

May 6, 2025

Honourable Demetrios Nicolaides  
Minister of Education  
*Via email: [education.minister@gov.ab.ca](mailto:education.minister@gov.ab.ca)*

Dear Minister Nicolaides,

### **Following up on update to Standards for Special Education**

This letter follows up on our [September 10, 2024 letter](#) regarding a timeline for updating the Standards for Special Education. Thank you for your response and for your commitment to these important conversations. We value our collaborative working relationship and wish to share with you some of the increasing feedback that Trustees are receiving from families on this topic. It's our belief that robust, meaningful engagement with school boards, educators and families is essential to properly update the Standards for Special Education. This update necessitates adequate funding to achieve those standards, so that all students can be supported with choices that best suit their K-12 educational needs and supports them in their successful transition to life after high school.

### **Families are asking for increased support**

More than ever, families are contacting Edmonton Public Trustees to tell us they are choosing Edmonton Public Schools because of the range of choice and support we offer to students with specialized learning needs. We are proud to provide choice to families in meeting the educational needs of their children. This can include full integration in a regular or alternative program, partial integration paired with enrolment in a Division centre program in a community setting, full-time enrolment in a Division centre program, or, in some cases, enrolment in a specialized school designed to meet the unique needs of that student.

Many of the families we hear from express a desire for additional support and accommodation for their children, whether within an integrated classroom setting or a specialized program setting, and frustration that current funding levels are inadequate to meet the needs of their child in their educational setting of choice.



**Stakeholder engagement is crucial**

Meaningful, solutions-focused engagement with school boards, educators and families who support these students is imperative as it will:

- Ensure that families, school boards and government are all on the same page
- Reinforce the government's commitment to protecting parental choice
- Raise awareness of all Albertans of the importance of supporting students to reach their full potential
- Establish funding expectations in alignment with the Standards so that the Standards can be successfully implemented

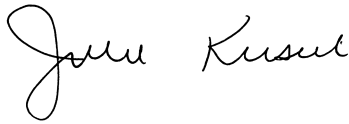
Engaging with families, educators and school boards could lead to insightful conversations around topics such as:

- What information don't we have right now that could be helpful?
- How can we tie support for students requiring specialized learning supports into career pathways or other meaningful engagement with the wider community?
- How can we best maintain choice of learning environments for families, ranging from full integration to fully specialized learning environments, within the public education system?
- What should the Standards for Special Education look like to support students to be successful, not only in their K-12 journey, but in setting them up for their life after high school?

We appreciate your willingness to hear from us on this important topic and are optimistic that a collaborative approach with all stakeholders, including the families most impacted, will lead to updated Standards that address the evolving needs of our students. We believe that by working together, we can ensure that all students receive the support they need to thrive.

If you would like to discuss anything in this letter further, or would like to come see any of our programs in action, please reach out to me at [trustee.julie.kusiek@epsb.ca](mailto:trustee.julie.kusiek@epsb.ca) or by phone at 780-429-8087.

Sincerely,



Julie Kusiek  
Board Chair

c: Marilyn Dennis, Alberta School Boards Association President  
Dennis MacNeil, Public School Boards' Association of Alberta President  
James Johnson, Chief of Staff

