

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Minister Demetrios Nicolaides, MLA for Calgary-Bow, Minister of Education and Childcare

**FROM:** Catharine Kavanagh, Western Stakeholder Director

**DATE:** April 10, 2026

**SUBJECT: Clarifying Public Reporting of the Alberta Education Student Population Statistics**

### WHO WE ARE

Cardus is a non-partisan think tank dedicated to clarifying and strengthening, through research and dialogue, the ways in which society's institutions can work together for the common good.

### ISSUE

The Government of Alberta's public reporting of the student population statistics is an essential resource for policy planning, research, and public transparency. However, the current student population statistics are imprecise due to the double counting of the Home Education and Shared Responsibility Populations within the School Authority System numbers.<sup>1</sup>

There are two types of Home Education students in Alberta, as well as Shared Responsibility students. Two out of those the three types are double-counted in two different categories of the student enrollment statistics. This leads to an overreporting of the total number of students in various School Authority Systems, giving the impression that a higher number of students are enrolled in regular (non-home educated) education in the English Public, Francophone, Separate (Catholic), and Independent school authorities. This has significant implications for capital cost planning and the scale of the ongoing space shortages facing school authorities.

### BACKGROUND

The diversity of educational options in Alberta creates challenges for reporting. There are two types of Home Education in the province: Supervised and Not Supervised,<sup>2</sup> as well as an additional stream of Shared Responsibility programs. However, the two types of Home Education are reported as a single category (Home Education) under the Home Education Population in the Student Population Statistics. Furthermore, there are two categories which currently fall under the Home Education Population heading: Home Education and Shared Responsibility.

#### 1. Home Education includes:

- i. **Supervised by School Authority:** This is "a home education program supervised by a willing [English] public, separate [Catholic] or francophone school board or accredited funded private school. Eligible for funding from Alberta Education."<sup>3</sup>
- ii. **Not Supervised by School Authority (notification only, non-funded):** This is "a home education program not supervised by a school board or accredited funded private school. Not eligible for funding from Alberta Education."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Table 2 of the "Student population statistics," Alberta, <https://www.alberta.ca/student-population-statistics>.

<sup>2</sup> "Home education", Education options, Alberta, <https://www.alberta.ca/home-education>.

<sup>3</sup> Alberta, "Home education."

<sup>4</sup> Alberta, "Home education."

- 2. Shared Responsibility Program:** This is a program where a parent provides a portion of the student’s education at home, while a school authority provides between 20% to 80% of the student’s education.<sup>5</sup>

Publicly-available data published in January 2025 reported 24,158 Home Education Students and 2,274 Shared Responsibility Students. A detailed breakdown of this data provided to the author by Alberta Education shows that amongst Home Education Students, 23,672 were considered Supervised by a school authority. These 23,672 students were also counted in the Total Student Population of each supervising authority, thus inflating the numbers by over 20,000. The Shared Responsibility population is double-counted as well, which brings the total number of students being double-counted to over 25,000. As illustrated in Table I, the impact of this double-counting is most significant for the independent school authorities, as over 15,000 students who appear to be regular students at independent schools are actually receiving home education (i.e. less than 20% of their education is the responsibility of the school).

**TABLE I. Home Education (Supervised) and Shared Responsibility Students by School Authority – 2024/25<sup>6</sup>**

School Authority Type	Total Student Population (including Home Education and Shared Responsibility)	Subtotal Home Education (Supervised) Population Only	Subtotal Shared Responsibility Population Only
Public	537,678	3,418	691
Separate (Catholic)	191,143	4,904	363
Francophone	9,839	18	2
Independent	48,024	15,332	1,216
Federal	-	-	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>23,672</b>	<b>2,274</b>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1:** We recommend updating the Student Population Statistics - Table 2 Alberta student population by authority system on the Alberta Education website to include a clarifying note stating that the “Home Education” sub-category *includes both Supervised and Not Supervised (Notification-Only) students* for each academic year.

**Recommendation 2:** We also recommend adding an additional table to the public report that clarifies the number of Home Education (both Supervised and Not Supervised) and Shared Responsibility students, clearly broken down by school authority for each academic year. The proposed change is illustrated in Table II.

<sup>5</sup> “Shared Responsibility Program”, Alberta, <https://www.alberta.ca/shared-responsibility-program>.

<sup>6</sup> Author’s calculations based on student population statistics provided by Alberta Education.

**Table II. Home Education (Supervised, Not Supervised) and Shared Responsibility Students by School Authority – 2024/25**

School Authority Type	Total Student Population	Subtotal Regular Student Population Only	Subtotal Home Education (Supervised) Population Only	Subtotal Shared Responsibility Population Only	Subtotal Home Education (Supervised) & Shared Responsibility
Public	537,678	533,569	3,418	691	4,109
Separate (Catholic)	191,143	185,876	4,904	363	5,267
Francophone	9,839	9,819	18	2	20
Independent	48,024	31,476	15,332	1,216	16,548
Federal	682	680	0	2	2
Home Education (Not Supervised) Only	486	-	-	-	-
Charter	15,400 <sup>7</sup>	-	-	-	=

### KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The recommended changes to the reporting will facilitate greater clarity and accuracy about the size and changes within the regular, public school population (English Public, Francophone, Separate[Catholic]) and the home-educated, independent, and charter school populations. It will also provide more granular information on the number of students receiving Supervised or Not Supervised Home Education, or Shared Responsibility.

Using public data from the 2024/2025 school year, it appeared that 89,856<sup>8</sup> students were being educated outside the regular, public school systems (10.88% of total student enrollment). However, when the double-counting is corrected, calculations show that only 74,524 students (9.02% of total student enrollment) were receiving education outside this system. Stated differently, the current reporting results in an overestimation of this sub-group by 15,332 students.<sup>9</sup>

### CONTACT

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and assist with future considerations on this issue. Please do not hesitate to contact us at [ckavanagh@cardus.ca](mailto:ckavanagh@cardus.ca).

<sup>7</sup> Charter schools are not allowed to supervise home education as per section 1(f.1) of Alberta Regulation 89/2019 of the Education Act, in which eligibility to supervise home education is limited to board (public) schools and independent schools.

<sup>8</sup> Author's calculation of this number includes independent schools (48,024 per Table II), charter schools (15,400 per table II), Home Ed Not Supervised (486 per table II), Shared Responsibility (2,274 per table I), and Home Ed Supervised (23,672 per Table I).

<sup>9</sup> Data accessed on August 19, 2025. Author's calculations based on student population statistics provided by Alberta Education. The total student population number is 825,817.