



Grande Prairie and District Catholic Schools

Serving the Regional Communities of Beaverlodge, Grande Prairie, Fairview, Sexsmith, & Spirit River
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Advocacy Plan for 2009 (October Revision)

Key Messages

1. *Catholic Education exists to provide a Christ centered learning environment for a child's education. In Catholic Schools, students:*

- Receive a specific class in religious education in every grade level.
- Have the opportunity to integrate and explore faith in each of their subjects. Teachers permeate faith opportunities into each subject.
- Receive specific instruction and immediate preparation in the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation so they can share in Church Life.
- Participate in morning and class prayers everyday and religious school celebrations every month. Bi-annual Youth Rallies for Junior and Senior High students.
- Understand they are responsible for their actions, that boundaries and limits need to be set, and that Social Justice is a core pillar of our Faith.
- Celebrate service, especially works of Social Justice.
- Actively participate in their Faith when teachers live and share their faith.

2. *A Proposed Reduction in Funding will Impact Students*

Alberta Education's 80 million dollar reduction in the 2009-2010 school year and the anticipated 300+ million reduction in the 2010-2011 will result in fewer programs and supports for students.

3. *Funding for Special Needs is Inadequate*

Our Special Needs population is growing at a faster rate than our overall student population. Many of the needs are complex as families move to Alberta to seek employment and support for their child(ren). We believe that

- Each Child should receive funding that is appropriate to the individual child's needs.. At the current time, special education funding is based on a snapshot of the district's needs in the 2000-2001 school year. A review of the District's profile has not occurred since that time.
- Provincial assistance is needed to meet the demand in Behaviour Programming, Occupational and Physical Therapy, Student Psychological services, and Residential Student Treatment.
- Special Needs programming in an integrated environment requires specialized training.
- A reduction in Student Health Services affects Speech-Language, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Mental Health needs.

4. Northern Teacher Education Programs Require More Spaces and Different Program

A recent study by Workforce Development (Alberta Education) notes that provincial and national demands for teachers will increase beyond the current supply rate. This will require new and innovative ways to deal with teacher supply. We propose the following solutions:

- Increase the GPRC Teacher Education North Output from 40 to 60 elementary teachers per year.
- Develop and deliver a secondary teacher education program at GPRC.
- Deliver the GPRC program in various northern communities as a means to attract prospective teachers to the profession.
- Provide Districts with financial incentives large enough to attract teachers away from large urban centers.
- Training more qualified special education staff so Boards can use their expertise to assist regular classroom teachers.

5. Safe and Caring Communities are Essential

With the release of the Safe Communities report by Alberta Justice action needs to be taken to improve the quality of life in Grande Prairie, one of three communities with a shadow population that has higher and unique needs. We are willing to be an active partner in the development of a safer community.

6. The District will Experience 40% Growth in the next 12 years

The schools in Grande Prairie/ Sexsmith are small CORE schools and already have 50++ portables attached to the schools. According to Workforce Development (Alberta Education) the Grande Prairie/ Sexsmith corridor’s Catholic population will grow by 2000 students by 2020. Two elementary schools (population 500) and one high school (population 875) will need to be constructed to meet the demand forecasted by Workforce Planning: Alberta Education

The current schools do not have sufficient Core space (Library, CTS, Gym, Office, Music/Drama) when portables are added onto the school, and we believe that smaller schools enhance the development of Christian citizens and Safe and Caring Communities.

Alberta Education approved population

Actual population

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Mother Teresa 425 ❑ Kateri Mission 677 ❑ Holy Cross 542 ❑ St. Gerard 765 ❑ St. Clement 333 ❑ St. Patrick 411 ❑ St. Joseph 1129 	<p><i>(student population 291)</i></p> <p><i>15 portables (student population of 455).</i></p> <p><i>11 portables (student population of 431).</i></p> <p><i>12 portables (student population 625).</i></p> <p><i>3 portables (student population 191).</i></p> <p><i>9 modulars (student population of 307).</i></p> <p><i>The school was built to accommodate 860 and was designed with large connectors During construction Infrastructure changed the “rule book” and believes that 269 additional students can be added without adding additional space (student population 942).</i></p> <p><i>9 portables (student population of 148).</i></p> <p><i>Replacement school being built in Sexsmith and will open September 2010</i></p> <p><i>1 modular (student population of 124)</i></p> <p><i>(student population 155)</i></p> <p><i>(student population 254)</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ St. Mary’s Sexsmith 143 ❑ St. Mary Beaverlodge 152 ❑ Ste. Marie Spirit River 195 ❑ St. Thomas More Fairview 451 	

Schools are considered full when the “approved population” or “capacity” reaches 85% of the number listed. This year 315 kids are enrolled in Kindergarten, 299 in Grade 6, and 256 in Grade 11. This demonstrates that Grande Prairie continues to grow and that additional facilities are needed.

7. The Class Size Initiative Outlined by the Commission Requires Space

We are working to achieve the overall Jurisdiction Class Size guidelines as follows:

Pre-K-3 = 17 4-6 = 23 7-9 = 25 10-12 = 27

Our class sizes in Core subjects are as follows:

Pre-K-3 = 18 4-6 = 19.7 7-9 = 20.3 10-12 = 21.5

Reduced class sizes, when coupled with a change in instructional practice, yield educational benefits.

8. An Educated Population is the Alberta Advantage

Alberta’s economy will strengthen if Alberta students receive a well-rounded education. Specifically we target numeracy, Religion, and literacy.

9. Personal: Why does it matter to you?

Include a personal story.

Please Report back on your Advocacy efforts, if possible

Please share number of phone calls, letters and visits with your principal, fellow Board members and colleagues.

Parents report to their Principal who reports to the Superintendent.

School Council Members report to the Principal who reports to the Superintendent.

Individual Board members report back to the Board.

One message with many voices can make a difference

We believe that many individuals need to carry the message. MLAs respond quicker when parents voice their concerns if they have “proof” or “data”.

Write, phone, or visit your MLA

• Every letter or phone call counts

Form letters are not as successful as letters that are written individually ... on each letter to an MLA, cc the Minister of Education, the Minister of Infrastructure, and the Premier. The most successful form of communication is by phone or in person. The MLAs, Ministers and Premier are required to respond to letters and phone calls. However, they are not obliged to respond to an email!

Contact your MLA...

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