



ALBERTA  
EDUCATION

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*Office of the Minister  
MLA, Calgary - Bow*

September 5, 2024

Dear parents,

As the summer winds down and a new school year begins, I want to take a moment to share updates you may hear more about as your child returns to the classroom.

As Alberta's Minister of Education, my mandate is to ensure our students are receiving a world-class education that sets them up for success. An important piece of this work is building an inclusive and comprehensive curriculum that reflects our modern world and inspires a passion for learning.

Since the 2022-23 school year, school authorities have implemented new curriculum in six Kindergarten to Grade 6 (K-6) subjects through a phased approach. This school year, all students in Grades 4-6 will be learning from new French first language and literature, French immersion language arts and literature and science curriculums. We continue to support school authorities and elementary teachers as they implement new curriculum by providing a variety of learning and teaching resources.

I am pleased to share that 62 school authorities have also chosen to pilot new draft K-6 social studies curriculum in classrooms across Alberta this school year. The new draft curriculum, which was developed after nine months of consultation with education partners, teachers, parents and Albertans, focuses on building students' critical thinking skills and empowers them to be engaged citizens. Throughout the piloting process, school authorities and teachers will provide valuable feedback to help Alberta Education finalize the new K-6 social studies curriculum.

This is just one change parents can expect in Alberta's schools this fall. When students return to class, their smart phones will not. In April 2024, we asked Albertans to tell us what they thought of cellphone use in schools. More than 68,000 educators, parents, and other stakeholders shared their thoughts. The feedback was clear: Almost 90 per cent of respondents were concerned about student cellphone use at school and 85 per cent said they believe cellphones have a negative impact on student achievement.

My government felt it was important to respond quickly to this feedback and has been working with educators and other stakeholders over the last several months to introduce restrictions on personal mobile devices and social media use in schools.

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These changes come into effect on September 1, with school authorities having until January 1, 2025, to formalize their policies and procedures for implementing the restrictions within their schools. This means that, beginning immediately, students are asked to keep their devices silent or powered off during class and stored out of view, unless a valid exception is in place. Parents and guardians should reach out to their school or school authority if they have questions regarding how restrictions will apply to a particular student or child.

Restricting personal mobile devices and social media use in Alberta Early Childhood Services and kindergarten to Grade 12 classrooms will reduce distractions, maximize learning time, support student mental health, and reduce opportunities for cyberbullying. This is one of many things we are doing to support our children's mental health.

I recently announced an additional \$6.7 million to extend 59 Mental Health in Schools pilot projects across the province to ensure students can get the supports they need, when they need them. This is in addition to the Budget 2024 investment of \$1.5 billion for learning support funding, which includes funding that allows school authorities to provide students with psychological and social-emotional supports, and access to mental health workers and other wellness supports, as needed.

As you know, Alberta's population is growing, and school enrolment is too. Our government recognizes this growth comes with challenges, which is why we made a funding commitment over the summer to invest an additional \$125 million for operational costs associated with enrolment growth and inflationary pressures.

And, we have invested \$2.8 billion over three years to maintain, enhance, plan, and build new schools. Our capital plan advances 43 priority school projects across Alberta, including 28 new schools, 10 replacement schools, and five modernizations, which will create 35,000 new and modernized student spaces! We recognize these advancements will not be realized immediately and space is needed now, which is why we are also putting \$90 million toward the purchase of up to 100 modular classrooms and the relocation of up to 50 more, for the communities of greatest need. This will help address emergent enrolment pressures and urgent space needs.

In closing, I want to thank and acknowledge our hardworking teachers, educational assistants, principals, and other school support staff. Their work is at the heart of Alberta's education system and is deeply acknowledged and appreciated by Alberta's government.

Finally, I want to thank you, Alberta's parents. As a father myself, I know that a child's education does not start and end in the classroom. Parents are busy behind the scenes packing lunches and schoolbags, helping with homework, and cheering our kids on at their school concerts and sporting events. Thank you for all you do to support your children, their teachers, and the larger school community to which you belong.

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I am wishing you a wonderful year ahead!

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Demetrios Nicolaides". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Demetrios Nicolaides ECA PhD  
Minister of Education