This convening guide is designed for conversations with the community
Curriculum Development Prototyping: A Series of Learning Conversations

General Conversation Guide

Participants come to the conversation prepared to contribute and learn and to support the vision and values of Inspiring Education.

a. Beneficial background knowledge includes previous reading and conversation about Inspiring Education, the recent Ministerial Order on Student Learning within Alberta, and the overall work of Curriculum Redesign as outlined by Alberta Education.

b. Additional beneficial background information includes Alberta Education’s Curriculum Development Prototyping Guide or the CBE summary of that document. The appendices to the Curriculum Development Prototyping Guide will be key reference material for many conversations.

c. There may also be resources identified for specific conversations along the way.

Conversations build on the best of current practice and also look beyond what is currently known and understood. What we currently know is offered as a starting point for what can be newly understood together.

Participants come to the conversation prepared to question and be questioned, to both speak and listen. Participants come to the conversation prepared to build understanding and make good judgments together without being judgemental of one another or other stakeholders.

Key ideas are summarized by the group or a group designate before being entered into the collection site – individual responses are brought together to represent the contributions of the conversation group as a whole.

For conversation groups unfamiliar with one another, or for groups looking for a new process for working together, a general conversation protocol is included here as a resource. This general protocol will need to be modified for particular conversations or groups. Another good resource for conversation protocols is the

One possible process for convening conversations is outlined in Appendix A.
Setting the Context

Alberta has a strong and successful education system, widely regarded as among the best in the world. Like any system or organization, it must continually evolve to respond to the environment around it. As a model of continuous improvement, we need your input to help us shape the next stage of development of our educational system so that students develop the skills, attitudes and commitment for work and citizenship. We need you to provide your insight, wisdom and expertise from your various contexts to help inform us as we create an exciting and engaging curriculum for Alberta’s youth.

We have heard from employers, many social agencies, colleges and universities that students leaving school need the knowledge, skills and competencies to be successful at work, as citizens or as individuals with strong life skills. In particular, they tell us that they need to see school leavers have:

- Strong knowledge, skills and competencies in literacy and numeracy and strong communication skills.
- Strong basic knowledge and the appropriate competencies associated with core subjects, especially science, technology, engineering and math balanced with an understanding of social issues, the arts, history and language.
- Strong team and collaboration skills.
- An ability to manage, evaluate and use information.
- Skills and practice in critical thinking, problem solving and using available knowledge and expertise “smartly”.
- A strong work ethic and an ability to continuously learn and develop – an eagerness to learn.
- Effective life skills – resilience, social skills, emotional intelligence, cultural and social sensitivity and an ability to work and solve social problems with others.

These are also the exact things driving the changes Alberta wants to make in what and how students learn at school.
The work is underway

Conversations are underway to gather the wisdom, insights, experiences and questions of multiple people and groups as we consider what students should learn in a new curriculum and how it should be organized.

We know:

- There will continue to be grades and clear learning outcomes for each grade level
- There will continue to be subject areas and clear learning outcomes for each subject area
- Literacy and numeracy will be developed both within the subject areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics and throughout all programs of study
- Competencies such as critical thinking, problem-solving, managing information, communication and global citizenship will be developed across grade levels and subject areas.
- High standards will continue to be emphasized

We need to consider:

- What learning and instructional content will best support students in becoming engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit?
- What learning and instructional content will best support students in achieving success in understanding, working with and creating knowledge?
- What learning and instructional content will best support students in becoming literate and numerate in today’s and tomorrow’s society?
- What learning and instructional content will best support students in developing the cross-curricular competencies identified in the recent Alberta Ministerial Order on Student Learning?
- What resources and assessment practices will best support students’ high levels of achievement with these multiple forms of learning demands?

Attempting to answer these questions brings each of us to the heart of what we believe about how and what people learn and what our obligations to students and society are within education. It also places us in the midst of
competing expectations – ones that must be held in a productive balance rather than pulling apart into all or nothing extremes.

Grant Wiggins¹, a well-known educational theorist identifies a few necessary tensions that must be considered as the “what” of curriculum is considered. These include the tension between honouring and maintaining the knowledge of the past while also creating opportunities for the creation of new knowledge. Another is the relationship between knowledge and action. One view suggests that curriculum is about providing students with knowledge. Another view suggests that knowledge comes from engaging students in meaningful action – from key performances and problem-solving experiences.

As we work together to identify priorities for what learning and instructional content will best prepare Alberta students for a future of contribution to their communities, continued learning, and personal and professional success, we might ask ourselves and one another how it is our new curriculum might negotiate these tensions.

Discussion Questions

When most people hear the word ‘curriculum’ they think about textbooks, course outlines and topics of study. In other words, curriculum makes us think about ‘content’ or what students learn in school. However, it is equally as important to think about how students learn. As we gather to talk about curriculum we ask you to think about your own learning, both in and out of school, and we encourage you to think about both what you learn and have learned and how you learn it.

i. Purpose: We are looking for your insights, expertise and wisdom while we identify what students need to learn.

* How can curriculum remain relevant in an increasingly global and digital world?
  * How do you (or your colleagues, children, etc.) know what is important to learn?
  * What learning has really lasted? Why?
  * What learning has made a difference in your life?
  * What new possibilities can you imagine for what students learn?

ii. Purpose: We are drawing on your experience.

* What does lifelong learning look like for you?
  * How do you know what you are good at?
  * How do you know what you need to learn next?
  * How do you undertake that learning?
  * What makes you enjoy what you are learning? What learning experiences have brought you joy?
  * Since leaving school, what new learning has been important?
  * What new possibilities can you imagine for how students learn?

iii. Purpose: We need meaningful relationships between school, students and community.

* What new possibilities, for all students, could we imagine together?
  * What existing relationships are working well? Why?
  * What new experiences can our communities offer?
iv. Purpose: We recognize there may be more….

• Drawing on your personal or professional expertise, as well as through discussions you have had with others, are there other things we need to consider?

Submitting Responses

We appreciate your wisdom and expertise; documentation of your conversation is deeply valued. Consider the general themes, the critical insights and the key considerations or recommendations that emerged through your discussion today. Summaries of these insights can be shared here. If you are working with a paper copy of this guide, you may type the following address into your web browser:

• bit.ly/curriculumcdp
APPENDIX A

One Process for Convening Conversations

The following process for convening conversations is adapted from the Community Conversation Kit developed by Alberta Education to support the engagement of Albertans through the Inspiring Education. The process outlined below may outline timelines and suggested processes that may not be appropriate for all conversations or groups. Those convening conversations are encouraged to adapt the process below as needed for specific conversations or to meet the needs of the group assembled.

Adapted from Community Conversation Kit: April 23, 2009 DRAFT, Alberta Education.

Introduction and Welcome by the Convenor (5 minutes)

- Welcome participants, introduce yourself, and set out the purpose and agenda for the meeting
  - Outline the following group discussion guidelines:
    - Everyone has wisdom.
    - We need everyone’s wisdom for the wisest result.
    - There are no wrong answers.
    - The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.
    - Everyone will hear others and be heard.
- Ask participants if they are clear on the discussion guidelines and if there are any further guidelines they would like to add. Seek agreement from the group if any further guidelines are added.
- Might there be a provocation (like a piece of music, poetry, image, metaphor, piece of literature, an elegant solution to a math problem) that could be used to open conversation.

Participant Introductions (5 minutes)

- Participants identify a partner (sitting beside them) and they introduce themselves to each other. The question to ask is “What brought you here today and why is this important to you?” Participants will have 5 minutes to discuss with one another.
- Each participant around the table should introduce their partner to the rest of the table – including their name and the most important reason
that brought them to the meeting. Participants will have 5 minutes for introductions.

Table Activity: Theme Gathering based on Questions for Conversation (20 minutes per question)

- Turn to the first question for conversation. Spend the first 5 minutes providing each individual with the opportunity to reflect on the question.
- Provide participants with sticky notes. Each participant then writes 2 to 4 ideas on individual sticky notes in short phrases (4-6 words), with one idea per note.
- When the group appears to be ready (approximately 10 minutes), the convenor leads the group through the following process:
  1. Two sticky notes are collected from each participant and put on a wall or flip chart, or arranged on the table top. Working quickly, members of each group identify pairs of ideas that seem to be naturally related to each other. These are placed next to each other. If any notes appear not to be related to another one to form a pair, place them apart from the pairs for the time being.
  2. Collect another round of sticky notes and see if they can form new pairs or can be added to an existing pair. Unrelated notes from the first round may be used to form new pairs.
  3. Collect any remaining sticky notes and repeat the pairing or grouping process. Pairs of notes can be moved into groups that seem to be related.
  4. Any ungrouped notes will remain as singles at this point.
  5. Participants review all of the notes to see if any ideas might be missing and should be added.

The convenor then asks:

*What did we see in common? What common themes do we see?*

- The facilitator records themes (perhaps in a chart form), asking for clarification from participants when necessary, and trying to ensure that each theme is distinct. It is suggested that each theme name consists of a short phrase.
- The convenor asks participants to put stickies under common themes.
- The convenor will use the themes/stickies in the feeding back of the conversation (Google Form online link [here](#)).
Give participants a 10 minute break before repeating the process with the second conversation question.

**Wrap Up (10 minutes)**

- The convenor will bring the session to a close by asking tables if they could share with the large group one or two “ah ha” moments they had during their discussion.
- The convenor will thank participants and adjourn the meeting.
- The convenor or group designate summarizes the conversation and submits it on behalf of the group online through the Google Form appropriate for the topic.