



Kids Come First Responds to CBE Statement

CALGARY, AB (February 3, 2017) - Kids Come First, a new education advocacy non-profit organization, has responded to the criticism raised by the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) in its statement released after yesterday's media coverage of the Kids Come First report, "Math 911."

Expressing disappointment regarding the CBE's statement, Kids Come First founder Lisa Davis said "Kids Come First stands by the facts presented in our report and backed up by the extensive data from Alberta Education that is reprinted both on our website and in the full report. We remain hopeful that the CBE will be courageous and take steps to acknowledge the math problem and take swift and concrete action to improve student outcomes across the city, particularly in underperforming schools."

With respect to the specific rebuttals contained in the CBE's statement, responses from Kids Come First are detailed below. The CBE's full statement can be found on its website at <http://www.cbe.ab.ca/news-centre/Pages/cbe-issues-statement-about-math-results.aspx>.

CBE Statement	Kids Come First Response
<p>"The facts as presented in the Kids Come First news release are misleading and inaccurate. Our comprehensive reporting to the Province, and to our Board of Trustees demonstrates that overall, CBE students are performing well in math." (emphasis added)</p>	<p>In its own Math Strategy Engagement Roadmap (updated yesterday), the CBE says "Math scores have declined across the province, and although our results are above the province, as a system we continue to experience a decline." (emphasis added)</p> <p>Similarly, in a presentation at the Council of School Councils (COSC) meeting on January 26, the CBE told parents that Grade 6 Math PAT scores have declined by 20% in the past five years.</p> <p>The CBE has watched the continuing downward slide over the past five years. Students do not have time to wait. The issue is urgent and requires the CBE to take immediate actions to improve math performance.</p>

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<p>“On Provincial Achievement Tests, the CBE reports on every student enrolled, while other jurisdictions may choose to report only on those students who wrote the test. This means that our results include students who may have been absent or choose not to write for a variety of reasons. This negatively impacts our overall results, but aligns with our objective of encouraging every student to participate fully in the program of study, including writing the Provincial Achievement Test.”</p>	<p>Kids Come First reported on results based on students writing, which shows the results in the best possible light. If we had reported figures based on students enrolled, the CBE’s performance would look even worse. Instead of having a Grade 9 Math PAT failure rate 46% higher than the Calgary Catholic School District (CCSD), the CBE would be 53% higher.</p> <p>Instead of quibbling over whether the most valid figure is 46% or 53%, the CBE should be addressing a real plan for this astonishing discrepancy.</p>
<p>(Considering report card results in math) “Over 90 per cent [sic] of our Grade 6 students have successfully met the four curriculum outcomes.”</p>	<p>Yet 21% fail the Grade 6 Math PAT – double the percentage of those who fail the school mark. The discrepancy in reporting clearly needs to be addressed. This speaks to the reasons for frustrations with the current CBE report card system.</p>
<p>(Considering report card results in math) “Over 90 per cent [sic] of our Grade 9 students have successfully met these outcomes, except for complex problem solving, where 87 per cent [sic] of students have met these outcomes.”</p>	<p>Yet 28% fail the Grade 9 Math PAT – almost three times what the school failure rate is in the school mark. This again underscores the limitations of the CBE’s 1-4 reporting system and explains why so many students are having trouble when they get to high school.</p>
<p>“All of our reports related to multi-year Provincial Achievement Tests and report card results, including this link to our math information report, are posted on our website.”</p>	<p>As Kids Come First has noted, and the referenced CBE report confirms, the CBE does not publish multi- year reports by school, thus preventing parents from seeing the trendline in achievement and facilitating meaningful discussion at the school level.</p> <p>As partners in education, parents expect easy access to complete data, which is why Kids Come First has compiled and published this information on our website at http://kidscomefirst.ca.</p>

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<p>“Resources to help parents understand what students need to know at each grade level as well as other materials related to our K-12 math strategy engagement are available on our website. Other math resources are also available on our website.”</p>	<p>On two occasions, the CBE has refused on to publish a simple list of 30 questions, by grade, that parents could use to help assess their child in order to help them be a full partner in their child’s education.</p> <p>While the CBE mathematics page provides a link to the parent curriculum guides produced by Alberta Education, these guides do not provide parents with easily digestible information on what kinds of problems their child should be able to solve at each grade level. For example, under “What Your Child is Learning” for Grade 6 Math, Alberta Education offers parents the following list:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● understand and use place value ● determine factors (e.g., 6 is a factor of 24) and multiples (e.g., 45 is a multiple of 9) to solve problems ● describe how decimals, fractions, ratios and percents are related ● use graphs and tables to show number patterns and solve problems ● write and solve equations that represent problems or patterns ● classify, measure and draw angles and triangles ● generalize the sum of interior angles for triangles and quadrilaterals ● construct and compare triangles ● describe and compare the angles and sides of regular and irregular polygons ● develop and apply formulas for the perimeter of polygons, the area of rectangles and the volume of right rectangular prisms ● plot whole number points on a grid ● perform reflections, rotations and slides in combination on a 2-D shape ● use line graphs to present and interpret information ● collect and analyze data to graph and solve problems ● understand the differences between experimental and theoretical probability

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<p>“The CBE carefully manages its board and system administration costs. All boards are required by Alberta Education to report on this amount annually. The CBE, like the other metro boards, has board and system administration costs that are less than three per cent. This information is contained in our 2016-17 budget report and other financial documents, and on the Alberta Education website. ”</p>	<p>The Kids Come First report refers to funds withheld from schools for administration and school supports, which the CBE has previously confirmed is between 21-25%. (See media reports from 2015 and 2016.) Administration is a small portion of that, given the current tax reporting standards. Taken together, these two costs are at least double that of the CCSD. By adopting the CCSD’s ratio for spending could result in another \$110 million reaching CBE classrooms.</p>
<p>“We are a well-managed and highly regulated organization. Accurate financial information is easily accessible on our website.”</p>	<p>The CCSD is also highly regulated, yet directs a much higher proportion of funding into the classroom in support of teachers and students.</p> <p>Parent groups have repeatedly asked the CBE to publish individual school budgets so that parents are able to see what funding is reaching the classroom. To date, the CBE has refused this request.</p> <p>In an October 2016 vote that has not been made public, the CBE Trustees voted down a motion to discuss the merits of a “sunshine list.” While similar regulations governing public sector compensation transparency in British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Saskatchewan compel school boards to publish compensation information, Alberta’s Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act leaves the decision up to individual school boards. A published list of staff salaries and benefits would go a long way in increasing transparency and accountability.</p>

About Kids Come First

Kids Come First is an independent not-for-profit organization advocating for quality K-12 education across Alberta. Our mission is to build a better future for students by improving math education, advancing STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) learning and ensuring as much education funding as possible is reaching the classroom.