**Action Strategies for a Transformation in Education**

**Questions to Ponder and Food for Thought**

**Garry McKinnon-August, 2013**

**The Big Questions:**

**Is there a need for a transformation in education in Alberta?**

**What would a transformation in the nature of learning and teaching in Alberta look like and what would it take to bring about the desired change?**

1. **Develop and Articulate a Shared Vision for Implementing the Inspiring Education Agenda-**

**Question to Ponder-Why do we need to be able to articulate a shared vision for what we are hoping to achieve in education and how important is it to share this vision beyond those directly involved in the work of our schools?**

*We need to engage everyone involved in and impacted by the work of our schools including Alberta Education, universities, school and school jurisdiction leaders, teachers, students, parents and community members in a process of making meaning of the Alberta Education Inspiring Education agenda. Traditionally, education has been left up to the educators; we now realize that the transformative agenda for creating a knowledge society impacts everyone and should be everyone's priority.*

1. **Make Teaching Practices Open and Public-**

**Question to Ponder-What are the facilitators and what are the inhibitors relating to attempting to de-privatize education and to create in Alberta schools a culture of sharing best practices and establishing new common practices?**

*If we are going to move beyond the celebration of exemplars and best practices and to establish new practices, we need to move away from the idea of teaching as a solo/isolated activity, to a more public, collaborative model. We need to open the doors of our classrooms, take the roofs off our schools and seize every opportunity to explore best practices and to learn with and from each other.*

1. **Provide Well-informed, Supportive Leadership –**

**Question to Ponder-What approach to leadership at all levels and among all partners in education, will we need in order to be successful in promoting change, innovation and ultimately a transformation of education in Alberta?**

*Certainly it is critical that leaders in education at all levels develop a deep understanding of: societal changes; the impact of digital technologies; the increasing diversity of learning needs; the challenge of authentically engaging all students and providing opportunities for success and the need to provide leadership in learning globally. Leaders in education at all levels will need to be very good at telling the story and working collaboratively with others in developing a shared vision and commitment to action.*

1. **Actively Involve Students in Directing Their Own Learning-**

**Question to Ponder -What more can we be doing to, “hear the student voice” and actively engage our students in their learning and what would our schools be like if students were seen as instructional leaders?**

*We need to develop new approaches for hearing the student voice and actively involving students in sharing feedback about their learning experiences to enable their teachers to develop and implement diverse pedagogical strategies designed to better meet their needs. As well, students should be encouraged to take ownership for their learning as active members in the process.*

1. **Create a Culture of Collaboration at all Levels in Education**-

**Question to Ponder-To what extent do we have a culture of collaboration in our schools and within the institutions and organizations supporting the work of our schools and what more could be done?**

*We have seen the tremendous benefits for teachers of: having open classrooms with frequent visitors and opportunities for pedagogical dialogue; mentoring student teachers; collaborative planning and team teaching; sharing best practices and learning from others and having opportunities for participating in rich professional development activities with an emphasis on co-learning and co-creating through job-embedded learning experiences. In fact, creating a culture of collaboration at all levels in education is the key to successfully achieving the transformational goals articulated in Inspiring Education.*

1. **Partner with Universities in Enhancing Teacher Preparation and Professional Learning Experiences –**

**Question to Ponder-How successful have we been in our teacher preparation programs in preparing the teachers we need to implement the *Inspiring Education* agenda and to facilitate a transformation in education and what more can we be doing?**

*If we are to bring about significant changes in education, schools and school jurisdictions we need to partner with university teacher preparation programs to provide learning experiences for our future teachers in classrooms similar to those we have highlighted as exemplars. Universities can serve a major role as change agents through providing teacher preparation experiences and supporting ongoing, job-embedded, professional learning opportunities and establishing new structures to build the capacity of teachers and school administrators.*

1. **Recognizing the Important Role for Technology as a Means to an End Rather Than an End in Itself –**

**Question to Ponder-How successful have we been, generally, in our schools, in effectively and appropriately using technology to enhance learning and teaching and what more needs to be done?**

*We need to recognize that technology in itself is not the change we are pursuing, but technology can certainly change how teachers teach and students learn. We have seen many rich examples of learning and teaching being enhanced through the appropriate use of technology for communication, research, collaboration and learning.*

1. **Celebrate Diversity as a Feature of our Classrooms** –

**Question to Ponder- To what extent are we effectively using a diversity of teaching practices in order to effectively address the diverse needs of our learners and to help all students experience success?**

*We need to think not only in terms of addressing the diverse needs of learners, but also promoting diversity in teaching practices designed to intellectually engage and meet the needs of all learners.*

1. **Work Together in Making Fundamental Changes in Curriculum and our Approach in Developing Learner Competencies**-

**Question to Ponder-While recognizing the need to restructure curriculum in order to allow for more depth and authenticity in learning experiences, to what extent can we be successful in implementing the 3E’s (Engaged thinker, Ethical citizen with an Entrepreneurial spirit) within the existing curriculum?**

*Educators should work together in making structural changes relating to curriculum and the competencies for 21st-century learners, which address the problems of fragmentation and enable teachers to explore the curriculum in a meaningful, engaging manner and to use a variety of teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of their students.*

1. **Promote Research and the Development of Research-informed Pedagogical Practices-**

**Question to Ponder-How successful have we been in our schools in using research to inform practice and what more can we be doing?**

We have seen the efficacy of conducting various forms of research and fostering research-informed practices. There is tremendous potential for more actively engaging teachers as action researchers and working closely with universities to conduct research related to new approaches to learning and teaching in keeping with the spirit of Inspiring Education and to openly share the learning experiences and the findings with others.