



Public Interest Alberta

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PIA Calls for Individuals to Participate in the province's *Inspiring Education Dialogue*

We need your help in strengthening public education in Alberta:

Public Interest Alberta is very supportive of Alberta Minister of Education's new public dialogue on K-12 education in our province. We regard it as an important opportunity to discuss the values and directions that should guide our K-12 system in changing times. We believe that this dialogue represents an significant way to "make a difference" for public education.

Why should you participate in the dialogue?

The government has scheduled ten "community conversations" around the province, from April 29 until June 20 (see below for specifics.) These regional dialogues will be important in determining future directions for education in Alberta. It is vital that people who are strong supporters of public education take the opportunity to participate in the dialogue and to give their views on how to strengthen public education in our province.

Do I need to have a background in education in order to participate?

No. Public education is a crucial element in building a democratic and prosperous society, and should be important to all citizens. You definitely do not need to be an educator; what you do need is a strong concern for public education, and a willingness to participate in a one-day community conversation in your region of the province.

How do I register for the 'community conversation' in my area?

First, check the list below, and determine when your regional event will occur. Then, go to the Department of Education website (<http://www.inspiringeducation.alberta.ca/>) and follow the instructions on putting your name forward for consideration. There are a limited number of places, and the consultations are happening soon, so it is important to move quickly to apply to attend.

If I do attend the session, how should I prepare for the discussion?

The sessions will not require detailed preparation, because the discussions will not be technical or very specific in nature. Rather, they will tend to focus on the values and principles that should guide our education system, and the broad directions that should be pursued. So, you can speak from your perspective as a citizen about the things that should matter most.

What are some of the core values that should be included in the discussion?

Public Interest Alberta is advocating for a system that is committed to develop the full potential of all Alberta Students. To do this we feel the education system must reflect UNESCO's International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century "four pillars of learning":

- Learning to Know – the development of skills and knowledge such as literacy, numeracy and critical thinking
- Learning to Do – the acquisition of applied skills, closely tied to occupational success
- Learning to Live Together – the cultivation of respect and concern for others, which helps contribute to a more cohesive society
- Learning to Be – learning that is related to creativity, personal development and health in the physical, social and spiritual senses

If we are serious about a learning system that genuinely develops the full potential of all of our children and youth, we need to ensure that our K-12 system fully reflects these four pillars and that our accountability systems inform us about progress in achieving all of these important goals.

We also need to structure our education system to better reflect the necessary conditions and supports for meeting the needs and developing the potential of the whole child. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) has developed a statement of key elements in this regard, which has been endorsed by a wide range of leading education, health, arts and civic organizations. The five elements include:

1. Each student enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle
2. Each student learns in an intellectually challenging environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults
3. Each student is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community
4. Each student has access to personalized learning and is supported by qualified, caring adults
5. Each graduate is challenged by a well-balanced curriculum and is prepared for success in college or further study and for employment in a global environment

We need to ensure that our classrooms, schools and school systems are committed to these elements and that they have the resources to implement them for all children.

If you want information on particular education issues, PIA will be updating our website with more detailed responses in the future or you contact us directly for assistance.

When and where will these Community Conversations take place?

April 29, 2009	Edmonton
May 6, 2009	Grande Prairie
May 13, 2009	Fort McMurray
May 20, 2009	Lethbridge
May 23, 2009	Calgary
May 27, 2009	Medicine Hat
June 3, 2009	Bonnyville
June 10, 2009	Red Deer
June 17, 2009	Calgary
June 20, 2009	Edmonton