

# PARENTAL CONSENT IS KEY OPEN LETTER



Dear Education Minister David Eggen:

I am writing this open letter to state that I expect that all legislation and policies impacting the education of children in the province will uphold the authority of parents as the primary caregivers and educators of their children. Parental involvement and authority must be respected at every level - from procedures at local schools, to school board policies and administrative regulations, as well as provincial legislation.

Research shows time and again that the most important support system for children, especially at-risk youth, is strong family and parent support. However, when parents are not provided with the opportunity to be informed about their child at school, they are unable to effectively provide the support most needed by their child.

It is essential that all decision-makers responsible for the care of children in our education system ensure that parents are returned to their rightful position as the primary caregivers and educators of their children. This is the only way parents, educators and schools can work together to ensure a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment for all students in Alberta schools.

Therefore, in order to fully support the diverse needs of children and families in our province, as well as ensure a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment for all students, I respectfully demand that current education legislation and policies be amended to include the following best practices:

- 1) Implementation of a legally binding protocol which makes every school's first priority the engagement of parents and guardians as the mandatory first point of contact for all aspects of a child's education, care and well-being, during both instructional and non-instructional time.
- 2) Required parental approval to opt-in to any instruction related to sex education, sexuality and gender identity, including the distribution of any materials or resources related to these topics.
- 3) Mandatory notification provided to parents of all extra-curricular activities operating at a school, including student organizations and activities. This should include a current,

publicly accessible list on the school's website of all extra-curricular activities and clubs available to students.

- 4) Mandatory notification of parents when their child is referred to school based counseling.
- 5) Mandatory notification and explicit parental permission required when any outside facilitator or program is invited to offer any activity, presentation or instruction to their child, at any time, during school hours.
- 6) Materials and resources which are made available to students during instructional time, as well as during extra-curricular activities, will be fully accessible to parents upon request.

Furthermore, I urge the provincial government to fully respect the authority and autonomy of all local schools and school authorities. Each school authority – including public, separate, charter, independent, distance and online schools as well as home education and alternative programs available within the public and separate system – must ensure that policy revisions, resources and extra-curricular activities respect the unique culture, character and teaching philosophy of each setting, and are responsive to the diverse needs of the families they serve.

In conclusion, education should be seamless between the education provided by parents at home and the education that happens outside the home. Classroom education should be seen as a complement to the learning that happens at home, not a replacement for it. Students are most successful when their parents are involved in the educational process.

Sincerely,

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