

# Our Children, Our Future: Getting it Right

*Alberta* 

Government  
of Alberta 

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# Engaging Albertans

**The pace of change is constant. One example is the rapid changes in the global economy that impact Alberta and the rest of the world. How do we ensure that students can adapt to the many changes that will continue to emerge as they move out of the education system and into the world of work and our broader society?**

Over the past three years, government has engaged Albertans in wide-ranging conversations about the future of education in Alberta. Three major initiatives included:

- *Inspiring Education: A Dialogue with Albertans,*
- *Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta,* and
- *Speak Out: The Alberta Student Engagement Initiative.*

Each of these has played a part in painting a picture of what the future of education should look like. Why is this important to parents and students, to business and the community, to the education system and to government?

The upcoming series of meetings are government's opportunity to check in with the public to make certain we are on track to getting the future right for our children.

# From Inspiring Education to the Education Act

**This paper provides an overview of key initiatives where Albertans had a voice in shaping the future of education and how we are currently using what we heard. Government has also received input from education stakeholders and staff on other projects, which helped in preparing the legislation – a new *Education Act*. Those projects are highlighted in this paper too.**

*Inspiring Education* is the overarching initiative that resulted in a vision for an educated Albertan. It provides a foundation on which all the other work of Alberta Education has been aligned since the *Inspiring Education* report's release. We want to look back and reflect on what we heard to make sure that the new *Education Act* will strengthen our education system.

## Inspiring Education: A Dialogue with Albertans

The [\*Inspiring Education\*](#) initiative was designed to:

- Heighten appreciation of the importance of education in the life of Albertans and its increasing contribution to a prosperous society and economy,
- Develop a clear understanding of what it will mean to be a successfully educated Albertan in twenty years,
- Create the basis for a broad policy framework describing the overall direction, principles and long-term goals for education in Alberta. (*Inspiring Education* report, p. 5)

**Vision** (*Inspiring Education* report, p. 18-20)

The Steering Committee's report to government, [\*Inspiring Education: A Dialogue with Albertans\*](#) (April 2010), presents a vision for education to 2030.

The vision was created after extensive discussions on what it would mean to be an educated Albertan. Public input formed the basis for drawing a portrait of an educated Albertan. This Albertan will be well-positioned to manage the challenges and opportunities of our future, which include: an increasing focus on knowledge, competition from developing economies, changing demographics, and more diversity.

Albertans also said that education is about more than preparing our children and youth for work. It must encourage learners to discover and pursue their passions; make successful transitions to adulthood; and create life-long learners who contribute to healthy, inclusive communities and thriving economies.

This is how educated Albertans would describe themselves in 2030 (p. 19-20):

- **Engaged Thinker:** I collaborate to create new knowledge.
- **Ethical Citizen:** I do the right thing because it is the right thing to do.
- **Entrepreneurial Spirit:** I create new opportunities.

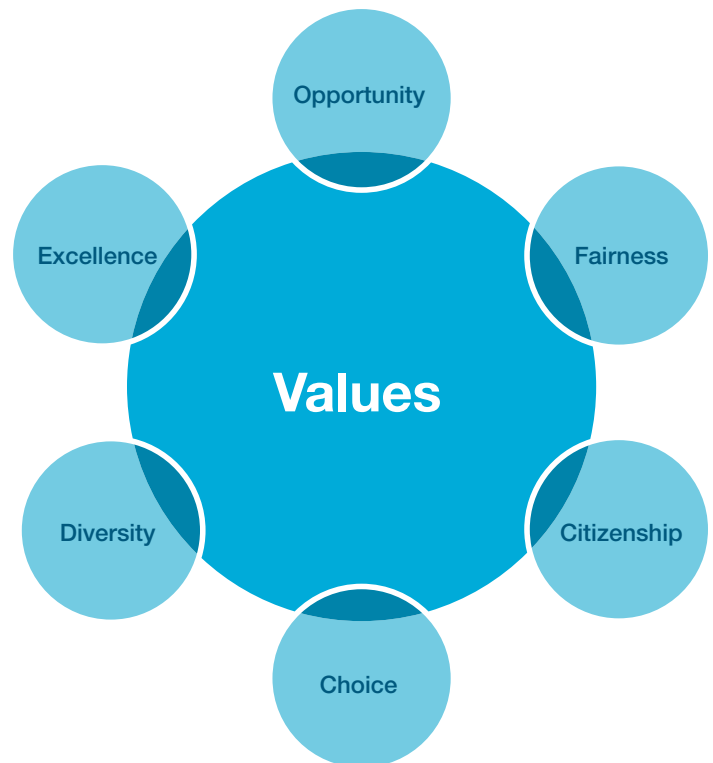
The *Inspiring Education* report sets high-level direction, but does not lay out the process for implementation. It is intended to guide, inform and encourage decision-makers in bringing the ideas to life.

In addition to the vision, the report includes values and guiding principles that have been incorporated into the work of the Education ministry and education system since its release.



**Values** (p. 20-21)

- **Opportunity:** Learners are exposed to rich learning experiences that enable them to discover their passions and achieve their highest potential.
- **Fairness:** Learners have access to the programs, support services, and instructional excellence needed to achieve desired outcomes.
- **Citizenship:** Learners have pride in their community and culture. They have a sense of belonging and work to improve both the community and the world.
- **Choice:** Learners have a choice of both programs and methods of learning.
- **Diversity:** Learners' differing needs, cultures, and abilities are respected and valued within inclusive learning environments.
- **Excellence:** Learners, teachers, and governors achieve high standards.



### Principles (p. 31-32)

- Learner-centred
- Shared Responsibility and Accountability
- Engaged Communities
- Inclusive, Equitable Access
- Responsive, Flexible Approach
- Sustainable and Efficient Use of Resources
- Innovation to Promote and Strive for Excellence

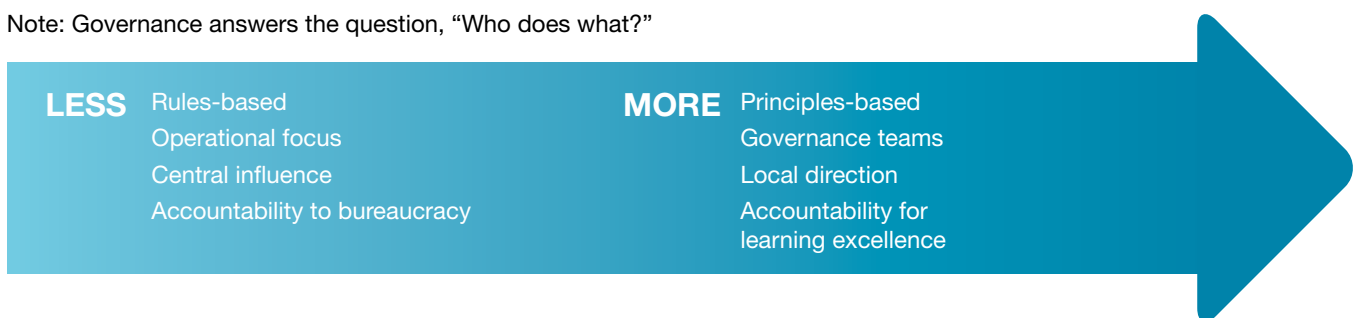
To ensure that the vision, values and principles come to life, the *Inspiring Education* report also identifies the shifts or changes we need to make in policy and governance.

### Policy Shifts (p. 22-30)



### Governance Shifts (p. 33-38)

Note: Governance answers the question, “Who does what?”



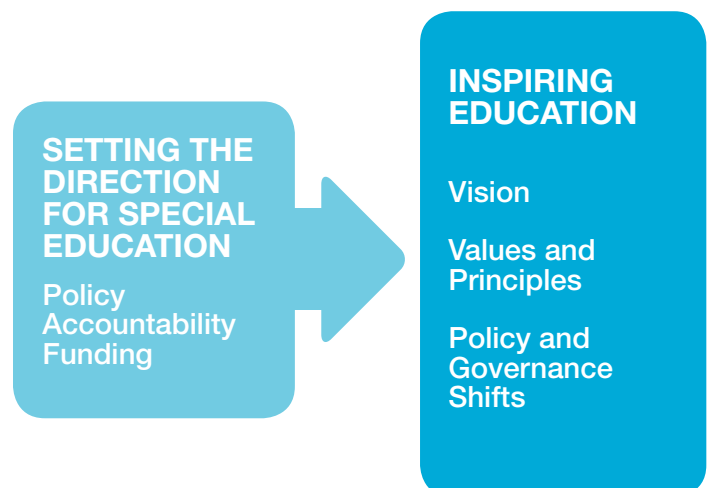
## Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta

The province serves thousands of students with behavioural, communicational and intellectual needs. It also assists students with mental health challenges, learning or physical disabilities and students who are gifted and talented. The [Setting the Direction](#) initiative grew out of a review of the provincial severe disabilities funding process. Individuals involved in that review learned that there were variations among school jurisdictions that made it difficult to fund programs for students with severe disabilities. Alberta Education decided to take a broad look at how the special education system in Alberta works.

Key elements of the Steering Committee's report, [Setting the Direction Framework](#) (June 2009), included a vision, mission and principles. The Framework also included recommendations to government on how to change its approach and more effectively implement services for students with disabilities and diverse needs. Government reviewed the Framework and accepted the recommendations in the [Setting the Direction Framework Government of Alberta Response](#) (June 2010).

Although the project was initially focused on policy, funding, and accountability for students with special needs, those who engaged in discussions collectively spoke in broader terms about the importance of ensuring that all students are successful. This gave rise to a vision – *One inclusive education system where each student is successful* – which means that every student will be included in the greater school community and will be physically placed in the setting that is best for them at a particular time, based on the input of all parties. Government and the educational community have embraced the concept of inclusion. In their respective responsibility areas and collectively, all are moving toward defining, enhancing or building an inclusive education system.

Steering Committee, Working Committee and project team members from both *Inspiring Education* and *Setting the Direction* had opportunities to discuss common emerging themes that they heard from the public. This resulted in the *Setting the Direction* vision of inclusion being reflected within the values and guiding principles of the *Inspiring Education* report and other high-level documents that followed.

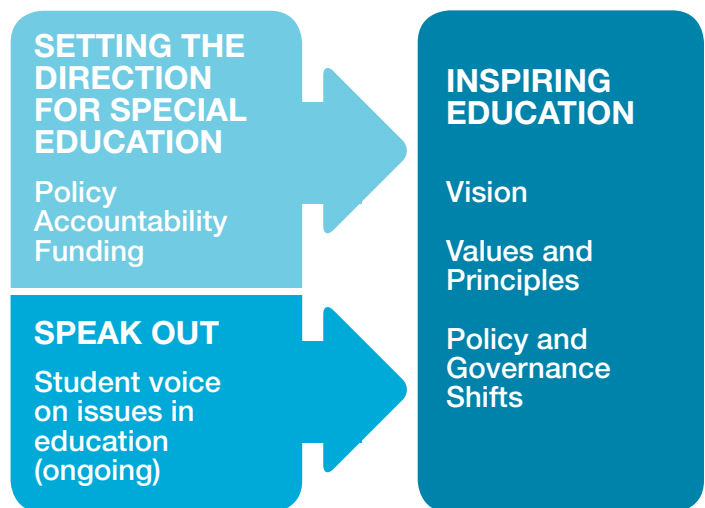


## Speak Out: The Alberta Student Engagement Initiative

*Speak Out* is an ongoing initiative that lets Grade 9-12 students talk to Alberta Education staff about their views on education so that government is sensitive to their desire for programs that are supportive, flexible and consistent with their needs.

A variety of approaches – student forums, a Minister’s Student Advisory Council, an annual conference and an interactive website – provide opportunities for students to discuss issues important to them.

Members of the Minister’s Student Advisory Council met directly with *Inspiring Education* Steering Committee members to talk about their perspectives on education. Other students talked online with members of the *Inspiring Education* team. The *Speak Out* report and discussions were also shared with the *Inspiring Education* Steering Committee to help in shaping their report to government.

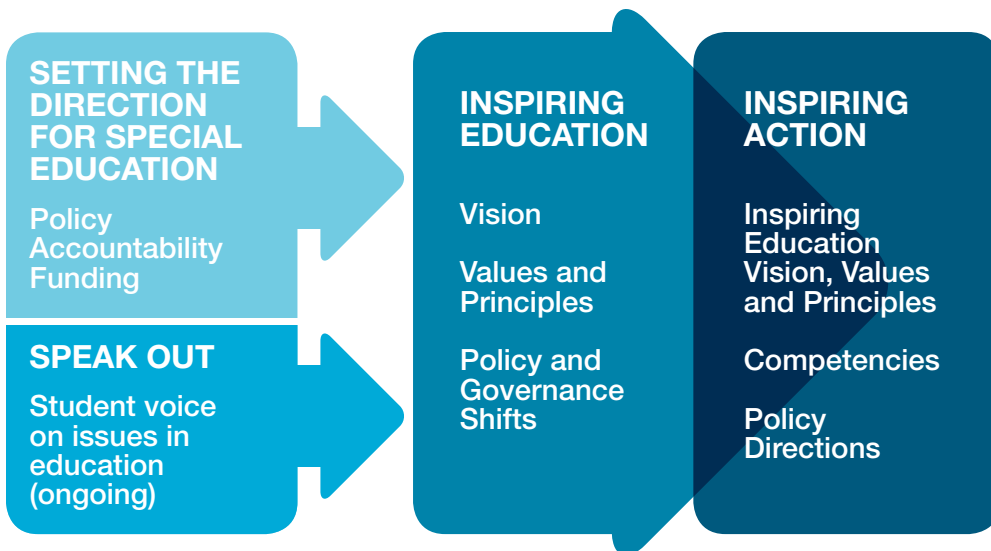


## Inspiring Action on Education

[\*Inspiring Action on Education\*](#) (June 2010) is a discussion paper that used the work of *Inspiring Education* to help identify how to achieve our preferred future for education. To provide context, it restated the vision, values and principles identified in *Inspiring Education*. It also identified competencies, which aligned with the *Inspiring Education* vision of an educated Albertan.

One section of the report explored reasons for new legislation. Based on input heard from the public through *Inspiring Education* and other consultations, it also suggested that future legislation be more enabling, empowering, supportive, and less prescriptive.

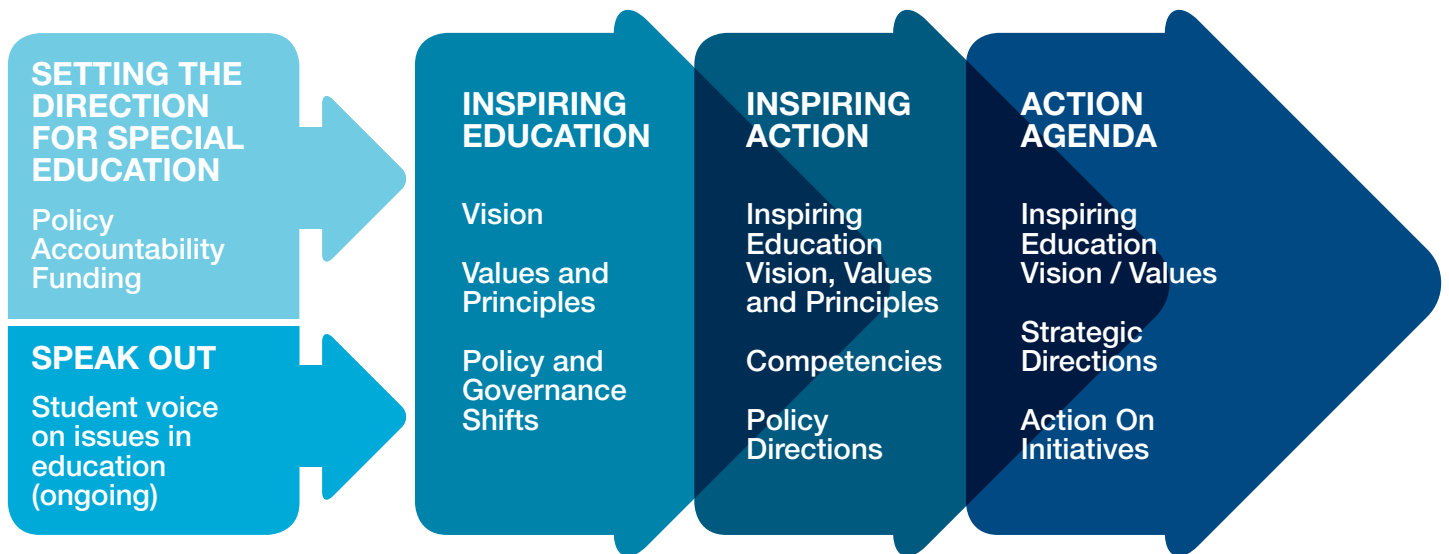
Public input resulted in six themed reports that focused on: parental and community engagement, shared governance, student-centred education, learning opportunities, teaching our children, and envisioning excellence. The Ministry used this input to develop the *Action Agenda*.



## Action Agenda

[Action Agenda 2011-14](#), a companion document to the Ministry’s business plan, incorporates the vision and values of *Inspiring Education*. The principles, policy shifts and governance shifts of *Inspiring Education* are also reflected in the document. The *Action Agenda* includes six key actions the Education Ministry is working on in partnership with its education stakeholders and community members. They include: curriculum, inclusion, teaching and leadership, legislation, research, and FNMI<sup>1</sup> success. Each of these actions support the desired change agenda outlined in *Inspiring Education*.

Engagement of Albertans is an important aspect of continuing the journey we are on to informed change. Success will depend on joint development of a student-focused action plan. The entire education sector must be committed to the process, with the Ministry and stakeholders sharing leadership where appropriate. All players need to be open-minded, innovative and willing to consider new approaches to make it possible for all students to have a high-quality education.



<sup>1</sup> FNMI is the acronym for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.

# Why This Conversation?

**Over the past few years, the Ministry reviewed the existing *School Act*. Input from the *Inspiring Education, Setting the Direction and Inspiring Action* projects gave the Ministry many ideas to think about that would be helpful to include in the *Act*.**

Premier Redford, Minister Lukaszuk and the Alberta government want to ensure the proposed act, or bill, introduced into the Legislature in Spring 2012 will make a difference for young people in the education system of this province. Government, parents, teachers, school boards and community members are all eager for an *Education Act* that embeds important values and roles and responsibilities – an *Act* that both appropriately describes what must happen in Alberta and what the province needs for its future success.

We all want an education system that serves Albertans well and keeps our province at the forefront of international education systems.

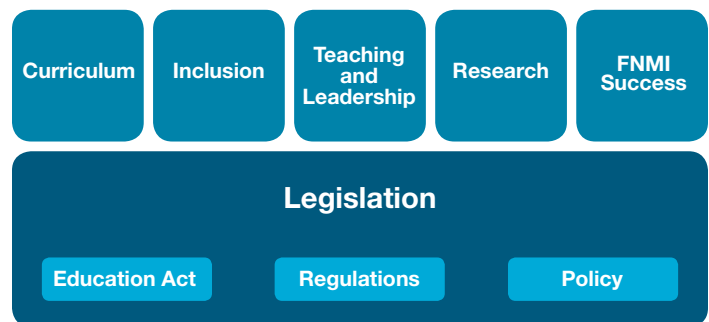
## So what do we really need to talk about?

The work of *Inspiring Education*, *Setting the Direction*, *Speak Out*, *Inspiring Action* and the *Action Agenda* has already featured considerable public dialogue and/or in-depth government and stakeholder consideration. Albertans have been clear about what is important to them. Their main preoccupations can be distilled into four key areas:

1. **Creating caring, respectful and safe schools** ([Inclusion](#): building an inclusive education system, free of bullying, where every student feels as if they belong).
2. **Making learning relevant for all students** ([Curriculum](#): moving towards the vision of an educated Albertan, meeting the needs of learners in the 21st century).
3. **Keeping students engaged in learning** ([Teaching and Leadership](#) and [Research](#): taking an evidence-based approach to engaging students in their learning).
4. **Setting students up for success in life** ([FNMI Success](#), high school completion, offering a continuum of supports and services so that all students can experience success in the education system).

Eventually, each of these elements needs to be reflected in a value-driven [Education Act](#) and supporting legislation that connects to the hopes and dreams of Albertans.

## KEY INITIATIVES



# What Do We Still Need to Do to Get It Right for Our Children?

Each initiative described in this paper shows an alignment with *Inspiring Education*. Each initiative has played an integral part in bringing us to where we are now – a round of engagement that will help us review and refine the *Education Act* to reflect the vision that Albertans helped us define through *Inspiring Education*. We are looking for your ideas to ensure that we get our future right for Alberta’s children.

**APPENDIX:**  
**Inspiring Education – Action Agenda Alignment**

This table illustrates how *Action Agenda* initiatives align with the policy and governance shifts identified in *Inspiring Education*.

Inspiring Education Policy Shifts	Curriculum	Inclusion	Teaching and Leadership	Legislation	Research	Access on FNMI Success
More focused on education	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
More centred on the learner	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
More building competencies	◆		◆		◆	
More technology to support the creation and sharing of knowledge		◆			◆	
Inspiring Education Governance Shifts	Curriculum	Inclusion	Teaching and Leadership	Legislation	Research	Access on FNMI Success
More principles based				◆	◆	
More governance teams		◆	◆			◆
More local direction				◆		
More accountability for excellence	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
<b>Inspiring Education Principles</b>						
<b>Inspiring Education Values</b>						
<b>Inspiring Education Vision</b>						

**Note:** The symbols show *Action Agenda* items with the greatest alignment to the *Inspiring Education* policy and governance shifts. However, there is some degree of crossover between most *Inspiring Education* policy/governance shifts and *Action Agenda* initiatives.

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