



## **Funding Teachers Is Only the Start: Alberta Must Build a Workforce for Classrooms**

One teacher. Thirty-plus students. Diverse learning needs, socioemotional supports, language learners, behavioural challenges—packed into classrooms where managing instruction already feels like a monumental task. That is the reality for many Alberta public school teachers today, and it is becoming increasingly unsustainable.

In response to the work undertaken by the Class Size and Complexity Cabinet Committee, the provincial government's budget has set aside funding for 5,000 additional teachers over the next three years and 476 classroom complexity teams. This investment acknowledges the pressure on the system, but funding does not automatically create teachers. What is needed now is a clear workforce strategy that turns that investment into classrooms staffed with qualified, supported educators.

The driver of this challenge is two-fold: demand and complexity. Alberta's school system has grown rapidly, with tens of thousands of new students in recent years, and classrooms now include students with a wide range of academic, linguistic and behavioural needs.

These realities point to a central issue: Alberta's public education system does not have a surplus of teachers waiting to be hired. Teaching is a profession where preparation, certification, and experience matter—and the pool of available educators is limited. Workforce planning must address both supply and sustainability.

A [recent report](#) from the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta examining teacher recruitment and retention underscores the urgency. Drawing on perspectives from boards across Alberta, the report highlights the need for expanded teacher preparation pathways, stronger mentorship supports, and co-ordinated provincial–local workforce planning to ensure classrooms are consistently staffed with qualified educators.

Other jurisdictions have faced [similar shortages](#). In the [United Kingdom](#) and [Australia](#), governments have expanded pathways into teaching by allowing final-year education students to teach under supervision, creating alternative certification tracks, and offering financial incentives to attract candidates into high-need subject areas. Mentorship programs and professional development have been essential for retaining teachers once they are in the classroom. Adapting these approaches to Alberta's context—while maintaining high standards—could help build the pipeline more quickly and effectively.

But recruitment alone is not enough. Retaining the teachers already in the system is critical. Mentorship for early career teachers, ongoing professional learning and meaningful supports for experienced educators are proven ways to improve retention. Supporting teacher well-being must be part of the workforce strategy.

Building this workforce also requires strategic planning. Local school boards know where demand is highest and where recruitment has been most challenging. They understand the unique needs of urban, rural and northern communities. Provincial leadership—through policy, funding frameworks and support for teacher preparation programs—must work hand-in-hand with boards to align staffing with student needs. This shared stewardship helps funding result in teachers in classrooms, not just budget line items.

Investment in complexity teams—teacher–assistant groups designed to support the most challenging government-identified classrooms—is a step in the right direction, but the current plan for a few hundred teams falls short of the scale of need. Workforce planning must be broad and sustained, not limited to incremental additions.

Alberta’s students deserve classrooms that are staffed, supported, and equipped for learning, and educators deserve workplaces where they can thrive. Funding 5,000 teachers is a promising start—but turning that promise into reality requires a thoughtful workforce strategy focused on building the pipeline, retaining experienced educators and planning collaboratively across the system.

Now is the time for shared action. With co-ordinated leadership from the province and local school boards, Alberta can build a teacher workforce that meets both current needs and future demands—ensuring every student has the opportunity to learn, grow and succeed.

Lorraine Stewart, President  
Public School Boards’ Association of Alberta  
[public-schools.ab.ca](http://public-schools.ab.ca)

*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.*