

# ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS ARE DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL

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## Current Situation

- About 25% of Alberta students drop out of high school each year prior to completing their grade 12.
- About 75% of English as a Second Language (ESL) students drop out of high school in Alberta prior to completing grade 12.

## Contributing Factors to this High Drop Out Rate

- New immigrants are placed in mainstream classrooms full time and receive approximately 25 hours of instruction per week. They attend classes with other students of the same age. However a high percentage of new immigrants cannot speak English, read English or write English.
- These new immigrants who need ESL classes are then removed from class for about 3 hours per week for special classes in order to learn English.
- Most teachers assigned to teach these new immigrants in their special classes are not properly qualified as English as a Second Language teachers.
- Teachers who are assigned to teach English as a Second Language learners do not have properly developed curriculum materials in 9 out of 12 grades to instruct these new immigrants properly.

## Results/Outcomes

- English as a Second Language learners do not perform well under this model and have been dropping out of classes in large numbers (75% do not complete high school). They are poorly equipped to function in Canadian society and far too many withdraw from their families and join youth gangs. As a result, our police and prisons must increase their budgets to deal with symptoms rather than causes.
- At the same time, Alberta's work force is aging. It needs all the well-educated citizens possible to meet the needs of a knowledge-based society.

## Solution

- Establish a special charter school under new legislation.
- Take English as a Second Language learners, assess their current skills, and then fully immerse them in English as a Second Language classes for 25 hours per week instead of three hours per week.
- Develop a curriculum for all grade levels and only hire teachers who are qualified to teach English as a Second Language.
- Once each learner has acquired their English as a Second Language skills, they will then be placed in special upgrading classes according to academic ability (not age). They will be provided with teacher support in small classrooms to catch up on their math, science, social studies, and English courses. They will remain in upgrading classes until their academic performance is at par with their age peers.
- Once each student is performing as well as their age peers they will be moved back into the mainstream classroom environment and will complete their education.
- In addition to creating a special academic program for these learners, this school will also develop a community-based program (with possible Federal Government dollars) to help these students and their families integrate better into the community.