

Reaching out



I hope this finds you well. It has been ten months since we met in Edmonton at the Alberta School Boards Association's *Putting the Public Back in Public Education* Summit. I wanted to reconnect with you to share news; to flag some upcoming opportunities for further engagement in public education and to invite you to get in touch with me. I am convinced involving citizens in our public education system is essential to maintaining a viable and vital system. Let us keep the dialogue going.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Welwood". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Heather Welwood, President, ASBA

Jamie Vollmer speaks to trustees to rave reviews

Your response to Jamie Vollmer, who spoke at the summit, was so positive we invited him back to speak to all school trustees at our June 2009 meeting. He brought the same powerful messages about the importance of connecting with the community to trustees – and they loved him.

Speaking out for education funding

In late August, 2009 officials with the department of education warned funding for public education could be cut by as much as \$300 million in the 2010 provincial budget. Cuts of this scope would hurt teaching and learning in Alberta's classroom. Deeply concerned, we joined forces with the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Alberta School Councils' Association to encourage Albertans to e-mail their MLA in support of funding for public education. Citizens sent 11,200 e-mails. We achieved our goal of raising the profile of this issue before government finished its budget deliberations. Now we await the February 9 budget announcement.

Reaching out was published January 26, 2010 by the Alberta School Boards Association for participants at the ASBA's *Putting the Public Back in Public Education* Summit.

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A year of review and reflection for public education

Two government initiatives *Inspiring Education* and *Setting the Direction for Special Education* have been the focus of broad ranging dialogue and discussion. The goal of *Inspiring Education* is to reach a clear understanding of what it will mean to be an educated Albertan 20 years from now. These important conversations will inform the writing of a new *School Act* – which is currently underway.

The *Setting the Direction for Special Education* initiative will see the creation of a new framework for special education that includes vision, principles, policy, accountability and funding.

I have to say that in my 18 years in trusteeship, I have never seen projects of such scope undertaken concurrently or within such a compressed timeframe. These are very significant. Contact your local board for more information; watch the newspapers for more information and see these links for updates about these initiatives:

Inspiring Education

<http://www.inspiringeducation.alberta.ca/>

Setting the Direction

<http://education.alberta.ca/departement/ipr/settingthedirection.aspx>

The School Act Review

<http://education.alberta.ca/departement/policy/schoolactreview.aspx>

The ASBA has participated in these conversations. See our website for information including our paper: [Alberta's School Act: Creating our Future \(PDF-283K\)](#).

School board elections coming up

As citizens who have demonstrated interest and commitment to being involved with their local schools and school boards, I encourage you to think about the October 18, 2010 school board elections. Vote. And if you want to channel your energies in a new direction – think about running for the office of school trustee. It is a challenging – and sometimes thankless job – but it is the most rewarding thing I have done. Please think about it. Watch our website www.asba.ab.ca for more information about the upcoming elections – and other education news. We update it daily and it is focused exclusively on what we hold most dear and most important – Alberta's public education system.

I'd love to hear from you.
Heather Welwood, President
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