

Report on Meeting with Dave Hancock, Minister of Education

CWL ABMK Provincial President Fran L. and Legislation Standing Committee Chairperson Dorothy J. met with Minister of Education Dave Hancock on January 12, 2010.

Topics were prepared and forwarded to the minister so that informed responses could be given.

1. School Act Review

Background: From Alberta Education Website: “The *School Act* review is timely and proactively supports the ongoing public consultation with Albertans, [Inspiring Education](#), launched in 2008 by the Minister of Education.

The aim is to create a future-thinking vision for education and turn that vision into reality. The goal is to introduce the new act in the legislature during the Spring Session, 2010.

The act is expected to reflect public expectations of a strong education system that ensures the rights, needs and expectations of individuals and groups are in balance with those of society as a whole.”

Clarified with the minister that there is no intent to remove or limit Catholic Education in Alberta, as this would limit choices. Instead the goal is to continue to find ways of engaging students in education. It is crucial that we continue to support our schools and student learning.

2. Full Day Kindergarten

Full day kindergarten is not supported by the minister for all children as,

“the School Act states that a board or an approved school authority may provide an ECS program to a child who is younger than 6 years of age as of September 1. Under Alberta Education Early Childhood Services policy 1.1.3, children identified with disabilities/delays are eligible for up to three years of ECS programming, depending on age, severity of the disability/delay and its impact on the child’s ability to function within an ECS environment. [Standards for the Provision of Early Childhood Special Education](#) applies to children who meet the eligibility criteria for special education programming.

Program Unit Funding (PUF), which is in addition to Base Instruction Funding, is available to approved ECS operators for young children from 2½ to age 6. These children have been assessed with a severe disability/delay.

Funding for children with mild to moderate disabilities/delays and those who are gifted and talented is provided in addition to the Base Instruction funding. Children who meet the coding criteria must be at least 3½ years and less than 6 years of age on September 1.

The decision to offer full-day or junior Kindergarten programs within a community is the decision of the local school authority, which has maximum flexibility to use their funds in whatever manner they choose.”

3. High school completion rates and how they can be improved.

The rates for high school completion are actually higher than those reported by Statistics Canada as completion rates according to Stats Canada are only counted until 18 years of age. In Alberta the completion rate is close to 80%. Right now, it is not that easy to leave school, as jobs are not readily available. More work and effort is still required to keep students engaged in school and to ensure they realize that it is important to finish.

4. High School Math Curriculum

Background: Raised a concern with the current Math program with Pure and Applied math, with very little opportunity for some students to achieve in either program. Informed that a new Math program has been introduced:

Implementation Facts The Revised High School Mathematics Program of Studies

Important Dates

Provincial implementation of the revised curriculum and course sequences (see diagram below) will take place on the following dates¹:

September 2010: 10C and 10-3

September 2011: 20-1, 20-2, 20-3

September 2012: 30-1, 30-2, 30-3.

Note: Mathematics 10-4, 20-4 and 31 have not changed under the revised program and remain available for students.

Quick Facts

- 1 The revised high school mathematics courses align with the revised Kindergarten to Grade 9 mathematics program. All students entering Grade 10 in September 2010 will enrol in the revised mathematics program sequences.
- 2 Mathematics requirements for graduation have not changed. Five credits at the 20 level are required to obtain an Alberta High School Diploma. Students may complete this requirement with 20-1, 20-2 or 20-3.
- 3 Authorized student and teaching resources will be available in English and French in the spring of each year of implementation; e.g., Grade 10 resources will be available in the spring of 2010.

The New High School Mathematics 10C Course

[from: <<http://education.alberta.ca/media/1089842/math10c.pdf>>, p. 1 of 2]

The revised Grades 10–12 Mathematics Program of Studies includes a combined Grade 10 course, Mathematics 10C, that is the starting point for the -1 and -2 course sequences (see diagram below). This will allow Mathematics 10C students to postpone choosing a mathematics course sequence until Grade 11. Mathematics 10C also offers students:

- a smoother transition from junior high to high school
- the opportunity to access more resources before making decisions about course sequences
- Greater transferability between sequences if their career or post-secondary goals change.

Other Grade 10 mathematics courses available are the new Mathematics 10-3 for students planning to enter a trade or the workforce and the current Mathematics 10-4 for Knowledge and Employability courses.

A Smoother Transition

One of the guiding principles in revising the mathematics programs was to facilitate a smooth transition from Grade 9 to Grade 10 mathematics. In Mathematics 10C, students will benefit from the way in which Grade 10 outcomes progress from the Grade 9 mathematics outcomes. Students will also have a year of high school experience before deciding which course sequence they will follow.

Informed Decisions

The course sequence students choose impacts their options for future post-secondary programs. By delaying the decision to high school, students can make a more informed decision based on their future career paths, their mathematics skills and their post-secondary education prerequisite needs. With the revised program, Grade 10 students can now consult with their high school teachers, and possibly counsellors, concerning which course sequence best suits their skills and their future goals. Universities, colleges and technical institutes have indicated that the new -2 sequence will be more widely accepted for enrolment than the current applied mathematics sequence.

Greater Transferability

Because Mathematics 10C covers topics studied in both the -1 and -2 course sequences, students gain the background knowledge in Grade 10 to transfer between course sequences in both Grade 11 and Grade 12. This means that students can make adjustments to their mathematics courses should their goals or interests change over the course of their high school studies. This flexibility gives students more options in high school while they determine their future education and career plans.

5. Funding replacement for Casinos

The issue was with the replacement of any funding that was provided by schools holding casinos. The response was that the schools are adequately funded and casino revenues were for trips and programs and better than provided technology options. The concern with the loss of funding is that perhaps grants funded by government casino revenues would also be part of the decision not to use casino funding such as **Community Facility Enhancement Program (CFEP)**.

6. School fees

Raised a concern that school fees are a problem for many parents as they are all due at the beginning of the year, and that if they are not paid, the outstanding fee collection is sent to a collection agency.

School Fees

The *School Act* allows for certain fees to be collected for alternative programs, copies of student records, early childhood services, transportation fees, continuing education, instructional supplies and materials.

Local school boards determine school fees or, school principals can establish fees in consultation with the school council and within policy guidelines established by the school board.

Fees may be charged for supplies and materials provided for the student's personal use or consumption. The fees charged are usually on a cost recovery basis and may include:

- Calculators
- Locker rentals
- Student planners
- Exercise books
- Computer diskettes
- Writing tools

Fundraising

Fundraising has always been used by schools to provide extra services and activities, such as additional playground equipment, field trips and sports uniforms. Fundraising is used for the extras that parents and staff want for their schools. Fundraising should not be used to raise money for core items. All fundraising activities should be consistent with local school board policy.

Boards should be advising parents on what fees or fundraising projects are for, and what the schools will be doing with any surplus funds that are generated.

Alberta School Board Association's Policy Advisories

The Alberta School Board Association's policy advisories outline points that school boards may wish to consider when drafting policies concerning [school fees](#) and [fundraising](#).

The minister noted that school fees cannot be charged for anything other than that above, and that budgets and fees need to be posted by each school. If parents are unable to pay, they should be requesting a meeting with the principal to discuss.

Noted that if there are situations where the school fees are onerous, or where they are for more than the items above, they should be elevating concerns to the school board.

Requested the Minister of Education to give us suggestions for how we can support Education in the province.

Suggestions were given for us to remain involved in Education, helping out wherever we can to ensure each child reaches their potential.