

Government of Alberta News Release

Edmonton, September 27, 1995

"The 1994/95 year was a year of accomplishment and change. With students as our first priority, we have made major progress in restructuring the education system to ensure that it runs more efficiently and effectively for years to come."

*Halvar C. Jonson
Minister of Education*

Education Minister Releases Pivotal Annual Report and Performance Measures Report

The *1994/95 Alberta Education Annual Report* has been released and documents a pivotal year for education in Alberta. The major restructuring of the education system has been completed and many of the business plan's strategies have been implemented.

To ensure that Albertans have the information they need to have confidence in the public education system, this year's annual report includes the Ministry's first provincial education results report. The goals outlined in government's three-year business plan for education have been used to organize the annual report.

The measures in the *Results Report on the 3-Year Business Plan* identify some extraordinary successes and some areas for improvement. Results show that students overall are meeting the province's high standards for student achievement. Survey results indicate that 94% of high school students are satisfied with the quality of education and 89% to 96% agree that school staff support their learning. Most parents of K-12 students (89%) think their child's school is well run and 88% are satisfied with the quality of education.

Areas requiring improvement include the high school completion rate and students' problem-solving skills in mathematics. The use of technology needs to expand to meet better the program needs of students throughout the province.

Provincial results reporting fits into a larger framework for accountability in education. For their part, school boards are submitting plans in September 1995 that reflect provincial requirements and local needs. They will report on local results in November 1996.

Annual report highlights include amendments to the **School Act** to provide for full provincial funding of education, and the establishment of school councils and charter schools.

Students were given equitable opportunity to access quality education through full provincial funding in 1994/95. To focus more resources on the classroom, a new framework for funding school boards was developed which included placing a cap on administrative spending. The number of school boards was also reduced from 141 in February of 1994 to 64 in March of 1995. Eighty percent of the targeted spending reduction was achieved in 1994/95.

Halvar Jonson stated "It is by using all of this information and our new way of reporting for the benefit of all students, that we will meet the challenge of establishing a more effective, efficient and accountable education system."

Highlights from the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities include the announcement of a government-wide policy on access to information in alternative formats such as large print or audiotape, and the release of two public documents identifying the likely impacts of change for people with disabilities: *The Impact of Change* and *A New Context: New Threats, New Opportunities*.

Mr. Jonson also released today the salary and benefit costs of Alberta school superintendents for the 1993-94 school year. In doing so he noted that many of the superintendent offices being reported on no longer exist as a result of the amalgamation and regionalization of school boards this past year.

To obtain copies of the *1994/95 Annual Report*, contact the Communications Branch at 427-2285. For more information on the *Results Report on the 3-Year Business Plan*, contact the Policy and Planning Branch at 427-8217. To be connected toll free from outside Edmonton dial 310-0000.

For more information, contact:

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Backgrounder -- Alberta Education's 1994-95 Annual Report Highlights:

- Provincial responsibility was established for setting provincial education tax rates and distributing education property tax revenues. Fiscal inequity among school jurisdiction was resolved. A new framework for funding school boards was developed and announced for the 1995/96 school year.
- Provincial capital funding was reduced by \$100 million and a new capital program was developed for 1995/96.
- The number of school boards was reduced from 141 in February of 1994 to 64 in March of 1995.
- Francophone governance was implemented.
- The School Act was amended to provide for full provincial funding of education, and the establishment of school councils and charter schools.
- About half of the Career and Technology Studies (CTS) program was available for schools to use in September 1994, with field testing of the rest of the program to be completed in the 1995/96 school year.
- Western provinces agreed to develop common learning standards in mathematics, Grades 1 to 12.
- The Department of Education was downsized: staff was reduced by 18 percent; over three-quarters of the department's three-year operating budget reduction target was met, reducing the operating budget by \$7.2 million; the Grande Prairie and Red Deer Regional Offices were closed; and the Materials Resource Centre in Calgary was closed and Edmonton's was combined with the Learning Resources Distributing Centre.
- Eighty per cent of the targeted spending reduction for education was achieved in 1994/95.
- Primary performance measures for education were developed and published in **Measuring Up**, government's preliminary report on performance.

Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities:

- Announcement of a government-wide policy on access to information in alternative formats (large print, audiotape, etc.).
- The council released two public documents identifying the likely impacts of change for people with disabilities: *The Impact of Change* and *A New Context: New Threats, New Opportunities*.

Alberta Education's Results Report Highlights:

- Between 75% and 87% of students writing grade 12 Diploma Examinations achieved at or beyond the acceptable standard in 1993/94.
- Alberta students perform favorably compared to students outside the province: the proportion of Alberta students meeting the standards in Canada-wide tests of reading, writing and mathematics is as

high as, or in some cases higher than that of students in the rest of Canada.

- Survey results show that 78% of parents and 85% of teachers are satisfied with the opportunities for involvement in decision making at schools in their community.
- Alberta Education staffing levels are reduced 23% from 863 full time equivalents in 1992/93 to 665 in September 1995.
- In general, the services provided to children with severe special needs are satisfactory according to 84% of the parents surveyed.
- Funding of education is distributed more equitably with full provincial funding.
- Of the parents surveyed, 90% are satisfied with their access to information from their school about their own children's achievement and 88% are satisfied with its quality of information.
- Most (94%) high school students surveyed are satisfied with the quality of education they are receiving in school and 81% to 96% agree that school staff support their learning in various ways.
- Parents have opportunities to choose schools and programs for their children within the public education system.
- School completion rates need to increase from 70% in 1993/94 to 75% in 1997.
- Use of technology needs to expand to meet better the needs of students throughout the province.
- Seventy-nine percent of parents surveyed are satisfied with their access to school information about overall student achievement and 75% are satisfied with the quality of information.
- Survey results indicate that about 40% of parents and the public are satisfied with information about how money is spent at the school board level; at the school level the percentages range in the sixties for parents and the forties for the public.

Disclosure of Superintendent Offices' Salaries and Benefits 1993-94 School Year

Superintendent Offices' salaries and benefits available through Education Communications, (403) 427-2285.

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