

A VISION FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Representatives of trustees, superintendents, teachers, parents and school business officials have engaged in consultations with Albertans about enhancing public education, which, in Alberta, refers to public and separate schools. These various partners in education have been able to come to agreement on the key elements, which constitute a vision for public education in our province.

The Vision contains two components:

1. A statement of *basic elements* that describes the mission and goals of public education in Alberta. It also outlines the important characteristics of a system committed to that mission.
2. A description of important *necessary conditions* that need to be present if we are to achieve our goals and mission.

This vision is the product of cooperation, dialogue and principled agreement among groups that play a central role in public education in Alberta and has been strengthened through the input of many Albertans. Our commitment is to use this vision to foster needed changes, which will result in the improvement of the education of our children and of our society as a whole.

BASIC ELEMENTS

Public education in Alberta has a three-fold mission:

1. to develop the potential and gifts of each child
2. to develop a foundation of learning that enables individuals to function effectively in further learning, work and life
3. to foster the development of active and contributing citizens of a democratic society.

In order to accomplish this mission, our system of public education must be founded on a commitment to *educate all children well*. It is essential that public education fosters and supports the intellectual, social, physical, emotional and spiritual development of each child. To do so, public education must be:

- accessible to every child
- free and available as a matter of right
- delivered by democratically elected local school boards.

Public education thus fosters the development of individuals, communities and society. It relies on a partnership of parents, students, teachers and the wider community.

NECESSARY CONDITIONS

In order to achieve the goals and mission of public education, there are a number of necessary conditions that must be in place. The establishment of these conditions is essential in achieving the goal to *educate all children well*. The conditions are organized under major headings.

Nature of the School

- Children are valued as individuals and treated with dignity and respect
- Schools are “learning communities” in which all of the participants are committed to the success of all students as the highest priority
- Schools have a safe and caring school environment in which children, staff and parents are secure
- Parents are effectively involved in their children’s education and the voices of parents and the community are valued
- Effective school councils and school/family/community partnerships exist in every school
- Schools and school communities are active in processes that support ongoing school improvement
- School buildings and facilities are able to meet current and future programming needs of students

Program

- All children have the opportunity to learn through a rich and demanding curriculum with appropriate assistance and support
- Students have access to a broad program of studies so that they receive:
 - a solid grounding in language arts, mathematics, science and social studies
 - a solid grounding in religious education, where appropriate, and
 - high-quality instruction in fine arts, languages, careers, technology, health, and physical education
- Student evaluation policies and practices enhance student learning
- Diagnostic assessment and treatment are readily available for students with problems which could affect their learning
- Delivery of services to children is effectively integrated so that teachers can meet the learning needs of children
- Comprehensive early intervention programs and support for families are in place, which ensure that all children come to school with the capacity to learn
- Effective programs and support for children at risk are in place, which provide equitable opportunities for them

Teaching and Learning

- Teaching practices engage students effectively in their own learning
- Educational leadership at all levels is focused on effectively facilitating and supporting teaching and learning

- The relationship between teachers and students is recognized as being of fundamental importance to the learning process
- Class sizes are small enough to allow teachers to meet the diverse learning needs of students
- Teacher professionalism is founded on high-quality teacher preparation programs and supported by a continuing investment in ongoing, multifaceted professional development
- Effective instruction is fostered through growth, supervision and evaluation practices which are focused on improvement in teaching and learning
- The integration of technology into learning systems is based on research that demonstrates its ability to improve teaching and learning

Governance

- ♦ Locally elected school boards are accountable to the public and responsive to the community
- ♦ Sufficient autonomy, flexibility and funding ensure school boards can address the particular character and needs of their jurisdictions
- ♦ There is ministerial responsibility and accountability for provincial decisions, open consultation and responsiveness

Finance

- There is sufficient, predictable and sustainable public funding to guarantee the mission of public education and the reliance on school fees, fund-raising or corporate donations is eliminated
- An ongoing consultative process occurs with all education partners so that the funding reflects current realities