



High School Completion Rate Task Force Report

Responding to Alberta's Commission on Learning (ACOL)
Recommendation 11

November 2005



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ACOL 11 Task Force Report

INTRODUCTION

The Task Force, comprised of representatives of stakeholders, believes that finishing high school is an important step for all Albertans to create a positive future for themselves, their families and their communities. Alberta's education partners – including government, stakeholder organizations and school jurisdictions – are committed to increasing high school completion rates throughout the province. High school completion rates for Alberta jurisdictions are a key indicator of success for the basic learning system. Although there have been consistent improvements to the high school completion rates, currently only 75 % of Alberta students complete high school within five years.

To ensure high school completion rates continue to increase, recommendation 11 of The Alberta Commission on Learning (ACOL) Report: *Every Child Learns, Every Child Succeeds*, released in October 2003, encouraged government to:

Develop and implement a comprehensive province-wide strategy with the goal of ensuring that 90% of students complete Grade 12 within four years of starting high school.

To achieve this recommendation, ACOL identified some strategies to attain this goal. This Task Force reaffirms the strategies outlined in the ACOL report.

The Task Force believes that Alberta has rigorous curricula, skilled and innovative teachers and a comprehensive approach to measuring student progress. However, to improve the province's high school completion rate, it is important to re-examine the education system and build upon its current successes.

BACKGROUND

The *Alberta Learning 2002-2003 Business Plan* set a target for improving the five year rate of high school completion students from 70% to 75%. In setting this target, the ministry drew on the *Removing Barriers to High School Completion – Final Report* (September 2001). This report included input gathered from focus groups around the province and the identification of barriers to high school completion and critical outcomes. It stated that, “although this input was broadly based, these outcomes require further discussion with stakeholders to gauge the level of support for them and to consider optional strategies and implementation options” (p. i).

Starting in 2002-2003, government provided jurisdictional and provincial three- and five-year high school completion rates to school jurisdictions. In the *Guide to School Board Planning and Reporting* November 2002, school jurisdictions were required to report their high school completion rates and this continues to be a reporting and target-setting requirement. Improving

high school completion rates has been a provincial and school jurisdiction priority for the past four years. There has been much work in key areas such as Safe and Caring Schools initiatives, Effective Behaviour Support, local projects funded through the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AIS), expanding alternative program delivery models and meeting special education students' learning needs. These and other similar strategies are either directly or indirectly linked to supporting high school completion.

As indicated in Table 1 below, some improvements to the province's high school completion rate have been made. It should be noted that improvement to high school completion rates has occurred through a complex evolving context of factors in which there are multiple, sometimes negative, variables at play. Changing immigration patterns, strong labour markets, and inclusive education represent some of the variables that have affected school and classroom environments and as a result completion rates.

Although recommendation 11 cites "completing grade 12 within four years of starting high school", for the 2005-2008 school years school jurisdictions will be reporting their three, four and five year rates and setting targets for the five-year completion rate.

Completion Year	1997/1998	1998/1999	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004
3 year rate	61.7	62.8	65.0	65.0	65.5	67.3	68.9
4 year rate		69.2	70.2	71.8	71.9	72.1	71.6
5 year rate			72.8	73.8	75.1	75.1	75.4

On February 2, 2005, the Minister of Education struck a Task Force to facilitate the improvement of high school completion rates. The membership of the Task Force included stakeholder representatives from Alberta Education, Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA), College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS), Alberta Home and School Councils' Association (AHSCA), Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), post-secondary colleges (NorQuest), First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) community, Métis Nations of Alberta, Fédérations des Conseils Scolaires Francophones de l'Alberta, and the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce. The Task Force held their first meeting on February 28, 2005.

The terms of reference for the Task Force were to review a consultation plan, review the summarized data from the consultation meetings, discuss the literature review and findings, recommend to the Minister a province-wide strategy that includes reference to cross-ministry initiatives and community supports, and assist in communicating the province-wide strategy to improve high school completion rates. To support the ongoing work of Alberta Education, information was gathered during the consultation process on promising practices and how to share them.

Between March and April 2005, a series of stakeholder consultation meetings were held. A literature review provided background information in developing and informing the consultation

process. A variety of different groups were invited to the consultation meetings. The meeting participants included:

- Six Zone consultation meetings
27 participants were invited to attend each meeting, including principals, teachers, school counsellors, central office administrators, Aboriginal liaison workers, school council representatives, special education coordinators/teachers, superintendents and trustees. A total of 115 people participated.
Locations: Lethbridge, Red Deer, Calgary, Edmonton, St. Paul, Grande Prairie.
- Six Principals consultation meetings
12 secondary principals were invited to attend each meeting. A total of 50 principals participated.
Locations: Lethbridge, Red Deer, Calgary, Edmonton, St. Paul, Grande Prairie.
- Six At-Risk Student consultation meetings
12 secondary at-risk students were invited to each meeting. A total of 41 at-risk students participated.
Locations: Lethbridge, Red Deer, Calgary, Edmonton, St. Paul, Grande Prairie.
- Six First Nations Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Community meetings
12-20 participants were invited to attend, including elders, community members, parents, students, and young people who left school early. A total of 60 participants participated.
Locations: Wabasca, Medicine Hat, Calgary, Rocky Mountain House, St. Paul.
- One meeting composed of 12 young people who left school early was held in Edmonton.

Participants in the consultation meetings expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the content shared and the processes used to collect data. Including youth in the consultation process was acknowledged and appreciated by participants.

The data gathered from the consultation meetings was combined and analyzed thematically. Many of the emergent themes and issues identified in the consultation meetings were endorsed by the Task Force and informed the Task Force discussion. Additional information was provided by the *Removing Barriers to High School Completion – Final Report* (September 2001), consultation with the Youth in Transition Committee, related Cycle 1 AISI projects, and Zone Annual Education Results Reports. A draft report including recommendations was developed and distributed to the executive level of stakeholder organizations for feedback. The recommendations and feedback received was reviewed by the Task Force as a whole. A collaborative process involving compromise and reaching consensus was used by the Task Force to develop the following set of recommendations. However, complete consensus could not be reached on three recommendations – resulting in a voting process that instead reflected the opinions of the majority members of the Task Force present. The Task Force feels that this voting process, combined with limited stakeholder feedback does not result in unqualified stakeholder support for these recommendations. (See Appendix 1: Summary of executive level stakeholder organization feedback.)

KEY DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the work to date, the Task Force has made 25 recommendations for the Minister's consideration. These recommendations have been grouped into five categories:

- Success for All Students
- Classroom and School Climate
- Career Exploration and Planning
- Student Supports
- Research and Ongoing Improvement Initiatives

Although members of the Task Force worked collaboratively in making these recommendations, it is important to acknowledge that time constraints have not allowed for broad stakeholder membership feedback – though the opportunity for stakeholder executive level feedback was provided. A summary of this feedback is provided in Appendix 1 of this report.

The operational definition of “at-risk” that the Task Force used was “at risk of not completing high school” (Levin, 2004). The Task Force viewed “at-risk” as a possible phase that some students may experience due to a particular set of circumstances. Some students may be at-risk for a short period of time, others for extended periods of time. It is widely accepted that leaving school early and not completing high school is best thought of as a process – not a decision made at a single point in time. It is a process that is characterized by multiple and dynamic causal factors that can appear as early as kindergarten. Ministries, community agencies, school jurisdictions and the teaching profession need to work together to provide appropriate services to students and their families so that all students can successfully complete high school.

Success for All Students

The Task Force believes success looks different for different students. Alberta's education system needs to ensure appropriate relevant curricula, pedagogy and assessment tools to meet the diverse learning needs of all students. A major portion of programming, high school structure and diploma requirements address the educational needs of those students who attend university. To fully acknowledge that there are a variety of ways for students to succeed in school and that there are multiple purposes of a basic education, it is important to re-examine the programming needs of all students and ensure that appropriate programming, learning opportunities, assessment tools and credentials are provided, promoted and accessed.

Parents want the very best educational opportunities for their children. Sometimes school staff members are faced with a dilemma between parental expectations and appropriate student programming which parents may perceive as limiting their future post-secondary opportunities. Rather than being viewed as limiting post secondary opportunities, alternate career and technical training possibilities should be valued and promoted by all stakeholders. An additional complication faced by school staff, parents and students is post secondary entry requirements, which can be used as a screening mechanism rather than a content prerequisite requirement as, for example, Pure Mathematics 30.

Recognizing that Provincial Achievement Test (PAT) and Diploma examination results are important components of the current accountability framework, the Task Force feels that there is need to also consider a broader array of qualitative and quantitative measures that address the full range of the educational goals and outcomes outlined in the *Guide to Education Handbook – ECS to Grade 12*. With a broader set of measures Alberta Education will be able to formulate a more comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of the education system. Additionally, this would enable Alberta Education to report on the ability of the system to meet all students' learning needs and underscore the value of academic, vocational, technical, artistic and other learning pathways to success.

The Task Force believes that the voice of students is important and needs to be valued. Often students can be very insightful with regard to their learning needs and how these needs could be best met. The link between this voice and government could be facilitated through the creation of a student youth forum.

Many school jurisdictions are exploring, piloting and implementing a range of alternative delivery models to adapt to changing student needs and provide flexible programming. Students and teachers perceive that Outreach programs, tutorial programs, and locally developed alternative delivery programs and supports are successful. However, it must be acknowledged that there are often higher costs associated with running such alternative delivery programs.

Issues surrounding Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) funding for FNMI learners are complex and multifaceted. The funding framework used by INAC is not the same as the funding framework used provincially. For the almost 7,000 First Nations learners living on Reserves and attending provincial school, funding is provided by INAC to the jurisdiction according to a tuition agreement. There is no one common tuition agreement; although there is an attempt to establish some parity with provincial educational funding, each tuition agreement is customized to meet the needs of the individual First Nations community and school jurisdiction. Since the 2004/2005 school year, many school jurisdictions under tuition agreements have expressed concern that INAC funding is not adequate and does not match the provincial funding allocation received for each FNMI student attending their schools. This creates a situation of meeting the needs of more FNMI learners with fewer resources. This situation is exacerbated when one considers the reduced severe disabilities funding received from INAC and the sliding funding scale used for clusters of students with severe emotional/behavioural disabilities.

Conversely, many First Nations parents living on Reserves feel that there is little commitment from provincial schools to keep their children throughout the entire school year and provide appropriate programming when INAC provides full funding to jurisdictions based on a specific enrolment dates. Parental concerns center on First Nations students who leave provincial schools after the funding dates looking for alternate programming from the Reserve schools. These First Nation students have had their funding committed to the provincial school creating an unfavourable financial situation for the Reserve schools– a situation that is not conducive to supporting students completing high school. The Task Force believes that the issues associated with INAC funding and tuition agreements need to be reviewed and addressed.

Both the literature review and the consultation data indicate that many students - including FNMI students - come to school without sufficient entry-level skills and knowledge. Closing the gap between student readiness, and the skills and knowledge expectations of the current prerequisite learner outcomes is challenging. The Task Force supports that “the first priority should be on making sure at-risk children have access to junior kindergarten programs targeted at meeting their needs and ensuring they come to school ready to learn” (Alberta Commission on Learning, 2003, p.45). Although ACOL recommendation 2 cites a universal program, the Task Force recognizes that pre-grade 1 programs are not mandated and respects the rights of parents to choose to access these program offerings for their children.

The identification process for mild/moderate special needs students has created challenges for school jurisdictions and schools due to the competing demands placed on jurisdiction and school budgets. Because of the limited resources available, schools often have to prioritize assessments for students based on a variety of school-based criteria balancing the needs of the child with available resources. Considering the degree of student need, often assessments are prioritized within a given school year. And, because of the level of expertise needed to administer and interpret these assessments, the cost per student assessment can be substantial. For example, a psycho-educational assessment can cost upwards of \$1,000. Situations exist within the province where some students never make the prioritized assessment list or who never make it to the top of the list and hence, “fall between the cracks.”

The literature review conducted to inform this Task Force noted that it is important for FNMI student success that students gain knowledge of Aboriginal cultures, languages, histories, values, heritage and spiritual beliefs. To enable more FNMI students to complete high school, courses such as Aboriginal Studies, Métis history, and Aboriginal languages need to be offered. These courses, coupled with teacher professional development opportunities focusing on improved cultural understandings and application of appropriate instruction, will strengthen the quality of educational opportunities for FNMI learners.

Meeting the needs of an increasing number of school-aged students for whom English is a second language is proving to be challenging. This is particularly true for those students who also have low literacy levels in their first language. For these students to experience success, their social and emotional needs also need to be addressed. Because the influx of immigrants and refugees is occurring mainly in the urban centers, addressing these diverse student needs is difficult for large urban boards. There is a need to review English as a Second Language (ESL) programming, funding and programming flexibility given to school boards to ensure that the diverse needs of these students are being met. The Task Force supports strategies that promote the involvement of ESL families in school councils and other school related functions.

Recommendations:

- 1. Alberta Education, in consultation with education stakeholders, review and address the alignment of the following with the goals of education and student learning outcomes as outlined in the *Guide to Education Handbook – ECS to Grade 12*:**
 - **Emphasis on provincial assessments in school, jurisdiction, and provincial accountability relative to the full range of learning outcomes.**

- Relevancy of achievement tests and diploma examinations to students' cultural backgrounds and their learning needs and interests.
 - Requirements for a high school diploma.
2. Alberta Education improve relevancy of provincial curricula and sequencing of high school core courses to:
 - ensure that the learning needs, aspirations and interest of non-university bound students can be addressed effectively in school programs, and,
 - encourage post secondary institutions to review and modify, if necessary, their entry requirements in Mathematics in particular to fit the level actually needed for success in the area of further study.
 3. The Minister of Education and school jurisdictions engage at-risk students in dialogue on topics that impact high school completion in their specific contexts.
 4. Alberta Education work together with stakeholders to identify and address all the constraints that restrict program offering and flexibility, including but not limited to the elements of the CEU funding model.
 5. Alberta Education review and address the issues associated with the student funding framework utilized by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and subsequent tuition agreements as to how these impact the completion rates of First Nations high school students living on-reserve and attending provincial schools.
 6. Alberta Education working with school jurisdictions review Outreach policy and effectiveness of the program in improving high school completion rates, the identification of any barriers in program funding and delivery, and the identification of opportunities for sharing promising practices.
 7. Alberta Education provide additional funding to enable jurisdictions to offer early intervention programs for at-risk pre-school students as appropriate to their contextual needs.
 8. Alberta Education provide an increase in funding for the identification of students and the provision of appropriate learning and other support interventions for those students identified with mild or moderate special needs.
 9. Alberta Education work with school authorities to investigate, implement and share effective practices for improving the high school completion rates for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students including language and culture programs.
 10. Alberta Education work with stakeholders to research the learning, social and emotional needs of ESL students, especially those with low literacy levels in their first language, and review funding and programming flexibility to ensure school jurisdictions are able to address these needs.

Classroom and School Climate

The consultation data indicates a perception that one barrier to increasing high school completion rates is an imbalance between the instructional (cognitive) and the affective components of many teachers' practice that occurs as the focus on rigorous knowledge of the academic disciplines increases along the K-12 continuum. The Task Force believes that achievement in non-core subjects and the affective domain of teaching that involves the development of caring relationships with students needs to be promoted and valued.

Not all contexts in Alberta's education system support the appropriate balance of these components. The required performance measures in the *Guide to Education Planning and Results Reporting* are broad and reflect, to some degree, goals around the affective domain; however, these performance measures are often not reported and celebrated to the same degree as those from the instructional (cognitive) domain.

The Task Force believes a welcoming, safe and caring school climate is an important contributing factor to students staying in school. There appears to be a causal relationship between school climate and student attendance for many at-risk students.

The Task Force believes that there is a need to acknowledge and respect the diversity that exists in Alberta schools. Where respect for diversity does not exist, students may be subjected to bullying, teasing, and racism that cause students to feel schools are unwelcoming. Students react to these factors by not attending school. Students perceive that schools do not always address these issues effectively. Schools need support in developing and implementing effective strategies to address these issues. The Task Force supports the work that Alberta Education is doing with Effective Behaviour Support Training and the work with other government ministries to respond to bullying prevention and intervention needs of school authorities. Work is continuing on the three-year province-wide bully prevention strategy, with a teen campaign being launched during the 2005/2006 school year.

The consultation data indicates that a need for enhanced university course work for pre-service teachers and improved professional development for school and jurisdiction staff to increase FNMI cultural awareness. There appears to be a lack of FNMI cultural understanding and practices at the school level that respect and support the identity of FNMI students. There is also a perceived need to increase positive FNMI role models in schools. However, the need to provide cultural awareness professional development opportunities extends beyond improving and understanding FNMI cultures. The Task Force recognizes that, in some areas of the province, changing immigration patterns are creating corresponding changes to the composition of classrooms. In these ethno-culturally diverse communities, the need to improve staff professional development opportunities to assist staff in better understanding the cultures and practices reflected in their communities.

The consultation data indicates that the relationships between FNMI families, communities, jurisdictions and schools need to improve. Many FNMI parents do not feel welcomed by the school. Schools need to make a special effort to establish supportive, trusting relationships with students' families to improve high school completion of FNMI learners. Alberta Education is

currently supporting a number of initiatives to improve these relationships. For example, the FNMI School Community Learning Project is in the process of developing a training manual to support school staff and parents to better understand and appreciate Aboriginal cultures and improve the school community learning environment for Aboriginal learners. The Aboriginal Curriculum Infusion Project supports the infusion of Aboriginal perspectives into all aspects of curricula.

The Task Force believes that many of the principles and strategies to increase FNMI parental involvement in schools are similar and transferable to immigrant parents. The Task Force encourages school staff members to continue to reduce barriers and make immigrant parents and families feel welcome and comfortable in school settings.

Recommendations:

- 11. Alberta Education support the development of assessment instruments and strategies that measure directly and enable reporting of non-core subjects, lifelong learning, preparation for employment, and citizenship outcomes that are required in the *Guide to Education Planning and Results Reporting* and that are currently assessed indirectly through satisfaction surveys.**
- 12. Schools and school councils work together to assess, monitor and share effective practices for engaging the FNMI community, increasing FNMI parental and community involvement, and ensuring that FNMI parents and community members feel welcome.**
- 13. Schools and school councils work together to assess and monitor the extent to which school cultures are inclusive, celebrate diversity, equity and human rights, and demonstrate respect for differences in physical characteristics, mental ability, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity.**
- 14. Alberta Education support school authorities in ensuring that at-risk students have a least one adult in the school who knows them well and will support them in their learning.**
- 15. Alberta Education, the ATA and school jurisdictions and community organizations work together to provide professional development opportunities for teachers and support staff to enable them to respond effectively to student diversity and the particular learning needs of FNMI students.**
- 16. The Minister of Education work closely with the Minister of Advanced Education, the faculties of education, the FNMI communities, and the ATA to create and implement courses focused on FNMI perspectives within university education and baccalaureate.**
- 17. Alberta Education and stakeholders such as school jurisdictions and the ATA encourage secondments and teacher exchanges between FNMI teachers and**

counsellors from reserve and settlement schools with teachers in public and separate schools to provide rich learning and professional development experiences.

Career Information and Planning

Many students do not have an appreciation of the variety of career opportunities and possibilities available to them. They have difficulty seeing the connections between their current school programs, completing high school, and subsequent career opportunities. This is due in part to the difficulty that some students encounter in seeing the relevance of their current learning. More work needs to be done to clarify the relationship between current educational programming, potential career pathways and post-secondary learning opportunities. For those students who do not have well-defined career ambitions, there is a need to articulate entry requirements for such opportunities as Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAP) and to demonstrate clear linkages between programs such as Integrated Occupation Program (Knowledge and Employability Courses).

To facilitate a smooth transition from school to the world of work or further study, there is a need to develop and implement a model, such as Learner Pathways, that improves student knowledge of self, and informs an understanding of relevant post-secondary and career opportunities that assists students and parents in planning for the world of work. There is also a pressing need to ensure that schools provide adequate career counselling to students. Competing resource demands have caused many schools to eliminate the role of the school counsellor. In addition, increased demands for personal and crisis counselling have diminished the school counsellor's ability to offer career counselling.

Recommendations:

18. Alberta Education:

- **ensure that curriculum and funding are available for schools to work with students to come to know themselves (abilities and interests) and engage in meaningful and timely career development planning with staff which may include trained career counsellors and,**
- **work with other government departments and industry to expand the range of credentialed occupations.**

19. The Minister of Education work with the Minister of Advanced Education to ensure entry requirements for apprenticeship programs are clearly articulated with high school programs, especially programs such as those comprised primarily of Integrated Occupational courses (Knowledge and Employability courses).

Providing Student Supports

Many at-risk students require support through multi-agency and inter-disciplinary front line services to enable them to be successful in their courses, as schools alone cannot address the issues that students face. These support services are particularly critical during junior and senior high school. Research indicates that for many students a critical stage in the process of leaving school early occurs during Grade 8 and 9. At the high school level, the Task Force feels the allocation of funding using the CEU process does not provide upfront resources to meet the needs of these students. To address the specific needs of at-risk students in high schools, schools need adequate upfront funding to develop school-based supports.

Schools need to be able to access and employ the services of community agencies in a timely manner. Currently the delivery of multi-agency support to at-risk students does not appear to be a single-entry, coordinated and seamless process. The Student Health Initiative Project (SHIP) and Children and Youth with Complex Needs (CYCN) as well as locally developed programs and initiatives have been working toward addressing this situation. Such services are not perceived to be consistently available in rural areas. The need for coordination of multi-agency and inter-disciplinary services has frequently created increased and unachievable demands on school counselling and administrative staff. Issues of access, communication (sharing of information), availability of proactive measures, roles and responsibilities of service providers and types of supportive services need to be reviewed and addressed.

Recommendations:

- 20. Alberta Education provide jurisdictions with non-enveloped, upfront financial support in addition to CEU funding to assist in addressing the needs of at-risk secondary students for the 2006/2007 school year.**
- 21. Alberta Education work with cross-ministry partners to conduct a provincial review to evaluate whether the Student Health Initiative integrated services model is effective in providing coordinated services to students and families and to share promising practices to address student supports needed to improve high school completion.**
- 22. Alberta Education ensure that there is additional funding to support guidance counselling services and to coordinate the delivery of multi-agency and school-based services including exit interviews of students leaving school.**

Research and Ongoing Improvement Initiatives

The need to continue enhanced literacy and numeracy supports at the elementary and secondary levels was identified. Providing the necessary remedial interventions may prevent students leaving school at later stages. Teacher professional development and classroom resources are foundational to the successful provision of these supports. The Early Literacy Initiative and many AISI projects are dedicated to addressing these needs. This work needs to continue.

The Task Force strongly supports the continuation of AISI. Consultation meeting participants throughout the province acknowledged the positive impact that AISI projects had on job-embedded professional development and, in many cases, on improved ability to meet the learning needs of a particular group of learners. However, specific concerns with regard to the AISI model were also expressed.

Effective adaptive professional practice is critical to enhancing high school completion rates. This has been recognized over time with professional development strategies being integral to improvement initiatives. However, many transformational changes are still at the early stages of being embedded into professional teaching practice when the project is coming to an end. To ensure long-term success, the Task Force feels Alberta Education needs to continue to support the implementation of these strategies before embarking on new initiatives and projects.

Although the literature review identified effective practices to remove barriers to high school completion, there is little research that examines the Alberta context. The Task Force believes that AISI projects specific to high school completion should have the project timeline extended to 5 years and that Alberta Education provide jurisdictions with requested relevant contextual data to guide their project development. As effective practices for improving high school completion are identified over time, there is a need to provide a sharing and support mechanism in which schools of similar contexts can share their insights and successes to inform improvement.

From time to time as they revise existing policy or devise new policy, Alberta Education and other government departments may inadvertently develop policy that creates barriers to high school completion. Therefore, if this is to be a priority for Albertans then there is an ongoing need to review policy for negative implications on high school completion.

The Task Force is aware that some provinces such as New Brunswick and Ontario have or are in the process of increasing the mandatory school attendance age. The Task Force believes that this strategy with associated changes should be investigated in terms of potential impact on high school completion. The Task Force believes that increasing the mandatory age alone will not improve high school completion. Some of the supports and learning experiences offered to students must change to fully realize the intended improvement.

Recommendations

23. Alberta Education provide ongoing funding for AISI and for those specific to high school completion:

- **extend the project time frame to 5 years**
- **provide school authorities with data specific to the context of the research, and**
- **determine those projects that have the greatest potential to increase completion and provide financial support for the ongoing implement of these strategies within relevant contexts.**

- 24. As a part of the Alberta Government policy development process with key stakeholders, departments take into consideration the effect of existing and proposed policy on high school completion.**
- 25. The Government of Alberta investigate the potential impacts of increasing high school completion through amending the School Act to reflect that students attend school until they complete high school or reach the age of 18 years.**

SUMMARY

It is recognized that many factors influence high school completion. Many of the Alberta Commission on Learning recommendations - directly or indirectly - support increasing high school completion rates. Prenatal-preschool care, family structure and supports, and school experiences and supports are some of the factors that affect high school completion. These factors are complex, multi-faceted and interrelated. There is no typical or predictable pattern by which factors interact. There is no typical profile of a student who does not complete high school. Completing high school is the net outcome of a complex fusion of factors, specific and unique to the individual student.

It is acknowledged that Alberta Education, jurisdictions and schools currently have in place many effective policies and practices. These policies and practices have contributed to the province's present high school completion rates. It is also acknowledged that there is no easy solution, no quick fix to addressing high school completion. The Task Force believes that this comprehensive set of aligned provincial strategies, if supported and implemented, will significantly improve high school completion rates. The recommendations and initiatives of this Task Force are lost if they are not supported and championed by a leader working with the support of a stakeholder advisory committee.

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