

Backgrounder: Education K-12

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Note: All funding included in our costing announcement of February 22, 2008

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- Review the utilization formula for all schools, rural and urban, and, in the meantime, enact a three-year moratorium on school closures.
 - The current utilization is flawed and does not take into account the full impact schools have as anchors in communities.
 - The goal is to not ban school closures outright, but to find a better way to decide a school's future.
- Introduce a school nutrition program to ensure at-risk children a healthy start at school every day.
 - Given the number of at-risk students (20% of total student population) and a cost of \$2 per student per day for a school nutrition program, the total cost of the program will be about \$48 million.
- End the use of public-private partnerships to build new schools previously announced by the Conservatives. These create Enron-style debt. Public funds will be used instead.
 - Total cost of capital projects under the Alberta Liberal's education platform is approximately \$540 million over the next three years.
- Honour the government's existing agreement on the teachers' pension.
- Eliminate school fees and parent fundraising for essentials.
 - The government will provide extra funding to school boards to make up for lost revenue. The plan will cost approximately \$60 million.
- Phase in new junior kindergarten programs (starting with at-risk children) and establish full-day kindergarten as recommended by the Alberta Commission on Learning.
 - Studies have shown junior and full-day kindergarten benefits children (especially low-income) both academically and socially.
 - Junior kindergarten will not be mandatory.
 - The cost to begin phasing in junior and full-day kindergarten starting with children at risk: \$75 million
- Support the Learning Commission's recommendations for class sizes.
 - The Alberta Liberals will commit \$30 million a year to bring class sizes down.
- Reinforce the status of arts, second languages and physical education as essential complements to the core curriculum.
 - We will invest an extra \$4 million a year to fix imbalances in arts, second languages and physical activity programs in our schools.

It's time.
Alberta Liberal

- Move toward a more diagnostic model for Grade 3 provincial tests to ensure student success.
 - The current tests focus on statistics, which do not effectively measure student performance. No extra funding will be required.
- Enable a “community schools” program, under which community supports such as health care, child care, after-school care and social services can be integrated under one roof.
 - We will invest \$30 million in the community schools plan to hire professionals in the realm of children’s services: social workers, psychologists, reading specialists, speech therapists and others as need arises.
 - Community schools will also be exempt from closure.
- Fund additional supports for special-needs students, gifted students and students whose first language is not English.
 - We will commit \$3 million per year in consistent, reliable funding that is adjusted based on student numbers and inflation.
- Maintain the current number of elected rural school boards, to keep control of rural education in local hands.
 - Rural areas need proper representation as they know best what is needed in their communities and schools. We will not move control away from rural school boards.
- Recognize and address the transportation pressures facing rural school boards.
 - Focus on cross school board transportation.
 - We will provide \$1 million to support transportation costs.
- Develop a career education program for junior and senior high school students with an emphasis on apprenticeship training.
 - We will double funding for the Registered Apprenticeship Program at a cost of \$500,000.
- Identify learning problems in or by the end of Grade 1.

Aboriginal Education

- Take aggressive measures — including mentorship programs, apprenticeship programs and specialized curriculum initiatives — to boost high school completion rates among Aboriginal students until they are on par with the rest of Alberta’s students.
 - We will work with Aboriginal communities and commit \$3 million per year to this initiative.
- Require annual progress reports on First Nations, Métis and Inuit Policy Framework Initiatives from Alberta Education.