

Are We There Yet?



Key Issues Relating to Public Education Election 2011

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is the largest international, professional organization dedicated to improving education outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities, students with disabilities, and/or the gifted. CEC advocates for appropriate government policies, sets professional standards, provides continual professional development, advocates for newly and historically underserved individuals with exceptionalities, and helps professionals obtain conditions and resources necessary for effective professional practice.

The Manitoba unit of CEC (MCEC) has been active in advocating for appropriate educational programming since 1959. The MCEC Public Policy committee is a unit providing advocacy for public policy based on the direction of and issues identified by the MCEC Executive through the strategic plan. The mandate is to activate, when necessary, the provincial network to achieve policy objectives at the various levels of public advocacy and government. Anticipating the October 4, 2011 Provincial Election, we have prepared a set of questions for candidates, pertaining to key issues facing public education in our province.

Prior to beginning the questions, we refer candidates to the following statements outlining core beliefs of the MCEC:

- ✓ **Individual Educational Planning & Reporting** - MCEC believes that the Individual Education Plan (IEP) is the mechanism to determine whether student goals are accomplished and student learning is improving. MCEC advocates that the province ensure that all students who require an IEP do, in fact, have one that follows provincial standards. MCEC advocates that the anticipated provincial report card reflect Manitoba's commitment to inclusion and appropriate educational programming by accommodating reporting requirements for students who have IEP's.
- ✓ **Preparation of the Professional** - The MCEC believes that it is crucial for all staff who work with diverse learners be well equipped with the capacity for their roles fully developed. In this way, all students can be well supported to achieve outcomes of appropriate educational programming¹, including students with diverse learning needs, new Canadians for whom English is an additional language, and students who are gifted and talented.

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- ✓ **Provisions for 'Lost Kids'** - The MCEC supports the province's intention to support with students who drop out of the system, have low attendance, lack engagement or investment, or are disenfranchised by or with education. MCEC advocates that the province continue to assist school divisions to address early school leaving, increase awareness of effective practices to support students staying in school, and mobilize key stakeholders and resources to ensure that all children and youth get an education that encourages a meaningful, purposeful and fulfilling life.
- ✓ **Transition Planning for All Students** - MCEC believes that we must ensure a vested interest and involvement in working with diverse learners, improving graduation rates for all, and improving transition planning from pre-school to school age and beyond. The MCEC advocates for being an active partner in continuing to promote a coordinated, barrier-free, team approach to planning and for continuing to provide consolidated information on options, during the planning process.
- ✓ **School as the Safety Net** - MCEC supports the collaboration between education and other systems (ie; CFS, Health/Mental Health, Justice) to share information, support planning and intervention, and improve the quality of life for children and youth. Thus, MCEC advocates that in order to provide successful planning and services to children and youth, the province work to enhance the communication and understanding of individual departmental policies and practices, in an effort to work together on a practical level, to achieve the best interest of all students.
- ✓ **Structural and Technological Accessibility** - Many of our schools are located in older buildings that require extensive structural modifications to appropriately accommodate students' needs. Just as after-the-fact but necessary architectural accommodations are often awkward and expensive, after-the-fact curriculum adaptations can be time consuming to design and difficult to implement in classrooms of diverse learners. A more efficient way to provide student access is to consider the range of user abilities at the design stage and incorporate curricular accommodations at that point – universal design for learning. Similarly the MCEC advocates for the use of technology that allows for both the necessary flexibility for student access and the necessary challenges for student learning.

¹The Public Schools Amendment Act (Appropriate Educational Programming) (2005) reflected Manitoba's commitment to providing all students with appropriate programming that supports student participation in both the academic and social life of schools. The legislation and regulations affirmed what many school divisions already practised and clarified for parents and school divisions the obligation to provide appropriate educational programming for each student.

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Questions for Candidates

Election 2011

- Which three issues in education/public schools require immediate action? What are your three priorities?
- What are your thoughts on including students with special needs in the regular classroom?
- In your opinion what is the optimum size of a class that would allow for individual attention for all students? Are you in favour of a limit on class size?
- What can be done to improve wait times for specialized assessments (ie; speech pathology, psychology)?
- What types of services should be in place to ensure that newcomer Canadians in schools get the best start and support possible?
- Accessibility in schools is necessary for appropriate educational programming to occur. What would you suggest for this to improve?
- How can we ensure that adequate training is available for teachers, to ensure appropriate educational programming?
- How can we ensure that the technology students require for appropriate educational programming is supported and funded?
- How can we improve services to students with mental health challenges?
- What can be done to improve the coordination for students and their families who require support from multiple services (Education/Health/Mental Health/Justice/Family Services/Consumer Affairs)?
- How can the province better support bullying/cyberbullying in schools?
- What should the government be doing to ensure that every student who requires an Individual Education Plan (IEP) has an IEP, and has parental involvement in the process?
- How is the government prepared to ensure that the new provincial report card is written in a way that includes students with special needs
- Manitoba's high school graduation rate has been increasing in recent years. How can the province ensure that this trend continues?

Source:

<http://www.mbteach.org/extras/Election%202011/pdfstext/Provincial%20Election%202011%20handbook%20draft%202.pdf>