

Fraser Institute releases popular school report card comparing performance of Alberta high schools

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CALGARY, AB-Calgary is home to nine of the 22 top-performing high schools in Alberta, far more than any other community in the province, according to the **Report Card on Alberta's High Schools: 2008 Edition**, released today by independent research organization the Fraser Institute.

Edmonton and Okotoks each had two high schools among the top performers while the communities of Vauxhall, Provost, St. Albert, Leduc, Brooks, New Norway, Daysland, Cochrane, and Magrath had one each.

"Without the Fraser Institute report card, parents are not easily able to determine how their child's school is performing compared to others in their community. School boards simply don't make that information routinely available," said Peter Cowley, the Institute's Director of School Performance Studies and co-author of the report card.

"While it may not make sense to compare performance of an elite private school in a well-off urban area to an inner-city public school, comparing schools within the same community encourages competition and improvement, just as competition between schools in athletics encourages improvement."

The **Report Card on Alberta's High Schools: 2008 Edition** rates 288 public, private, separate, francophone, and charter high schools from across Alberta based on eight key indicators derived from Grade-12 province-wide exams results and grade-to-grade transition data provided by Alberta Education.

This annual report card, compiles data from these indicators into easily read charts that allow anyone to analyze and compare the performance of individual schools. Parents consult the report card when they are choosing a school and use it as an annual audit of how their children's school is doing academically.

The Report Card also provides background information on the individual and family characteristics of each school's students. It reports the percentage of ESL, special needs, and French immersion students at the school and an estimate of the average number of years of education of the students' parents.

Cowley said critics of the Fraser Institute report card too often excuse a school's poor results by blaming them on socio-economic factors. By doing

so, these critics are essentially writing off a student's chances of success based on their family's economic standing.

"The entire school system should be dedicated to ensuring that all children, no matter where they live or how much their parents earn, acquire the skills and knowledge they will need to continue their studies and go on to live a happy and prosperous life as adults in Canada. Educators must continuously improve their practice in order to find new ways of helping their students succeed."