

June 23, 2021

Alberta Education,
10044-108 Street,
Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 5E6
Attention: Honorable Minister of Education

Re: Home Education Programs Refused Supervision by Resident Public Boards for Fall 2021

Dear Honorable Minister of Education, Ms Adriana LaGrange,

I am writing on behalf of the Alberta Homeschooling Association to ask for clarification on an issue regarding public school divisions refusing to support their 15 to 18 year-old "high school age" students who want to home educate. Some public boards are accepting home education students from age 6 to 14, but not older. It is our understanding that according to the Home Education Regulation, Alberta Regulation 145/2020, parents have the right to home educate at any time:

Education Act Preamble

WHEREAS parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that may be provided to their children;

Education Act – Responsibilities of a Public School Board

11(1) A board shall ensure that each of its resident students is provided with an education program consistent with the requirements of this Act and the regulations.

Two public school divisions, Grande Prairie School Division and Rocky View School Division, are refusing to accept Notification Forms of Intent to Home Educate under a Supervised Home Education Program from their resident students because they say these students are "presumed to be in grades 10-12," and the boards are not supporting home education for the "high school" years. They want the children to move to online or in-person "school-provided" high school. Since there is no additional need for school authorities' resources or funding, or supervision responsibilities, for school board support of teenage children's home education programs, this is a refusal of the parent's right to home educate based purely on the school division's educational philosophy, and not based on the school authorities' capacity to provide supervision.

Murray Arnold, Principal of Rocky View School Division states in an email sent to parents, "Rocky View Schools believes that students should be following the Alberta Education curriculum and earning credits in Grades 10 to 12, so they no longer support traditional home education past Grade 9."

Angela Desbarres, Superintendent of Grande Prairie Public School Division states, "We don't have to take families that request home education. In conversations with Alberta Education, they did not recommend that we take on high school this year."

We believe that resident school divisions refusing supervision of their teenaged home education children demonstrates egregious disregard for parent choice and boldly underestimates the value of high school education that does not follow the AB Programs of Study, a right that is enshrined by legislation.

We believe that children have the right to an education and parents have the prior right to choose the kind of education for their children. This includes the choice to home educate in their resident boundary with supervision, funding and support. Parents pay taxes designated to their local resident school division and parents have the right to utilize their resident school board's activities.

Parents should not be diverted to a non-resident associate school board in order to home educate, if that is their preference. Many non-resident associate school boards can't offer programming or activities because of geographical barriers.

Parents should not be left with no other option than to notify directly with the government and forego funding and support.

Resident school boards have no right to determine that high school aged children must follow a particular course of education such as online classes, which may be contrary to what their parents desire such as a home education program.

We believe as stated in the Education Act, that children's best educational interests must be considered before school division funding policies and philosophical ideas about education.

Please clarify whether resident school boards must provide home education supervision for their resident students, *regardless of student age*, if notified before September 30th. If our interpretation is correct, we would like to know what you will do to ensure that teenage students in Grande Prairie and Rocky View will be able to notify with their division, as well as to ensure that other divisions do not initiate similar efforts to divert or discourage families wishing to home educate their children at any age.

Sincerely,

Judy Arnall

President