

## 1. What is your vision for fine arts education in Alberta?

I see Fine Arts as not only integral to education in Alberta, but to the ongoing cultural life of our citizens. The study of fine arts, as the most current research suggests, constitutes a vital part of personal and intellectual development in our youth, and is deserving of not only preservation in our education system, but recognition of its true value and worth to our society.

The arts occupy an important role in education. A basic goal of education is to help students fully realize their various potentials and become critical and creative thinkers. Education that nourishes creativity will prepare future generations to add to the quality and richness of their lives as well as enhance the creativity, vigour, and productivity of the future workplace.

Arts and creativity in education are essential for complete student learning, are essential for local communities, and are essential for students' future success and for Alberta's economic prosperity.

## 2. How do you see fine arts fitting within the education system?

It's easy to look at our education system as made up of various components or compartments, separate from each other, and needing to "fit together" somehow. What if the approach were taken as though the fine arts were a given? How would this question differ? Perhaps what we should be asking is how our education system would best fit with the mandates and high-discipline requirements necessary for high-quality fine arts training. I believe that the study of fine arts is not only immensely valuable in and of itself, but as a vehicle for deepening our province's cultural and creative imperative; of benefit to our citizens, and the future of our communities. Our efforts must be focused on research, policy and practice geared towards securing the place of arts learning in a complete and comprehensive education.

High-quality arts programs and creativity education infused throughout the curriculum motivates students to learn and improves their academic achievement, critical thinking, and social skills. High-quality arts programs offer students a variety of learning opportunities in traditional and new forms of visual and performing arts, and creativity education teaches students how to apply creative capacities in various contexts.

The development of creative thinking by supporting creative outlets such as the development of fine arts education also helps prepare students to contribute to the workplaces of the future. One of the most valued skills in a workplace is the ability to problem solve through creative thinking. These skills need to be fostered in our schools not suppressed.

My vision: Every teacher use processes of creative inquiry and knows when each student is demonstrating and developing his or her creativity.

My goal: Educators at all levels place creative processes at the core of: all disciplines taught in the classroom, professional learning programs, parent/community relationships, and teacher education.

### 3. Do you support the Inspiring Action Initiative that was introduced by Minister Hancock?

Please explain why / why not.

There are many positive and progressive ideas and elements of this initiative. While the concept is compelling, and I applaud the broad base of stakeholder input, what I find odd is that there is not a currently a clearly outlined strategy as compelling and sound as the ideas behind it. We have the tools and willpower to address the vital issue of the future of education in our province, yet we absolutely must enable its implementation through careful draft and design of a support strategy.

I do support the process of public dialogue and engagement that led to the development of the report; more of these processes need to be utilized by government. Authentic dialogue with the citizens of this province will lead to better policy development. However after the report has been developed and recommendations made, it still needs political will to implement.

#### for students in kindergarten to grade 12

There are many progressive ideas put forth in this initiative. What it needs is the *space* to occur; not just the ‘physical’ space, but the space in the curriculum to implement these initiatives – not more structure, but more opportunity for our highly qualified teaching professionals to implement the fundamentals of this initiative; these people will be the enablers – the inspiration for the transformation. We must allow room for the cultivation of arts and creativity in education as essential for complete student learning.

However, there are pieces missing in this initiative: In my opinion, there are three fundamental issues that still need to be addressed here: student engagement, current modes of student assessment, and our alarming high school non-completion rates.

#### for students at the university or college level

It is my belief that this particular level of fine arts/and general education is not addressed or mandated in the current initiatives of this ministry. There are serious issues at stake here: Alberta has one of the lowest rates of entrance into University by its high school graduates in the country. This needs to be addressed, and soon – in order for Alberta to ensure a place of advantage in today’s global economy.

### 4. Do you believe the Alberta Government is currently providing the appropriate amount of funding for public education in kindergarten to grade 12? Please explain.

This is a particularly poignant question in light of the massive and, I believe, hugely destructive recent cuts to the education budget. Simply put, a resounding “NO!” I cannot imagine a more worthwhile investment for our Province, and our future, than in our education system. This is the root of all potential, and I believe our entire future depends on it. It is imprudent and foolhardy to think otherwise.

**5. How do you propose to provide the funding required for the Inspiring Action Initiative, which is estimated to have a cost of at least \$1 Billion?**

Alberta is, arguably, among the wealthiest areas on the planet. Here is an idea: we must establish a fund – perhaps something like the ‘Heritage Trust Fund’ – and with these resources gleaned from a compilation of sources, including our oilsands revenues, invest in this province’s *most* valuable resource: it’s children, and our future generations.

**6. If you were elected as the Premier of Alberta in the next provincial election, what would be your timeline to complete the Inspiring Action Initiative?**

In order to complete the initiative, first it must be started. My priority as Premier would be to begin the process of implementation by first working to get the support of caucus to budget the initiative and then begin the implementation process.

There is a danger in believing that our job will ever be ‘complete’ or ‘done’. The initiative on the table right now should not have a ‘shelf-life’, and should – as part of its mandate – include regular and frequent re-visiting to allow for ongoing and current research. We must never close the door on tomorrow’s innovations through our narrow window of knowledge today.

**7. What is your commitment to increasing the importance of fine arts in education and society in general?**

Let me say first of all that my commitment to fine arts is not just a vague promise for something to take place in the future. It is not a hollow campaign pledge. During my tenure as Mayor of Hinton, our town has seen incredible transformation: a radical shift from being known as “that-stinky-pulp-mill-town” to a thriving, vital artistic community. I personally oversaw several initiatives to make this so.

So coming from that vantage point, I lived and witnessed first-hand the transformational character of fine arts in our community. It is an experience I will always remember and revere, and aspire to spreading throughout this great province. Through creativity and the arts I envision a new era of greatness for our society, and my commitment is complete and unwavering to make this happen.