



ALBERTA
EDUCATION

*Office of the Minister
MLA, Calgary - Bow*

AR128714

March 11, 2025

Mr. Ken Glazebrook
President
Alberta School Councils' Association
207, 11010 142 Street
Edmonton AB T5N 2R1

Dear Mr. Glazebrook:

Thank you for your inquiry regarding playground funding, climate and biodiversity education, air quality in classrooms, class size and complexity, and funding for the Alberta School Councils' Association. As Minister of Education, I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

As of June 2020, Alberta Education now provides up to \$250,000 in playground funding for new and replacement schools built on a greenfield site with a Kindergarten to Grade 6 component.

For schools that are not eligible for the playground funding, Alberta's government offers the [Community Facility Enhancement Program](#), administered by the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women, to support initiatives such as the construction of playgrounds. The Community Facility Enhancement Program provides financial assistance to eligible organizations for the renewal, expansion, purchase, or building of public-use community facilities, including playgrounds.

With regard to embedding climate and biodiversity education in the school curriculum, Alberta's Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum provides many opportunities to examine complex issues from multiple perspectives, such as climate change, to critically analyze information and its sources, to take informed positions, and to develop understanding of different perspectives in their background knowledge.

The [Kindergarten to Grade 6 Science curriculum](#) (curriculum.learnalberta.ca/curriculum/en/s/sci) addresses concepts of climate and biodiversity. This includes the development of foundational knowledge related to environmental respect and responsibility, biodiversity, conservation, and responsible waste management in early grades. In the current Grades 7 to 9 Science curriculum, students explore various concepts relating to weather, climate and biodiversity.

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In high school, students explore various concepts regarding energy flow in global systems, such as the relationships among weather patterns, climate, ecosystems, biomes, changes within these systems, and human activity.

Alberta's current Kindergarten to Grade 12 Social Studies curriculum provides opportunities for studying a broad range of issues, including those related to resources and the environment. Students are encouraged to develop the critical thinking skills necessary to assess the reliability, validity, and accuracy of information.

Across grade levels, students explore multiple perspectives on using, distributing, and managing resources and wealth, and they investigate the effects that economics and resources have on quality of life around the world. The curriculum provides opportunities for students to demonstrate consciousness for the limits of the natural environment, stewardship for the land, and an understanding of the principles of sustainability. Students are also expected to develop individual and collective responses to contemporary local, national, and global issues, such as those related to climate change, to help them become active and responsible citizens.

I appreciate your comments about ensure good air quality in Alberta's classrooms. While Alberta Education is responsible for legislation, funding, and ensuring accountability within the education system, school authorities are responsible for decisions about the operations and maintenance of their schools. These include decisions about ventilation and air filtration management programs, maintenance, and upgrades to these systems.

School jurisdictions can also upgrade their heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems as part of a major modernization project. Each year, school boards submit capital plans to Alberta Education outlining their priorities for school construction projects, including modernization projects for older schools. In deciding which projects to recommend for provincial funding, Alberta Education considers the requests made by school jurisdictions in the priority order identified by local school boards.

Alberta Education respects the autonomy of school boards to manage their resources while making the best use of public funds to meet the needs of the students they serve. More than 98 per cent of Education's operating budget flows to school authorities, which deliver education services to students.

I recognize your concern about class size and complexity. Education's budget will reach an all-time high of \$9.88 billion in 2025/26, an increase of \$426 million, or 4.5 per cent, from the previous year. To address enrolment growth, over the next three years, we are providing almost \$1.1 billion to hire additional teachers and classroom support staff, so school authorities can manage class sizes and the growing number of students, with \$185 million being spent in 2025/26. This funding is expected to support the hiring of more than 4,000 teachers, educational assistants, and support staff over the next three years.

Budget 2025 includes more than \$1.6 billion for Learning Support funding to meet students' specialized learning needs, including \$55 million in 2025/26 to help address classroom complexity, a 20 per cent increase from the previous year, so school authorities can add staffing supports to complex classrooms and give students the focused time and attention they need.

Alberta Education is committed to providing a high-quality education for all students and to ensuring that all learners experience a feeling of belonging. Alberta's [Inclusive Education Policy](#) recognizes that every learner has unique needs. The policy calls for a flexible and responsive learning environment that can adapt to the changing needs of learners. School authorities have the autonomy to manage their resources, determine their own class sizes and configurations, and make hiring decisions that reflect local priorities, while making the best use of public funds to meet their students' needs. This includes establishing policies and procedures for matters such as supports for students who have special educational needs.

In addition, on September 17, 2024, Premier Smith announced the creation of the [School Construction Accelerator Program](#). The program will expedite construction of over 100 schools that could cost upwards of \$8.6 billion, to create 50,000 new or modernized spaces in the next three years and an additional 150,000 spaces in the subsequent four years. This new funding will help alleviate pressures on school divisions facing rapidly increasing enrolment and reduce class sizes.

On the matter of funding opportunities, Alberta Education has a long history of supporting school councils. The Alberta government currently provides over \$1 million for school councils through the Alberta School Council Engagement (ASCE) Grant to strengthen collaboration between parents and schools on educational priorities. Under this direct funding approach, each school council in the province receives \$500 a year.

Thank you for sharing these topics for discussion.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Demetrios Nicolaidis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Demetrios Nicolaidis ECA PhD
Minister of Education