establish appeal mechanisms for parents of children enrolled in their schools.

Reasons for ending funding for private schools in Alberta:

"Public boards are being strapped a bit for cash and we're trying to do more with less," said Helen Clease, who was elected to a two-year term as ASBA president at the organization's fall general meeting this week.

"We don't have an issue with there being private schools," Clease added. "But we believe that the public dollars should go to public schools where every child can have access to that education."

The policy, which was supported by 71 per cent of the 62 public and separate school boards represented by ASBA, calls for public funding currently provided to private schools be

reallocated to public education, with the exception of designated special education private schools.

"At a time where every bit would help in the public education system, whether it's substantial or not, I think we have to support public education," said Cleese.

"We're there to take every child and we have to make sure that we can meet many, many diverse needs with our children in our communities," she added.

David Howell, "Private school funds under fire," *Calgary Herald*, Nov. 21, 2013

Charter schools in Alberta

Alberta Education describes charter schools as follows:

- Charter schools are autonomous non-profit public schools designed to provide innovative or enhanced education programs that improve the acquisition of student skills, attitudes and knowledge in some measurable way.
- Charter schools meet the needs of a particular group of students through a specific program or teaching/learning approach while following Alberta Education's Program of Studies.
- Alberta's 13 charter schools occupy 23 school buildings, 20 of which are owned by school districts, mainly in Calgary and Edmonton.

Reasons for ending support for charter schools in Alberta:

"Alberta is the only Canadian province that funds charter schools, which are generally defined as 'alternative' schools that receive government money but are really just private schools that are subsidized by taxpayers.

There's a good reason we're alone on this. It's a bad policy that takes money from taxpayers to bankroll often dubious and poorly monitored specialty programs, many of which cherry-pick students on such grounds as how likely they are to succeed and how much money their parents have. Practically speaking, it also takes money *away* from public education.

Alberta's charter schools, which often try to deny their teachers fair pay and union representation, continue to receive the full per-student grant provided to public and separate schools." David Climenhaga, *AlbertaPolitics.ca*, April 3, 2016

Alberta Student Population by Authority System

School Authority System	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016P
Public	423154	434186	443713	455028	464567
Separate	141168	145663	152628	158094	162552
Francophone	5945	6286	6801	7353	8068
Charter	7847	8418	8732	9131	9275
ECS Private Operator	4165	4617	5062	5291	5688
Private School	25443	27175	28076	29400	28627
Provincial	1542	1799	1742	1483	1554
Federal - First Nations	9631	10007	10266	9836	9695
Federal	333	617	791	716	818
All School & Authorities	619228	638768	657811	676332	690844

Source: *Alberta Education*