

Executive Summary

Education is vital to the future of our province. It affects everything and everyone.

With this statement in mind, in April 2018 the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation announced its intention to launch a significant initiative – Re-Imagine Education: a bold plan to reshape public education. The initiative is intended to clarify the issues facing education today, imagine what the future might look like and plan how to make the vision a reality. One step in the first phase of the Re-Imagine Education initiative includes the development of this document.

Acknowledging that those closest to education – students, parents and teachers – have often been excluded from conversations about changes in public education, a compelling rationale is presented for teachers to lead the Re-Imagine Education conversation by engaging with parents, the public and other stakeholders in open, deliberative dialogue. Supported by sound research and the perspectives of educational and policy experts, the document highlights foundational themes for public engagement and consultative processes.

One foundational concept, active democratic professionalism, recognizes that teachers collectively, and the professional organizations to which they belong, are ideally positioned as leaders to bringing various stakeholders together for a common purpose and mobilize them to effect change. Re-Imagine Education is an opportunity for people to come together to create a hopeful vision of education in the province.

Central to this hopeful vision of education is the question “What is an educated person?”. The perspectives of a number of scholars are presented along with a consideration of what it means to live a flourishing life. Throughout the text, provocative questions prompt deeper contemplation and dialogue about the values and principles that underpin a strong public education system.

While educational reform movements are common throughout the history of public education, they have

not always led to positive, sustainable change within education systems. Research identifies a number of barriers to successful change, including: ideological drivers; lack of priority for education; shortage of dedicated resources, including time to support change; inadequate consultation with teachers, students and parents; and an overall lack of authentic, engaging processes.

Acknowledging there have been a number of past consultation processes and final reports in Saskatchewan, the document invites participants to consider the legacy of these consultations and recommendations. A critical question is posed regarding how to improve upon the processes and experiences of the past.

Fundamentally, it is not enough for a consultation process to simply ask questions and collate the responses. Rather, participants must engage in real dialogue that lets them work through and reach consensus on the issues, and arrive at the solutions together. Such a process recognizes the importance of all stakeholders and the responsibility they have to build a strong public education system. It acknowledges the need for robust deliberation about educational issues.

While there are a number of consultative processes that might be employed, this document argues for a process that is inclusive and respectful of the perspectives of everyone involved, and places participants at the centre of the engagement process.

Re-Imagine Education recognizes that before goals, strategies and actions are considered, broad public and professional engagement must occur about the purposes of education. This engagement must be one that welcomes all voices, including those whose voices have been historically absent, in creating a bold vision for Saskatchewan education. 