



PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA™

Classroom Complexity and Public School Education: Lessons from a Crucial Conversation

The recent teachers' strike in Alberta drew unprecedented attention to the pressures facing classrooms across the province. For weeks, parents, students and the public engaged in a national conversation about what it means to provide high-quality education amid growing demands, rising class sizes and increasingly complex learning needs. The strike underscored what educators have long known: The dynamics inside a classroom today are far more complex than traditional metrics suggest.

In response, the UCP government announced the formation of a Task Force on Class Size and Complexity, signaling an important commitment to understanding and addressing these challenges. The Task Force offers an opportunity to examine classroom realities through a lens informed by evidence, experience and system-wide perspectives.

Alberta's public school system is unique. Unlike other systems, it is legislatively mandated to accommodate students with all manner of learning needs—from students with disabilities or learning differences, from high to low achievement, to those requiring language or mental health supports. While other schools may face class size pressures and limited inclusivity demands, the public school system must balance size with **legally required inclusivity**, making classroom complexity a particularly acute challenge. This combination of scale and diversity gives public school boards insight into how staffing, resources, and student supports interact in ways that other systems simply do not experience.

Public school boards witness daily how the intersection of class size, diversity of learning needs, and resource limitations affects student outcomes and teacher well-being. Teachers and administrators navigate these realities with creativity, data-informed strategies and a commitment to equity. The insights gained from these experiences are not only practical but systemic—they illuminate broader policy implications, highlight areas where investment is needed and inform sustainable solutions that benefit all students.

The Class Size and Complexity Task Force presents an opportunity for policy-makers, educators and communities to move beyond anecdotal debate and into evidence-based discussions. The public conversation sparked by the strike, combined with this initiative, creates a moment for meaningful reflection on how the province can better support both students and educators. Public school boards are a critical source of knowledge in this dialogue. They bring perspectives rooted in real classroom experience, operational expertise and accountability to the communities they serve. Their insights ensure any recommendations reflect the realities of learning environments across Alberta, rather than assumptions or averages detached from daily practice.

As Alberta looks toward solutions, it is clear classroom complexity is not simply a question of numbers. It encompasses the full range of student needs, teacher supports and systemic factors that influence learning outcomes. A thoughtful, fulsome approach to addressing these challenges—one informed by the people who see them first-hand—will benefit students, educators and the broader community alike.

The conversation sparked by recent events has shown Albertans care deeply about the quality of public school education. The Task Force represents a meaningful step forward, and by grounding its work in the expertise of those closest to the classroom, Alberta can ensure its recommendations are practical, equitable and forward-looking. Public school boards are proud to contribute to this ongoing dialogue, offering perspectives that help illuminate the path toward solutions that serve all students and strengthen the foundation of our province's education system.

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*The **Public School Boards' Association of Alberta** represents 28 public school boards that account for more than 800 schools and more than 250,000 students across the province. We believe public schools are the first choice of our communities, where all our children learn and live the values of democracy together, reflecting our hope and shaping the future of our communities.*