



Dave
Hancock

December 2008

Message from the Minister

As we look to the beginning of a new year, we cannot help but reflect on the year that is coming to an end. The last few months have certainly been interesting, especially economically. The year started out looking like it was going to produce a record surplus for our province. Now it looks like our surplus will be very much smaller. In addition, for the first time in the lives of our students in the K-12 system, they are hearing talk about a recession.

I think most of us are familiar with the saying, "The more things change, the more they remain the same." This is certainly true at this point in our province's history. Regardless of what else is happening, our obligation and commitment to our young people remains the same. We must ensure they receive the best possible education - an education that will enable them to survive and thrive in a challenging world.

All of us are affected by things and events beyond our control. However, regardless of what happens today, we must keep our focus and not become distracted from the real task at hand. The education of our young people is not about today or tomorrow; it is about the future. It is our job to ensure our students have the skills, abilities and attitudes that will enable them to succeed in the decades to come.

The *Inspiring Education* dialogue I recently announced is about how education in Alberta can help tomorrow's students find their passions and prepare

continued on page 2

Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta

Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta is a major project to create a new framework that will ensure students with special education needs get the supports they need to be successful. The project is comprehensive and far-reaching, and will consider the needs of students in all types of schools: public, separate, francophone, charter and private.

During the last month, the project Steering Committee, led by Naresh Bhardwaj, MLA Edmonton-Ellerslie, supported by the Project Team, has conducted 13 consultation sessions in 10 Alberta communities and gathered input from over 1,000 participants on vision and principles for the new framework. Feedback from these sessions will be added to hundreds of online and paper submissions to help inform the new vision and principles for special education in Alberta. If you haven't already done so, we invite you to submit your input online until the end of the year.



Albertans with an interest in the future of special education attended a community consultation session in Calgary on December 11, 2008.

The feedback gathered during phase one consultations will steer the development of the phase two discussion guide, which will be available February 2009. This guide will propose options for the full framework—including policy, accountability measures and funding model—based on the vision and principles developed from the first phase. The Steering Committee will be back in Alberta communities in February and March 2009 to gather feedback on the framework. A final consultation will be held through a Minister's Forum in Edmonton on June 8-9, 2009, when project recommendations will be presented to the Minister of Education.

More information, including the online questionnaire, is available at www.settingthedirection.alberta.ca.

Speak-Out launched

Launched on November 26 at Harry Ainlay High School in Edmonton, the *Speak Out Initiative* provides Alberta's students with opportunities to provide their perspectives on education.

Key to stimulating a student-driven dialogue is the launch of the fully interactive *Speak Out* website, www.speakout.alberta.ca.

Minister Hancock speaks with students from Harry Ainlay High School in Edmonton.



Message from the Minister...

continued from page 1

for success in the future. This initiative will heighten public appreciation for education and build our understanding of what it will mean to be an educated Albertan 20 years from now. It will also result in a new vision for education and a policy framework that will guide the Ministry and inform legislation.

An education system that involves everyone as equal members of the community can be developed only through a process that involves everyone equally. That is why I am encouraging you to take an active part in it. This dialogue will only succeed if we all approach it with a desire to be involved and a willingness to listen, collaborate and communicate.

We are still in the formative stages of the Dialogue, but we expect to be conducting public meetings and announcing other ways you can take part early in the new year. Current information about the *Inspiring Education* dialogue can be found at <http://alberta.ca/acn/200811/24838DEE9A015-E75F-9CFA-F71828799729537E.html>

I wish you Merry Christmas and happy holidays. I look forward to keeping you informed about developments in education in the new year.

Dave Hancock, Minister

We want to keep in touch

Communicating with you this way is a new approach for us. If you've found this newsletter of value, please let us know. We would like to keep you up to date about what is going on in education in Alberta. The best way of doing so is to email you a copy. That way we can cut down on printing and mailing expenses and act in an environmentally responsible way. If you would like to keep in touch, please send an email to edc.communications@gov.ab.ca or a letter to **Education Communications**, 7th Floor, 10155-102 Street, Edmonton, AB T5J 4L5.

Please feel free to share this newsletter with friends and colleagues.



The Skills Road Show trailer is showcased at the Legislature.

Skills Road Show raises awareness about National Skilled Trades Week

Six Alberta members of Team Canada, who will compete at WorldSkills Calgary 2009, visited the Legislature on November 4 to meet with government officials and to be officially introduced in the Legislature.

The Skills Road Show trailer also made its first appearance at the Legislature to raise awareness about National Skilled Trades Week. The road show will be traveling throughout the province promoting the WorldSkills Competition, as well as trades and technology occupations.

The Minister of Education, Dave Hancock, along with other government representatives, education stakeholders and industry members were on hand to welcome competitors and tour the new road show.

For more information about WorldSkills Calgary 2009, visit <http://education.alberta.ca/departement/news/events/worldskills2009.aspx>

School Bus Safety Report Available

To view the school bus safety report, go to: www.transportation.alberta.ca/3112.htm

What others see in us

A series of articles on Alberta's K-12 system recently appeared in the *Des Moines Register*. Iowa, like many U.S. states is looking for ways to improve its school system and is looking at Alberta's success in education for guidance. The comparison between Iowa's K-12 education system and that of Alberta's may come as a real eye opener for many Albertans. The articles can be accessed at data.desmoinesregister.com/education/worldclassschools.php

Minister's Education Leadership Recognition Awards (MELRA)

Several school boards across the province received awards recognizing their leadership teams. The awards are for significant improvement and/or very high achievement in areas ranging from student achievement to the promotion of healthy living, and safe and caring school environments.

For more information about the MELRA celebrations and to view the 2008 awards by district and category, visit <http://www.education.alberta.ca/departement/ipr/awards.aspx>