



ALBERTA
EDUCATION

*Office of the Minister
MLA, Calgary - Bow*

Dear parents,

The year is coming to an end, and I'd like to share a few thoughts and reflections about the year past, and as well, share some views about what the new year will bring us.

Before I do though, I want to extend my utmost gratitude and appreciation to all the amazing staff in our schools and head offices. The work that they do does not go unnoticed, and as we take some time to rest and relax over the Christmas break, I want to say thank you. To our parents, teachers, principals, educational assistants, custodians, superintendents, and all staff, thank you for the work that you do, every single day, to ensure our students continue to receive a world-class education. As a father of two school-aged children, I've always been impressed by the quality of instruction, care, and attention they have received.

2023 saw some significant new investments into our education system. Budget 2023 included a 5.2 per cent increase in overall funding to our school boards this year. This includes \$820 million over three years to fund enrolment growth. In addition, 2023 saw the start of the new Classroom Complexity Grant, with \$126 million over three years to support the hiring of up to 3,000 more educational assistants, speech language pathologists, psychologists, and other staff to ensure our students have the support they need. We are already seeing strong results as this school year alone, our four metro school divisions hired over 1,200 new teachers and over 450 new educational assistants. Budget 2023 also approved 58 school projects, at various stages, across the province.

We've also continued work in renewing Alberta's curriculum. In September 2023, school boards began implementing the new Kindergarten to Grade 3 curriculum in Science, French First Language and French Immersion. September also saw all Kindergarten to Grade 6 students learning the new English and Math curriculums. We are also continuing our work to develop a new Social Studies curriculum. Almost 13,000 Albertans completed the online survey to share their views about what our Social Studies curriculum should include, and we are continuing to engage with teachers, subject matter experts, curriculum development specialists, First Nations leaders and multicultural groups.

As the new school year got underway, it was clear that our school boards were seeing record enrolment levels. Alberta's population is booming again! From April 1, 2022, to April 1, 2023, our population grew by 200,000. We are seeing the largest population boom since 1914. To help address this spike in enrolment, I announced an in-year funding boost of \$30 million to help our hardest hit school boards.

The year is closing on a high note, with announcement of the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results. Alberta students scored first in Canada in reading, first in Canada in science and second in Canada in math. In addition, our students scored exceptionally well against international competitors. Globally we ranked second in reading, second in science and seventh in math. Our parents, educators and students deserve our praise.

As we look ahead to 2024, I plan to provide Albertans with an update on the new Social Studies curriculum, as well as more details on our plans to improve career education programming in our schools, significantly expand the number of schools in our growing communities, explore incentives to support the recruitment and retention of teachers and other staff, and strengthen life skills and financial literacy in our curriculum.

In closing, I want to recognize the hard work that goes on at home. Parents and guardians play a critical role in our education system, whether it's helping with homework and school assignments, volunteering at events, or participating on parent school councils.

I wish you all a restful holiday break, and a fantastic start to 2024.

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