

Serving as a Catholic School Trustee:

A Handbook for Prospective Candidates



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A Prayer for Trustees and Electors



Dear Lord,

**We feel your presence in every aspect of our lives.
You enter our thoughts and actions,
let us be alive to your voice in our hearts and in our minds.**

**Guide us, Lord, as we enter into this 2021 election season.
When we are faced with difficult choices,
fill our decisions with your will for us
and your desire for the betterment of the world.**

**Be with us as we call for your assistance
to navigate this political terrain,
let us open ourselves to your voice
and be always ready and willing to embrace
the beacon of your light.**

**We ask this through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Amen**

01. Called to Serve as Catholics



Alberta boasts a publicly-funded educational system where Catholic education holds a distinct role.

This role has strong historic roots, existing prior to the creation of the province, and was constitutionally enshrined in the Alberta Act, 1905. The Alberta government is committed to providing Alberta students with an exceptional education system that offers them the choice of attending a publicly funded Catholic school.

Catholic education involves a unique partnership between the school, home and parish. Together this triad seeks to develop a student's whole person by integrating academic excellence and faith. The central focus of Catholic education is Jesus Christ.

Catholic schools are distinctive faith communities that grow the spiritual, academic and physical needs of students through the permeation of the Alberta Education curriculum with Gospel values and sacramental life. Christ is the centre of the Catholic school and his presence and teaching permeate the school building. If we fail to do this, we not only fail to carry out the educational mission of the Church, but also put our constitutionally-protected denominational right at risk.¹

This handbook is meant to explore the unique place that Catholic schools have in Alberta. In addition, it will define the role of the Catholic school trustee and inform Catholic school electors of their unique role in the Catholic partnership between school, home, and parish. The handbook is intended only as an introduction and guide. For additional information, please contact your local Catholic school board, the Ministry of Education, the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association, or the Alberta School Boards Association.

¹ Feehan, Kevin P. (2008).

02. Service to Christ

a. A Letter from ACSTA Bishop Liaison William McGrattan



WILLIAM T. MCGRATTAN



BISHOP *of* CALGARY

May 20, 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

Jesus Christ is the centre of Catholic education. The ultimate aim of every Catholic school is to lead each of its students to encounter the living Lord. Catholic Education engages with the family, local Church, and parishes to provide a learning experience in which young people will grow in knowledge and wisdom as they come to know and love Jesus Christ and serve others in His name.

Catholic school trustees exercise the important role of governance of our Catholic schools. They uphold and protect the Catholic identity and mission of our schools and promote publicly funded Catholic education in the Province of Alberta. This necessarily involves a deep respect for parents as the first educators in the faith for their children and a desire to engage collaboratively with all the faith communities, individuals, and groups who support Catholic Education.

Recognizing that the heart and soul of Catholic education is Jesus Christ, trustees accept that their primary and most important responsibility is to give witness to the Catholic Faith. In the exercise of their dual accountability to both civil and canon law, trustees will ensure that the Gospel of our Lord and the teachings of His Church will fully permeate not only the educational curriculum, but also the communal life and witness of faith in each Catholic school. As stewards of Catholic Education, trustees are called to act with integrity in the fulfillment of their particular responsibilities and to work in close collaboration with the Alberta Bishops, the Catholic superintendents, administrators, teachers, and support staff to provide students and their parents with an authentically Catholic education.

The Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education's 2014 document, *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion*, outlines the “quality hallmarks that Catholic schools and universities must be able to ensure:

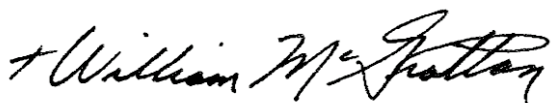
- respect for individual dignity and uniqueness;
- a wealth of opportunities that are offered to young people for them to grow and develop their abilities and talents;
- a balanced focus on cognitive, affective, social, professional, ethical and spiritual aspects;
- encouragement for every pupil to develop their talents, in a climate of cooperation and solidarity;
- the promotion of research as a rigorous commitment towards truth, being aware that human knowledge has its limits, but also with a great openness of mind and heart; and
- respect of ideas, openness to dialogue, the ability to interact and work together in a spirit of freedom and care.”

These hallmarks of an authentic Catholic education demand similar qualities in those who aspire to become a Catholic trustee. They call for women and men of faith, dedication, and vision fully committed to the Lord and His Church. The Catholic school trustee is an important ministry of leadership within the local Church in Alberta. This role of witness and service is of critical importance for ensuring that future generations will have the opportunity to experience the gift of Catholic education in the Province of Alberta.

This resource pertaining to the role of Catholic trustee is the work of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees Association (ACSTA). The information it provides is offered to help members of the Catholic community to discern the call to serve as trustee. As the Alberta Liaison Bishop for Catholic Education, I commend the ACSTA for their work to support the recruitment of faithful trustees who will serve, lead, and govern Catholic Education.

May God guide you in the discernment of His Will, may you follow Him with courage and determination, trusting always in His providence and grace.

Yours in Christ,



†William T. McGrattan
Bishop of Calgary

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b. *Church Authority and Catholic Education*



Book III of the Catholic Church's *Code of Canon Law* is dedicated to the topic of '**The Teaching Function of the Church**' (Cann. 793-821). Chapter I speaks specifically to schools, and clearly defines the role of ecclesial authority in Catholic education:

Can. 803 §1. A Catholic school is understood as one which a competent ecclesiastical authority or a public ecclesiastical juridic person directs or which ecclesiastical authority recognizes as such through a written document.

§2. The instruction and education in a Catholic school must be grounded in the principles of Catholic doctrine; teachers are to be outstanding in correct doctrine and integrity of life.

§3. Even if it is in fact Catholic, no school is to bear the name Catholic school without the consent of competent ecclesiastical authority.

Can. 804 §1. The Catholic religious instruction and education which are imparted in any schools whatsoever or are provided through the various instruments of social communication are subject to the authority of the Church. It is for the conference of bishops to issue general norms about this field of action and for the diocesan bishop to regulate and watch over it.

§2. The local ordinary is to be concerned that those who are designated teachers of religious instruction in schools, even in non-Catholic ones, are

outstanding in correct doctrine, the witness of a Christian life, and teaching skill.

Can. 805 For his own diocese, the local ordinary has the right to appoint or approve teachers of religion and even to remove them or demand that they be removed if a reason of religion or morals requires it.

Can. 806 §1. The diocesan bishop has the right to watch over and visit the Catholic schools in his territory, even those which members of religious institutes have founded or direct. He also issues prescripts which pertain to the general regulation of Catholic schools; these prescripts are valid also for schools which these religious direct, without prejudice, however, to their autonomy regarding the internal direction of their schools.

§2. Directors of Catholic schools are to take care under the watchfulness of the local ordinary that the instruction which is given in them is at least as academically distinguished as that in the other schools of the area.



c. Religious Dimension of Education:



“The Catholic school finds its true justification in the mission of the Church; it is based on an educational philosophy in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony. Through it the local Church evangelizes, educates, and contributes to the formation of a healthy and morally sound lifestyle among its members. The Holy Father affirms that “the need for the Catholic school becomes evidently clear when we consider what it contributes to the development of the mission of the People of God, to the dialogue between the Church and the human community, to the safeguarding of freedom of conscience....” Above all, according to the Holy Father, the Catholic school helps in achieving a double objective: “Of its nature it guides men and women to human and Christian perfection, and at the same time helps them to become mature in their faith. For those who believe in Christ, these are two facets of a single reality.”²

² Religious Dimension of Education (34)

d. *The 5 Marks of Catholic School:*³



-
1. Inspired by a supernatural vision
 2. Founded on a Christian anthropology
 3. Animated by Communion and community
 4. Imbued with a Catholic worldview throughout its curriculum
 5. Sustained by Gospel witness
-

³ Miller, Michael J.(2006)

03.Path to the Voting Booth

a. Candidate Eligibility

Candidates:

1. Must be eligible to vote in the election (see 4.d Voter Eligibility, below);
2. Must be a resident of the local separate jurisdiction for the six consecutive months immediately preceding nomination day;⁴
3. Must not otherwise be ineligible or disqualified.⁵

b. Nomination Papers

Nomination papers are due: September 20, 2021 at 12:00pm.

After deciding to run as a Catholic trustee, you must file your nomination papers. This is usually done at your local school division office. Please confirm this information with your local school board office as local authorities may set different dates and times and locations. Also consult them for the number of signatures needed on your nomination papers and who is eligible to sign your nomination papers.

c. Campaigning

Please check with your Diocese as well as school division regarding the regulations associated with campaigning on Church and/or school property.

Catholic School Board Trustee Election Protocol in Parishes (Archdiocese of Edmonton)
https://caedm.ca/Portals/0/documents/policies/1101_SchoolTrusteesElectionProtocolInParishes5Apr17.pdf

Catholic School Board Trustee Election Protocol in Parishes (Diocese of Calgary)
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Gi-zOu2A3qoIEUduzv78Ccq6J3jOQIVS/view?usp=sharing>

⁴ *Local Authorities Election Act*, Section 21.

⁵ *Local Authorities Election Act*, Sections 21, 22, 23.

d. Voter Eligibility

Who is eligible to vote?

1. You must be at least 18 years old;
2. You must be a Canadian citizen;
3. You must reside in Alberta and your place of residence is located in the school board's boundaries on election day;⁶
4. You must declare that you are Roman Catholic.⁷

e. Election Day

The next municipal general election will be held on October 18, 2021.



⁶ *Local Authorities Election Act*, Section 47.

⁷ *Education Act*, Section 74(3).

04. What do School Trustees do?

a. What do School Trustees do?

Alberta school boards help shape the future of local communities by governing the education of young people. The provincial government, through the minister of education, grants school boards the authority to make decisions regarding the direction and quality of local public education. Accountability to the public is entrenched through the election of local school board trustees every four years.

b. School Board Responsibilities

It is up to school boards to ensure all children in the community receive a quality education. Specific school board responsibilities include:

- Communicating, informing and involving parents, staff, and the community-at-large in school board decisions and activities.
- Adopting an annual budget that achieves jurisdiction priorities.
- Setting goals and priorities for the jurisdiction that achieve provincial education standards, meet the needs of students and reflect the community's wishes.
- Making and enforcing policies that set out standards and expectations regarding the actions of administration, teachers, and students.
- Lobbying the municipal and provincial governments on education issues of importance to the jurisdiction.
- Adjudicating policy or decision appeals.
- Hiring and evaluating the superintendent.

c. The Role of Trustees

A key responsibility for trustees is to stay in touch with community stakeholders so that they understand - and reflect in their decision making - what all citizens value and want from their local public schools. It is important to note that trustees do not represent any one school, neighbourhood or community. Rather, they make decisions based on the needs of the entire jurisdiction. As elected officials, trustees are required to carry out the following roles:

- **Communicators:** Trustees ensure the community has a say in what children learn by communicating effectively with stakeholders and ensuring their concerns and wishes are heard.
- **Planners:** Trustees develop plans to deal with student needs and to actively participate in the economic and social strength of local communities.
- **Policy makers:** Trustees create policies to guide administration and staff. They also evaluate the impact of these policies and make adjustments where necessary.
- **Advocates:** Trustees address and seek resolution of public education issues of importance to students, parents, and the community at large.
- **Educators:** Trustees play a key role in developing tomorrow's citizens because they have the ability to make independent decisions that impact the direction and quality of public education.
- **Adjudicators:** Trustees hear and make judgments concerning local education decisions, procedures or policies that individuals, groups or the public feel are unfair or improper.
- **Influencers:** Trustees communicate with municipal and provincial governments to ensure those who influence the allocation of funding and other resources hear the voice of the local community.
- **Legislators:** Trustees make decisions that have the status and impact of law – for example, decisions governing and enforcing the conduct of students and staff.
- **Politicians:** Trustees are elected every four years to govern the local public education system on behalf of the community. The democratic process ensures the public is engaged in the public education system.

05. Serving as a Catholic School Trustee

Catholic schools are governed by locally-elected Catholic school boards comprised of Catholic trustees. They are a vital link between the school, the church, the community, and the government, and they provide an essential Catholic oversight of the school division or district. The Catholic school trustee, answering the vocation of trusteeship, is a steward for Catholic school and Catholic education. This vocation is a call from the Church and the community to bring together faith and political life to share in the central mission of the Church: passing our Catholic faith on to our children.

To be a Catholic school trustee represents a dual challenge: trustees must ensure that students are provided an excellent education, while at the same time ensuring that Catholic principles and values are reflected in policies and practices of the school board, thus establishing an education system that is permeated by faith. In practice, this plays out in trustees being accountable to both government legislation, as well as *Canon Law* (Church Law).

Through legislation, the government delegates much of its authority for the governance of education to locally elected boards. Catholic school boards are also accountable to the Bishop in their diocese. This means that they understand and affirm the role the bishop has in ensuring that Catholic teaching is respected, promoted and cared for in the diocese they represent, as well as in the local Catholic schools.

06. What does a Catholic School Trustee do?

- As Catholic trustees, Catholic education is entrusted to us. We must hold within ourselves a deeper understanding of and commitment to the nature of Catholic education.
- As Catholic trustees, we ensure that the essence of Catholic education, formed through partnership of home, school and parish, is recognized and supported in the political arena.
- As Catholic trustees, we ensure the support and encouragement of our teachers and school staff by providing them with opportunities for faith formation.
- As Catholic trustees, we ensure that our educational leaders are able to examine their unique role in shaping the faith life of their school.
- As Catholic trustees, we ensure that our students are seen as individuals and given the chance to study in a learning environment permeated by Gospel values and sacramental life.
- As Catholic trustees, we are evangelizers of the good news of Christ in all aspects of our lives.
- As Catholic trustees, we are stewards of our Catholic faith; with care, we tend to it in our own lives and we foster it in the lives of all whom we encounter.

Catholic school trusteeship is a unique vocation which serves the Church and the community. The Catholic school trustee plays an integral part in ensuring that Christ is the heart and soul of every Catholic school. The uniqueness of Catholic education lies in the fact that its purpose and end is holiness.

07. Catholic School Boards and Associations

a. What is ACSTA?

The Alberta Catholic School Trustees Association (ACSTA) is the voluntary association of 24 Catholic school boards across the province of Alberta, the Northwest Territories, and the Yukon. ACSTA was formed in 1966 to support separate school trustees, and to provide opportunities for trustees to discuss issues important to Catholic education. Our **Mission** is to celebrate, preserve, promote, and enhance publicly-funded Catholic education. Our **Vision** is that all have access to publicly-funded Catholic education. Our **Core Purpose** is to provide a unified voice of spiritual and political leadership for publicly-funded Catholic education. For more information, please visit:

<https://acsta.ab.ca/about-us>



b. ACSTA Member Boards

- Calgary RCSSD
- Catholic Education Association of Yukon (CEAY)
- Christ the Redeemer CSSD
- Conseil scolaire Centre-Est
- Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord
- Conseil scolaire du Nord Ouest
- Conseil scolaire Francosud
- East Central Alberta CSSD
- Edmonton CSSD
- Elk Island CSSD
- Evergreen CSSD
- Ft. McMurray RCSSD
- Grande Prairie RCSSD
- Greater St. Albert RCSSD
- Holy Family CSSD
- Holy Spirit RCSSD
- Lakeland RCSSD
- Living Waters CSSD
- Lloydminster RCSSD
- Medicine Hat RCSSD
- Red Deer CSSD
- St. Paul School Division
- St. Thomas Aquinas RCSSD
- Yellowknife Catholic Schools

c. Related Catholic Trustee Associations

These are the sister boards of the ACSTA located around Canada, in jurisdictions where publicly-funded Catholic education still exists. The ACSTA liaises and coordinates efforts with these organizations on issues of shared interest:

- Canadian Catholic School Trustees Association (CCSTA)
- Ontario Catholic School Trustees Association (OCSTA)
- Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)
- Saskatchewan Catholic School Boards Association (SCSBA)
- Catholic Independent Schools of British Columbia (CISBC)
- Manitoba Catholic Schools
- Roman-Catholic Independent Schools Association - Atlantic Region (RCISA/AR)



08. Catholic Education in Alberta

a. *The Case for School Choice*

People support Catholic schools for a variety of reasons. Here are a few to keep in mind:

1. Catholic faith and culture are fundamentally distinct, and our schools reflect that distinctiveness. Our schools are ordered towards belief in God and obedience to His Son, Jesus Christ. Every subject taught and all aspects of the Catholic school environment are permeated with our faith and reflects a Catholic worldview. We do not compartmentalize our faith within our lives; nor should we do so within our schools. This is a special educational tradition that existed in Alberta before it became a province, and in Canada before it became a country.
2. Catholic schools comprise a large-scale alternative to the public system. A single monolithic school system is difficult to assess in terms of academic excellence and financial stewardship. In Alberta, the diverse dynamic that exists in our education sector allows us to compare and contrast as well as innovate and hold ourselves accountable. The scale of our Catholic system furthermore enables us to advocate for school choice in a way that would be difficult for smaller alternative schooling communities (i.e. homeschooling, private schools, etc).
3. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Church teaches that “God created the world to show forth and communicate his glory. That his creatures should share in his truth, goodness, and beauty - this is the glory for which God created them”.⁸ Jesus tells Pilate “For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice”.⁹ Saint Paul wrote to the Philippians that “whatsoever things are true...think on these things”.¹⁰ Catholic schools will always teach that the truth is intrinsically good and beautiful, and that the pursuit of truth sets one on the path to finding God (“O send out your light

⁸ CCC 319.

⁹ John 18:37

¹⁰ Philippians 4:8

and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling”)¹¹

4. Catholic schools recognize that parents are the primary educators of their children, and respect the right of parents to choose how their children will be formally educated. This principle is reflective of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26(3): “Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children”.¹² Children in Alberta’s Catholic schools are there because their parents had a choice, and they chose a Catholic education for their children. The *Choice in Education Act* echoes this language in its insertion into the preamble of the *Education Act* that, “WHEREAS parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that may be provided to their children”.¹³ Albertans demand school choice, and Catholic schools both respect and embody the fruit of that volition.

b. Our Catholic Intellectual Tradition & History

The Catholic Church has been providing education for people for a very long time. It is the largest non-governmental provider of education in the world, playing a particularly important role in low-income countries.¹⁴ Even the university is a product of Catholic culture and civilization. Our intellectual tradition spans the likes of St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, the Jesuits, St. Jerome, Boethius, Blaise Pascal, G. K. Chesterton, Edith Stein and countless others. The Catholic Church has played a special role in Canadian society, and continues to do so to this day - particularly in Alberta.

I. Catholic Education in Canada

The first school in what is now Canada was founded in 1620 at the colony of Quebec by Recollets Missionaries.¹⁵ Jesuit missionaries founded the Collège du Québec in 1635, and many other Catholic religious orders followed. Anglican schools were first established in the 18th century. The

¹¹ Psalm 43:3

¹² United Nations (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Retrieved from: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

¹³ Choice in Education Act, Section 2(a)

¹⁴ Wodon, Q. (2020). Global Catholic Education Report 2020. International Office of Catholic Education, p. 2. Retrieved from: <http://oiecinternational.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/GCE-Report-2020.pdf>

¹⁵ Ontario Ministry of Education (1994). *Education About Religion in Ontario Public Elementary Schools*. Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20140325190948/http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/religion/religioe.html#Preface>

first non-denominational schools were not established until the middle of the 19th century.

The guarantee of minority denominational schooling rights was one of the most contentious issues in Confederation. The provision for minority denominational rights was included in the Canadian Constitution in 1867 to protect Roman Catholics, a significant religious minority in the province of Ontario. The protection of this minority was arguably a precondition to the creation of Canadian nation. This right was reaffirmed in section 29 of the 1982 Constitution Act (The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms).

II. Catholic Education in Alberta

The Lac St. Anne Mission was founded by Fr. Jean-Baptiste Thibeault in 1842. By 1844 a structure was built, and by 1859 the Sisters of Charity of Montreal (the 'Grey Nuns', as they were later known) had established a formal Catholic school with 42 students.¹⁶

The role of separate schools became an issue in negotiations with the federal government over provincial status. The Alberta Act of 1905 reaffirmed the status of separate schools as defined by the British North American Act. The Alberta Act provides constitutional protection to separate schools only. Public schools are not constitutionally entrenched, and are subject to regulation by the legislature.

c. Facts & Data

Did you know?

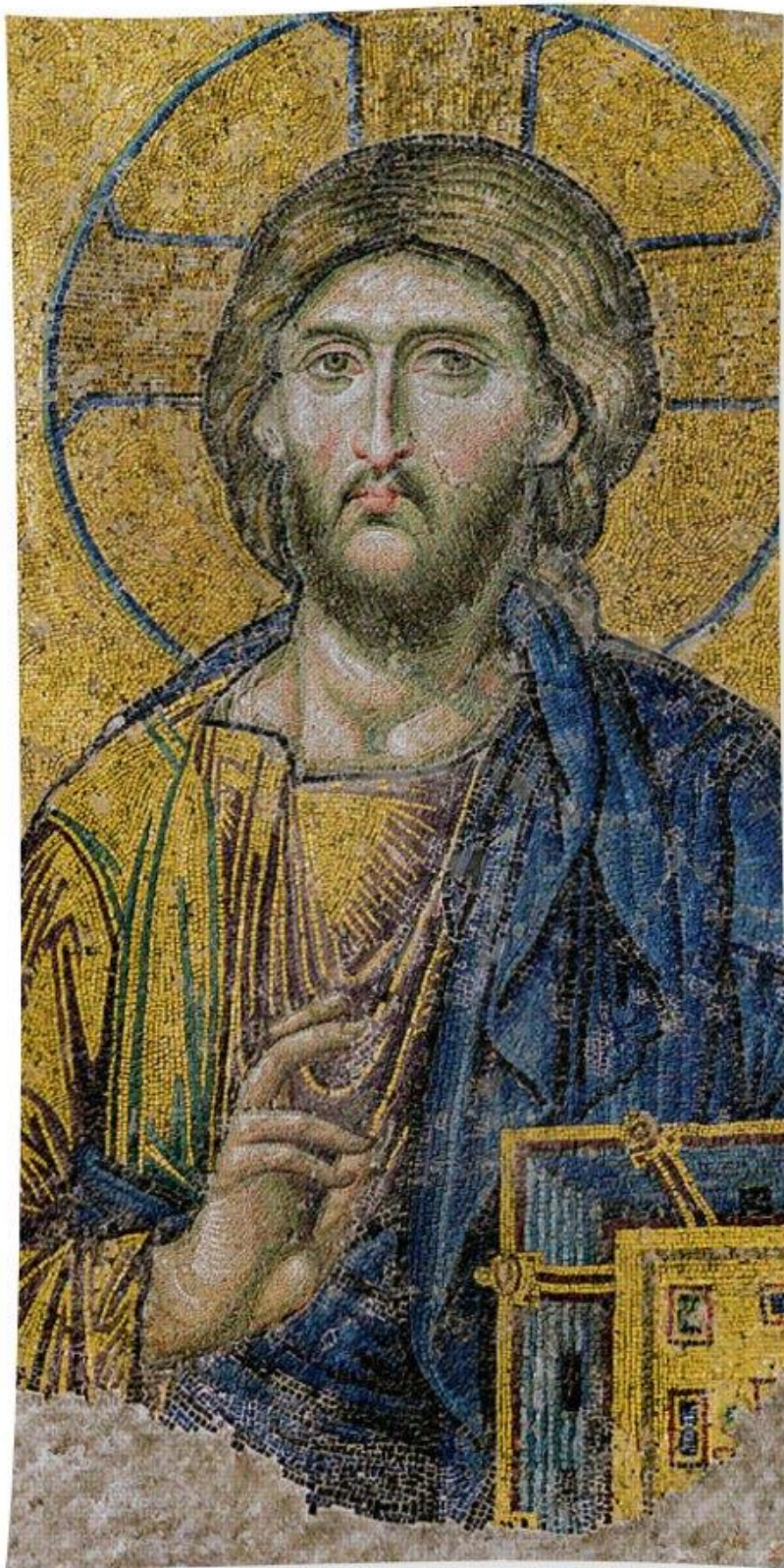
- There are 450 Catholic schools in Alberta, Northwest Territories and the Yukon.
- 183,000 students receive a Catholic education in Alberta, NWT, and the Yukon.
- Catholic schools continue to grow at a rate of 9.53% per year.¹⁷

¹⁶ Tzach Nicholas. *Alberta Catholic Schools...A Social History*. Faculty of Education, University of Alberta & Alberta Catholic School Trustees Association. 1983.

¹⁷ Based on data from the 2018/2019 to 2019/2020 school years.

- Amalgamating the school system would not result in significant savings unless Catholic school students were denied access to publicly-funded education; in fact, studies have suggested that amalgamation of municipalities, health authorities and schools in other provinces can often lead to increased administrative costs.
- Catholic schools have been operating in Alberta half a century before it became a province. Eliminating fair and equitable funding for Catholic separate schools would create a severe dent in the social fabric of Alberta, and result in significant social turmoil.
- Public and Catholic schools divisions across the province regularly engage in cost-saving partnerships related to purchasing, transportation, energy management, and other shared services.
- Catholic schools are all-inclusive, welcoming school communities where all students are unique creations of God and are cherished as gifts of God. The Catholic Church and Catholic schools have a social mandate to be open to all, especially the most vulnerable of our society. While Catholic schools must remain grounded in the tradition and teachings of the Catholic Church, we are inclusive and respect the wishes of parents to have their children benefit from a Catholic education. It is part of the ecumenical mission of the Church to allow those who choose to learn about the Catholic faith to take part in a distinctive Catholic education.





- Catholic schools provide a life-giving counterbalance to the materialistic and egocentric tendencies present in our culture.
- The number of Albertan students enrolled in Catholic schools is approximately proportional to the number of Albertans who identify as Catholic, so the taxes paid by the Catholic people of Alberta pay for Catholic education in Alberta.
- The right of publicly-funded Catholic schools to admit and educate non-Catholic students was recently confirmed by the unanimous favourable decision in *Saskatchewan vs. Good Spirit School Division* by a Saskatchewan Appeal Court (as well as the 2021 decision by the Supreme Court of Canada not to hear the subsequent appeal). The key arguments for the inclusion of non-Catholic students are the social mission of the Church, the Church's mission of evangelization, and ecumenism.

09. Election Resources

Alberta Catholic School Boards Associations Webpage:
<https://acsta.ab.ca/>

Catholic School Board Trustee Election Protocol in Parishes (Archdiocese of Edmonton)
https://caedm.ca/Portals/0/documents/policies/1101_SchoolTrusteesElectionProtocolInParishes5Apr17.pdf

Catholic School Board Trustee Election Protocol in Parishes (Diocese of Calgary)
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Gi-zOu2A3qoIEUduzv78Cc6J3jOQIVS/view?usp=sharing>

Catholic School Board Trustee Election Protocol in Parishes (Diocese of Calgary)
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Gi-zOu2A3qoIEUduzv78Cc6J3jOQIVS/view?usp=sharing>

Education Act
<https://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/e00p3.pdf>

Election Guide - Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) <https://www.asba.ab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ASBA-Trustee-Election-Guide.pdf>

Local Authorities Election Act
<https://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/L21.pdf>

School Board Election Guide - Alberta Education
<https://education.alberta.ca/school-board-elections/school-board-elections-guide/>

2021 School Board Elections Information Package
<https://education.alberta.ca/media/3795952/2021-school-board-elections-information-package-february-2021.pdf>

10. Supplemental Reading

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