PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA®

Community Connection: Public Schools. Public Good.

Stories, perspectives and issues shaping public school education across Alberta.

Welcome to the first edition of *Community Connection: Public Schools. Public Good.*, a newsletter from the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta (PSBAA). Whether you are a parent, educator, school staff member or simply someone who cares about the future of Alberta's communities, we want to share what's happening in public school education and why it matters to all of us.

Public schools play an important role in shaping individuals, families and communities across Alberta. They bring people together, create opportunities for students and help prepare the next generation for the future. Through stories, perspectives and conversations about the issues facing schools today, we hope to build a better understanding of the value of public school education and the role we all play in supporting it.

We invite you to explore these stories, share your perspectives and stay connected.

Public school education is a shared investment in Alberta's future, and every voice has a place in that conversation.

Where Public Schools Take You

Meet Doug Stollery



Public school education is about more than what happens in a classroom. It creates opportunities, shapes experiences and helps prepare people for the future.

ONLY PUBLIC SCHOOLS PROVIDE PUBLIC EDUCATION®

HAVE A QUESTION?
ASK US ANYTHING!

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PUBLIC-SCHOOLS.AB.CA

The PSBAA has launched the *Faces and Voices of Public School Education*, a series sharing the perspectives of people whose lives have been shaped by public schools.

We begin with Doug Stollery, a public school alumnus who reflects on the value of his education and the lasting contribution public schools make to individuals, communities and Alberta's future.

Doug's story is a reminder that the impact of public schools extends well beyond graduation. The knowledge, experiences and opportunities gained along the way shape the people and communities we become.

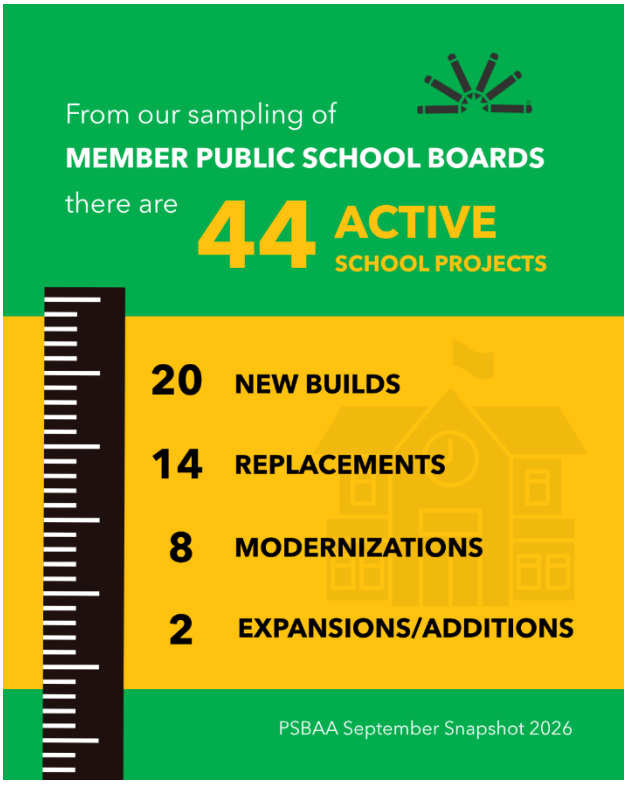
Watch the video to hear Doug's perspective and discover where public schools can take you.

Learn More

Making Room for Students

Alberta's Changing School Needs

Across Alberta, communities are experiencing different challenges when it comes to school space. In growing neighbourhoods, rising enrolment means more classrooms are needed. In some rural communities, declining enrolment is changing where and how students attend school.



When students travel to larger centres or regional hubs, the schools receiving them can face additional pressure on space and capacity.

There is no single solution. Some communities need new schools, while others may benefit from additions, modernizations or modular classrooms. The right approach depends on local circumstances and the needs of students.

Planning for these changes takes time. Public school boards elected by their communities assess enrolment trends, building conditions and future needs to identify priorities. Projects then move through funding decisions, planning, design and construction before students can use the space.

A project announcement is an important step, but families are ultimately waiting for completed classrooms and the resources to support them.

The former municipal airport terminal turned amiskwaciy Academy in Edmonton is one example of how educational space can sometimes be created through non-traditional approaches. The right solution depends on local circumstances and the students who need to be accommodated.

amiskwaciy Academy

And buildings are only part of the picture. Students also need qualified teachers, educational assistants, support and professional staff, transportation, technology and the resources required to keep schools operating.

Providing appropriate school space takes planning and co-ordination among public school boards, municipalities and the provincial government. It also means looking beyond the number of projects announced to consider how many classrooms are actually opening and whether students have the support they need.

Planning for school space is ultimately about making sure students have somewhere to learn, wherever they live in Alberta.

Learn More



Today's Classrooms Reflect Today's Society

Walk into a classroom today and you will see students with different abilities, experiences, backgrounds and circumstances. Some need additional learning support. Others may be navigating mental health challenges, behavioural needs, language barriers, addiction or difficult circumstances at home. Often, several of these needs are present in the same classroom.

Classrooms reflect the society we live in. The challenges students bring to school are not always challenges that schools can solve on their own.



Teachers and school staff play an important role in recognizing concerns, supporting students and connecting families with help. But some needs require expertise and services beyond what schools can provide.

That's why the connections between education, health, mental health and social services matter. Students benefit when these services work together, when families can access support in a timely way and when educators have the professional learning and specialized resources to respond to changing needs.

This also means thinking about how future teachers are prepared for the realities of today's classrooms and how ongoing professional development helps experienced educators continue to grow.

The needs of students are not the same in every community. A large urban school, a rural school division and a northern community may face very different circumstances. Public school boards bring an important local perspective to understanding those differences and identifying where support is needed.



Supporting students is an investment that extends well beyond their school years. Today's students will become Alberta's future workforce, parents, volunteers and community members.

The classroom reflects the Alberta we have today. How we support the students in those classrooms will help shape the Alberta we become tomorrow.



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What Does It Take to Put a Teacher in Every Classroom?

Having a qualified teacher in every classroom is something families expect, but ensuring there are enough teachers across Alberta takes more than simply adding positions.



Teachers enter and move through the workforce in different ways. Some are new graduates beginning their careers. Others are experienced teachers moving between school divisions or arriving in Alberta from another province. And some new hires are filling positions left by people who have retired, resigned or moved into other work.

Understanding how many teachers are entering the profession, how many are joining Alberta's workforce and how many are replacing those who have left helps provide a clearer picture of the workforce available to support students.

The needs also vary across the province. A rapidly growing community may need additional teachers simply to keep pace with enrolment. Another community may have difficulty recruiting teachers with particular qualifications or specialized expertise.

Public school boards work every day to recruit teachers, fill vacancies and plan for changing student populations. The provincial government also plays an important role through funding, teacher certification, post-secondary education and recruitment initiatives.

Bringing these perspectives together can help identify where teachers are needed, understand workforce pressures and plan for the years ahead. Recruitment matters, but so do retention, professional development and creating working environments where teachers can build lasting careers.

Ultimately, workforce planning is not just about numbers. It is about what happens in schools: having a qualified teacher in front of a class, being able to open another classroom when enrolment grows and ensuring students have access to the expertise they need.

Counting teachers is just the start. What matters is having the right people in place to support students and schools across Alberta.

View Our Research



Better Together

Why Education Is Not a Competition

Competition is often presented as a way to improve education. The idea is that when schools compete for students, they have greater incentive to improve results and find better ways to deliver education.

But does competition necessarily lead to better outcomes for students?

Schools do not all start from the same place. They serve communities with different circumstances and students with different abilities, learning needs and family experiences. These differences affect the resources, expertise and supports schools need to help students succeed.

Research from the OECD suggests the relationship between competition and student achievement is more complicated than it might appear. In many education systems, apparent performance advantages associated with school competition disappear when students' socioeconomic backgrounds are taken into account.

There is also a bigger question about what happens when schools compete for enrolment and resources. Schools facing greater challenges may find it harder to attract students and build the capacity they need to improve.

The result can be greater separation between schools rather than better outcomes across the education system.

An individual school's success is important, but it does not tell us everything about how well the overall system is working.

Public school education benefits when schools and school authorities share knowledge, learn from one another and work together to address emerging needs. Public school boards, elected by their communities, also have an important role in understanding local circumstances and contributing to solutions that benefit students across the province.

Accountability, innovation and continuous improvement matter. But schools do not need to work against one another to achieve them.



The question is not which school wins. It's whether Alberta's education system is succeeding for all students.

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What You Can Do

Make Your Voice Heard

Public school education is important to families and communities across Alberta. Public school boards work to represent local needs and advocate for students, parents, caregivers, educators and community members. These same individuals also have an important voice.

One way to make a difference is to reach out directly to your MLA, the Minister of Education or other Alberta government decision-makers to share what is happening in your school community and what students need to succeed.

You don't need to be an education expert or have all the answers. Your experiences as a parent, grandparent, educator or community member can help decision-makers understand how provincial decisions affect schools and the people who depend on them.



Contact the Government of Alberta

You might raise questions about classroom space, teacher availability, supports for students with diverse learning needs, access to specialized services or the resources schools need to keep pace with changing demands.

Consider sharing:

- What you are seeing in your local school or community.
- How particular challenges are affecting students, families and educators.
- What additional support or resources would make a difference.
- What you would like the provincial government to consider when making education decisions.

A phone call, email or meeting with your MLA can help bring local experiences into provincial conversations. You can also encourage others in your school community to share their perspectives.

Public school education is a shared investment in Alberta's future. When families and communities speak up, they help ensure the needs of students and schools across the province remain part of the conversation.

Contact Your MLA

PUBLIC SCHOOLS. PUBLIC GOOD.

The Public School Boards' Association of Alberta represents locally elected public school boards across the province. We work to promote, elevate and protect public school education through advocacy, research, collaboration and support for our member boards.

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