



**Speak Out**

**Summary of Major Themes & 'Notable Quotables'**

**Online Forums – April 1, 2011 – March 31, 2012**

## Table of Contents

<b>Summary of Major Themes from Online Forums – April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Summary of ‘Notable Quotables’ .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>10</b>
Background .....	10
Setup and Activity .....	10
April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012 .....	11
<b>Featured Forums:.....</b>	<b>12</b>
So you want to be a teacher? .....	12
A Necessary Step to Your Future – Compulsory Education .....	13
Speak Out Satisfaction Survey .....	14
Designing School Facilities .....	15
Design the Ideal Mathematics Diploma Exam .....	17
International Education .....	19
Our Children, our Future: Getting it Right – Education Act .....	21
The Environment and You.....	24
High School Diploma: What’s up with that? .....	26
Technology in Your Learning & Life .....	28
<b>2011 Speak Out Conference Feedback .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Exprime-toi: Viser juste – Questions concernant la Loi sur l’éducation .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Open Mic/ Tribune libre.....</b>	<b>32</b>

## Summary of Major Themes from Online Forums – April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012

Forum	Summary of Major Themes
So you want to be a teacher?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good teachers balance curriculum and additional learning, listen, are open to new ideas, incorporate current events, admit when they are wrong, entertain, and get to know students on a personal level.</li> <li>• Students are most influenced by those teaching 'option' classes, and are not necessarily supportive of Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs) as a way to evaluate teachers.</li> </ul>
A Necessary Step to Your Future – Compulsory Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excessive skipping of school can lead to dropping out.</li> <li>• Students skip because they do not feel a connection to their schooling; they are bored, or learn independently.</li> <li>• Students do not support strong consequences for skipping, rather, support making students aware of the importance of a high school diploma.</li> <li>• Students that skip school are most affected by their choice to skip; classmates and partners are also affected.</li> <li>• There is a correlation between a student's attitude at school, and the other things they do in life.</li> </ul>
Speak Out Satisfaction Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Speak Out team should continue advertising the initiative using social media, school assemblies, and school visits to make students and teachers aware.</li> <li>• Support for continuing the use of forums where students feel comfortable voicing their opinions.</li> <li>• Continue demonstrating how powerful the student voice can be in influencing decisions.</li> <li>• Students are motivated to voice their opinions when they feel personally comfortable, and when friends are involved.</li> </ul>
Designing School Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students want schools with modern architectural design, natural light, open spaces and lounge areas, wider hallways and taller ceilings, outdoor areas, and brightly painted walls.</li> <li>• Classrooms should be equip with new technology, have good ventilation, utilize unique shapes, and could be arranged according to subject.</li> <li>• Schools and classrooms need to adequately accommodate the size of the student population.</li> </ul>
Design the Ideal Mathematics Diploma Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diploma exams are too heavily weighted at 50%.</li> <li>• Support for approximately 50 questions, and 50% remaining the pass rate.</li> </ul>

Forum	Summary of Major Themes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diplomas questions should include a variety of question types, with strong support for multiple choice.</li> <li>• 2-3 hours is considered a reasonable time to complete a diploma exam; students that require additional time, an exam reader or a modified exam environment should be accommodated.</li> <li>• The test environment (room, lighting, temperature) is perceived to have an effect on exam performance; distractions during exams should be limited.</li> <li>• Support for multiple streams of math: pure and applied, but mixed reviews on if the math curriculum provides students with necessary life skills.</li> </ul>
International Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being 'globally engaged' means to be aware of what going on in the world around you, doesn't necessarily mean travel, but to connect with people around the world. To be globally engaged, you need to be aware of current events/ issues, different cultures/ customs, and how you are interconnected with others.</li> <li>• To get involved, schools/ students can sponsor annual international trips and exchanges, have foster children and mission trips, fundraise/ volunteer for international aid organizations, and promote clubs and international studies.</li> <li>• Being a 'global citizen' means to take a broader view, be interested, involved, current, and to participate!</li> <li>• Global activities are very important – they open student minds to the privileges they have in Canada and the future of globalization.</li> <li>• To live globally students require tact and diplomacy, as well as technological, communication, language, simple mathematical, critical thinking and social skills.</li> </ul>
Our Children, our Future: Getting it Right – Education Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools feel more welcoming/ safe when they have comfortable environments (artwork, paint colours, common and clean spaces, outdoor curb appeal, security and timely repairs), as well as friendly people in the building (someone to provide directions, welcoming committee, sense of school spirit).</li> <li>• To stop bullying we need to create awareness of the long term effects to students, develop a more personal/ community feel among students, support someone being bullied, and empower others to stand up to bullying. Support for a strict no-tolerance, anti-bullying policy.</li> <li>• To assist students to complete high school, schools need to foster interesting and engaging activities, and demonstrate how high school learning can be applied in real life. Need to proactively 'reach out' to students at risk, identify the issues limiting them from participating at school, and provide the necessary supports. Encourage programs like Work Experience and Registered Apprenticeship Programs.</li> </ul>

Forum	Summary of Major Themes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students need critical-thinking, problem-solving skills, life, social, and financial skills, as well as a proper work ethic to succeed after high school.</li> <li>• Students learn at their best when there is a comfortable work environment, and when teachers are passionate, care about their students, accommodate various learning skills, and support students when needed.</li> </ul>
The Environment and You	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspiration to get involved in environmental action includes the love for the outdoors, visible pollution, various environment movies and activists, as well as knowing the consequences of current actions on future generations.</li> <li>• General support for learning about the environment in specific subjects such as science or social studies; suggestion that environmental studies could be a fourth science.</li> <li>• Nature is the 'natural way' things are supposed to be, not created by humans.</li> <li>• Environment means our surroundings or the conditions in which we live.</li> <li>• To influence environmental change in Alberta, students can make individual contributions to reduce environmental impacts, and to organize student groups to raise awareness.</li> </ul>
High School Diploma: What's up with that?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A high school diploma demonstrates an equitable standard across all students in the province, and can reasonably be achieved through the 100 credit requirement.</li> <li>• A high school diploma is very important and critical to enter post-secondary and/ or for future employment.</li> <li>• A diploma gives you the basic skills to succeed in the future.</li> </ul>
Technology in Your Learning & Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology can be used to do research, make presentations and videos, write reports/ essays/ notes, listen to music, access websites and email, collaborate with other students, and access courses (distance learning or full-time online student).</li> <li>• Smartphones could be used in classes to view presentations, use the calculator or calendar, search the internet for information, receive email on assignments, participate in a class discussion, and to capture pictures of lecture notes.</li> <li>• Being a 'digital citizen' means to respect technology, use social media safely, be part of an online community and its associated rules, take responsibility for your actions, and behave as you would in real life.</li> </ul>
2011 Speak Out Conference Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 2011 Speak Out Conference sessions were interesting, informative, interactive and fun.</li> <li>• Suggestions to align the timing of the student and chaperone sessions, and to incorporate a larger group activity/ photo.</li> </ul>
Exprime-toi: Viser juste –	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools feel more welcoming/ safe when administration is close</li> </ul>

Forum	Summary of Major Themes
<p>Questions concernant la Loi sur l'éducation</p>	<p>to the main entrance to provide directions to visitors, and when students are friendly to one another and to adults.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To assist students in completing high school, schools need to demonstrate how education is an investment/ value of time.</li> <li>• In order to succeed after high school, students need visual education, time to prepare, family supports, focus on subjects that apply to their future career, and to be taught how to write a resume.</li> <li>• Students learn at their best through their peers, when teachers are facilitating interactive lessons, when teachers care about their students and take interest in their course, and when all students are given the opportunity to participate in class discussions.</li> </ul>
<p>Open Mic/ Tribune libre</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Open Mic/ Tribune libre section provides the opportunity to debate, discuss and talk about almost anything students encounter in their education.</li> <li>• This year, students posted comments on a variety of topics, including: extra-curricular activities/ sports, technology, time/ breaks, exams/ assessment, options/ languages, wellness, school environment, post-secondary/ careers, school spirit, teachers/ homework, and bullying.</li> </ul>

## Summary of 'Notable Quotables'

Forum	'Notable Quotables'
So you want to be a teacher?	<p><i>"Teachers are not necessarily expected to have all the answers but instead to teach students how to find the answer themselves".</i></p> <p><i>"I think students appreciate it when teachers admit they have made a mistake or are wrong sometimes. After all they are just human."</i></p>
A Necessary Step to Your Future – Compulsory Education	<p><i>"I don't think we should leave it totally to students whether they want to stay in school or not, but they should have some choice in it".</i></p> <p><i>"The challenge is to think about all of the issues and problems that students face today, try to understand them and then try to find solutions".</i></p> <p><i>"There is no simple solution to skipping".</i></p>
Speak Out Satisfaction Survey	<p><i>"I've personally found that the most effective way of getting students to voice their opinions is to ensure that they don't feel singled out or alone. That's why the Speak Out forums are such a great idea; they are a casual and friendly way for students to have open, honest discussions with their peers without feeling pressured".</i></p> <p><i>"Another thing we could do to help students to speak out more is to show them just how powerful, and influential their voice can be".</i></p>
Designing School Facilities	<p><i>"I think the school should be centered around a gathering space".</i></p> <p><i>"I believe schools should be built modern but have room for the upgrades and technologies of tomorrow".</i></p> <p><i>"When I made the transition from a 50 year high school to a newly built school, it was quite clear that in order to enhance education in the 21st century, up to date technology is essential!"</i></p>
Design the Ideal Mathematics Diploma Exam	<p><i>"Math is important to the curriculum and although much of the knowledge which we absorb in math class is forgotten, the skills are not".</i></p> <p><i>"Although I do feel guilty about the amount of paper wasted in the creation of exam booklets, I am inclined to believe that they are a more effective means of testing than on the computer (digital)".</i></p> <p><i>"Because this is a formal exam, I would argue students should not be able to choose their environments. Sure, we have different learning styles, prefer different learning environments, but we simply don't have the resource or the time to accommodate every single student."</i></p>

Forum	'Notable Quotables'
International Education	<p><i>"My school is an International Baccalaureate (IB) world school... the very essence of an 'international education'."</i></p> <p><i>"Especially in a cultural crossroads such as Canada, I believe it is fundamentally important for schools to be globally focused, and schools should strive to be as globally connected as possible."</i></p> <p><i>"A lot can be found, and learnt, from outside of Canada, and I think that new connections are one of our most important resources in this new technology-gearred age."</i></p> <p><i>"The more engaged the world is the more we can understand each other".</i></p>
Our Children, our Future: Getting it Right – Education Act	<p><i>"Schools are more welcoming when the individual personalities within the school are allowed to flourish".</i></p> <p><i>"Sure the aesthetics of the school affect how we perceive it, but ultimately it's the staff and the students that create the atmosphere".</i></p> <p><i>"Completing high school is one of the best things you can do in your life, but many students decline this wonderful opportunity".</i></p> <p><i>"When I am learning at my best I am on task and focused. I am in a comfortable place with NO distractions".</i></p> <p><i>"When I am learning at my best, I am having fun".</i></p>
The Environment and You	<p><i>"Knowing that I can make a difference inspires me to make a difference".</i></p> <p><i>"Nature is the sound of the birds that wake you up in the morning or the beauty of the flowers and how they smell".</i></p> <p><i>"Nature is everything that is beautiful in our world that occurs without human interaction, environment is the collective area where all organisms interact".</i></p> <p><i>"The greatest thing you can truly do to influence change is to truly become informed upon the issues themselves before taking action".</i></p>
High School Diploma: What's up with that?	<p><i>"I personally believe that the Alberta Diploma Examinations are an integral part of earning your high school diploma".</i></p> <p><i>"The fact that Alberta students have a responsibility to prepare for these large exams allows students some insight into what they can expect entering post-secondary".</i></p> <p><i>"In today's society and economy you cannot get a decent job without a high school diploma".</i></p> <p><i>"I think most students see the required classes for graduating high school (getting a diploma) as being fair but the issue of diploma</i></p>



Forum	'Notable Quotables'
	<i>exams is controversial".</i>
Technology in Your Learning & Life	<p><i>"In some of my science classes we use Edmodo which is like an educational Facebook".</i></p> <p><i>"While technology provides many great opportunities for learning and accessing extraneous information, technology can have many detrimental consequences, such as plagiarism, and loss of individual identity. Technology needs to be used to aid and support the traditional methods of learning, and not replace it".</i></p> <p><i>Digital citizenship means to be part of an online community. With that, comes the responsibility of being aware of what you post".</i></p>
2011 Speak Out Conference Feedback	<p><i>"I thought the sessions were amazing, especially with the fact that they were run by the Minister's Student Advisory Council kids".</i></p> <p><i>"I was so glad that I got to meet new people, make long lasting friends, and the best part, share my education stories".</i></p>
Open Mic/ Tribune libre	<p><i>"Academic should always come first because even if you are the best athlete in your school, as the chances of you becoming a major league professional athlete are still extremely small."</i></p> <p><i>"While I don't think that schools rely on technology any more than society does, I do believe that society relies on technology too much".</i></p> <p><i>"Lunch isn't only about eating lunch; it's a break in your school day and a break for teachers".</i></p> <p><i>"I think that to create "global citizens" it is important for schools to offer second language classes".</i></p> <p><i>"My school shows school spirit when it just treats everybody with respect".</i></p> <p><i>"I think students get enough time to do homework if they use their time wisely at school and at home".</i></p> <p><i>"I think that bullying goes "unnoticed" in a sense as there is so much bullying in a school that people learn to just ignore it when it happens".</i></p>

## Introduction

### Background

Launched by the Minister of Education on November 26, 2008, Speak Out – the Alberta Student Engagement Initiative – encourages Alberta’s youth to get involved in a variety of activities to share their thoughts about the education system. Speak Out has four components: an interactive, fully moderated website; Speak Out forums where small group-facilitated discussions are held at schools around the province; the Speak Out Annual Student Conference where 200 youth from around the province will gather; and the Minister’s Student Advisory Council, comprised of 24 youth ages 14 to 19<sup>1</sup>.

Speak Out’s website, comprised of moderated and interactive discussion boards and a daily blog, went live on November 3, 2008. Although many provinces in Canada have youth and student engagement initiatives, Speak Out is unique in that it is the only initiative to provide an interactive online presence, thus allowing students to discuss their education issues and concerns and to brainstorm recommendations and solutions with their peers across the province. Because the website is moderated, every post is reviewed by human eyes prior to posting to ensure relevance, privacy, anonymity and safety. The Community Rules for the website are clear: keep it relevant; keep it respectful; keep it safe (no names, no places, no schools, no contact info, no URLs); keep an open mind; and keep it clean. With these clear expectations, the website has a 90% approval rating<sup>2</sup>.

### Setup and Activity

The Speak Out website features a “Discuss” tab under which students can create their own discussion topics, view the archive of discussion posts and respond to ongoing conversations. The discussion section is divided into several “forums” created by the Speak Out administration, including monthly forums that feature a different theme each time. When students join, they can create a personal profile, complete with an avatar and a signature signoff. Members can then create their own topics under the forums to talk with other students across Alberta about their school experiences and their education. Discussion topics have varied immensely across the forums – from what kind of music is best for studying, to suggestions for improving the curriculum. Students have enjoyed being able to connect and speak out with peers, as is clear from the tremendous response<sup>3</sup>.

In 2011-12, the Speak Out website saw a significant increase in online posts.

---

<sup>1,2, 3</sup>A Summary of Student Voices Online, November 2008 to June 2009. Prepared by: Final Eyes Communications

**April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012**

From April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012 the Speak Out website featured ten (10) monthly *featured forums* supported by other branches within Alberta Education:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Featured Forum</b>	<b>Hosted by</b>
April 2011	So you want to be a teacher?	Workforce Planning and Development
May 2011	A Necessary Step to Your Future – Compulsory Education	High School Attendance
June 2011	Speak Out Satisfaction Survey	Student Engagement
September 2011	Designing School Facilities	Capital Planning
October 2011	Design the Ideal Mathematics Diploma Exam	Diploma Programs
November 2011	International Education	International Education Services
December 2011	Our Children, our Future: Getting it Right – Education Act	Engagement – Corporate Planning Branch – Getting It Right
January 2012	The Environment and You	Environmental Education
February 2012	High School Diploma: What's up with that?	Operational Standards
March 2012	Technology in Your Learning & Life	School Technology Sector

Additional feedback was collected on:

- 2011 Speak Out Conference Feedback
- Exprime-toi: Viser juste – Questions concernant la Loi sur l'éducation
- Open Mic/ Tribune libre

The following report is intended to summarize the combined thirteen (13) forums, and related discussion posts, as well as to highlight notable quotes provided throughout discussions.

Posts included under the 'Open Mic/ Tribune libre' section of the website have been summarized into broad categorical themes.

## Featured Forums:

### So you want to be a teacher?

**Forum Topics:** Have you ever had a Teacher who inspired you? What do some teachers do to make their lessons interesting? If you've had a Teacher who inspired you, what ways did they impact your life? Think of the Teachers in your life who were good at their job – what are the qualities that make them good teachers?

Theme	Issues Discussed
Good teachers...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balance both curriculum and enrichment based (beyond the curriculum) learning.</li> <li>• Are willing to listen and are open to new ideas.</li> <li>• Promote discussion on topics that are current and relevant to student lives.</li> <li>• Can admit when they are wrong/ have made a mistake.</li> <li>• Are people who really get to know their students, and relate on a personal level.</li> <li>• Educate and entertain students at the same time.</li> </ul>
Influence and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some students are more influenced by 'option' teachers (i.e. music, drama, art, etc.), as these teachers appeal to their interests.</li> <li>• Students are not supportive of Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs) as a method to evaluate teachers.</li> </ul>

*"Teachers are not necessarily expected to have all the answers but instead to teach students how to find the answer themselves".*

*"I think students appreciate it when teachers admit they have made a mistake or are wrong sometimes. After all they are just human."*

## A Necessary Step to Your Future – Compulsory Education

**Forum Topics: Where do you think skipping school will lead? Who do you think is affected when you skip school? Who is in Control? Why do students skip school?**

Theme	Issues Discussed
Skipping school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skipping school excessively can lead to dropping out; missing a few classes is ok.</li> <li>• Strong enforcement (such as legal action) to ensure students stay in school was not largely supported.</li> <li>• Need to communicate to students the importance of a high school diploma, so they can make an informed decision about staying in school.</li> <li>• Attendance is not as important as achievement (maintaining grades).</li> <li>• Suspensions should not be the consequence for skipping.</li> <li>• Students need incentives to attend classes (i.e. if you see value in something, you are more willing to participate).</li> <li>• It is difficult to define what is an 'acceptable' reason is to miss school.</li> </ul>
Effect on others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students that skip school are most affected by their choice to skip.</li> <li>• Classmates and partners on projects may be affected as well.</li> </ul>
Who is in control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a correlation between the attitude you develop at school, and the attitude you bring to other things you do (i.e. post-secondary, work, extracurricular, etc.)</li> </ul>
Why students skip school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students skip because they do not feel a connection to their schooling/ school.</li> <li>• Students skip because they are bored/ see a better use of their time.</li> <li>• Sometimes students skip because they are independent learners/ resources are available to them to learn outside the classroom.</li> </ul>

*“I don't think we should leave it totally to students whether they want to stay in school or not, but they should have some choice in it”.*

*“The challenge is to think about all of the issues and problems that students face today, try to understand them and then try to find solutions”.*

*“There is no simple solution to skipping”.*

## Speak Out Satisfaction Survey

**Forum Topics:** What could we do to encourage students to Speak Out more often about their education? What has been your experience participating in Speak Out? Do you have any ideas on how we can make Speak Out more effective? What is your motivation to Speak Out?

Theme	Issues Discussed
Encouraging students to Speak Out/ how to make Speak Out more effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggestion to use school assemblies as a method to make students and teachers aware of Speak Out, and the resources available to them.</li> <li>• Continue advertising (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, posters, presentations, contests, student representative at each school, etc.)</li> <li>• Continue to utilize forums where students feel comfortable voicing their opinions.</li> <li>• More effort in making principals and teachers aware of the initiative (to assist with further promotion); Speak Out Team to network in schools.</li> <li>• Suggestion to make an app for ipads.</li> <li>• Continue demonstrating how powerful student voice can be, and how it has been used to influence decisions.</li> <li>• Speak Out website community rules (relevancy, respect, safety, and anonymity) are perceived as being too strict; time delay to moderate posts.</li> </ul>
Motivation to Speak Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are motivated to voice their opinions when they feel a personal comfort level.</li> <li>• Friends motivate other friends to get involved.</li> </ul>

*“I’ve personally found that the most effective way of getting students to voice their opinions is to ensure that they don’t feel singled out or alone. That’s why the Speak Out forums are such a great idea; they are a casual and friendly way for students to have open, honest discussions with their peers without feeling pressured”.*

*“Another thing we could do to help students to speak out more is to show them just how powerful, and influential their voice can be”.*

## Designing School Facilities

**Forum Topics:** What do you think should be included in a school building of the future and why? If you were able to change one thing in your current school building, what would it be and why? What do you like or not like about your current school building and why?

Theme	Issues Discussed
School buildings of the future, should include	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate windows/ skylights for natural light.</li> <li>• ‘State of the art’ technology into computer rooms or directly in classrooms (i.e. Wi-Fi, electrical outlets, SMART, etc.)</li> <li>• Well-designed library, including designated areas or individual and group study.</li> <li>• Student lounge (area where students can relax and be comfortable).</li> <li>• Modern architectural design (get away from the traditional rectangle).</li> <li>• Bolder colours/ murals on walls.</li> <li>• Open spaces.</li> <li>• Spaces/ designated rooms for group work.</li> <li>• Wider hallways and taller ceilings.</li> </ul>
If I could change something, I would...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add an outdoor/ gazebo-type classroom.</li> <li>• Increase the number of windows.</li> <li>• Paint walls with bright, cheery colours.</li> <li>• Widen hallways/ add more connecting hallways.</li> <li>• Expand the cafeteria.</li> <li>• Improve air ventilation.</li> <li>• Add more gathering/ common areas.</li> <li>• Expand number and size of classrooms.</li> </ul>
Strengths of current school building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Library/ seating in library.</li> <li>• School structure – simple/ easy to find your way around.</li> <li>• School atrium/ courtyard.</li> <li>• Lots of natural light/ windows.</li> <li>• Team colours on lockers/ colourful walls.</li> <li>• Open eating/ gathering areas.</li> <li>• Large building.</li> <li>• Classrooms organized by subject.</li> <li>• Shape of classrooms.</li> </ul>
Weaknesses of current school building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narrow hallways.</li> <li>• Lack of windows.</li> <li>• Too small of building for student population.</li> <li>• Portables not attached to the school.</li> <li>• Classrooms organized by subject (however, doesn’t necessarily support teacher interaction across disciplines).</li> </ul>

Theme	Issues Discussed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temperature issues in classrooms.</li> <li>• Worn flooring (gym floor, carpeting)</li> </ul>

*“I think the school should be centered around a gathering space”.*

*“I believe schools should be built modern but have room for the upgrades and technologies of tomorrow”.*

*“When I made the transition from a 50 year high school to a newly built school, it was quite clear that in order to enhance education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, up to date technology is essential!”*



## Design the Ideal Mathematics Diploma Exam

**Forum Topics: Thoughts and opinions on what an ideal mathematics diploma examination might look like.**

Theme	Issues Discussed
Exam Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for approximately 50 questions; some support for increasing the number of questions (so an incorrect answer has less impact on the overall mark).</li> <li>• 50% should remain the exam pass rate.</li> <li>• Diplomas should utilize/ balance a variety of questions (i.e. multiple choice, written/ short answer) to appeal to various testing styles.</li> <li>• Strong support for multiple choice questions.</li> <li>• It is important to 'show your work' and how you derived the answer.</li> </ul>
Exam Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need a reasonable time to complete the exam – suggestions of 2-3 hours.</li> <li>• There should be a certain time limit people are required to stay to reduce distractions.</li> <li>• Some support for accommodating individuals who prefer to write their exam in a separate/ individualized setting, at a different time or with an exam reader. Others feel 'choices' for all students are not practical, and that the same standards should apply to all students.</li> <li>• Noted that several students have 'test anxiety'.</li> <li>• Mixed reviews on if year-end exams should be written together in a gym (or if they should remain in individual classrooms).</li> <li>• The test environment (room, lighting, temperature) is perceived to have an effect on exam performance.</li> <li>• Teachers should not disturb or pull students away during examination times.</li> <li>• Limited support for the use of ipods/ listening to music during exams; students are concerned that ipods can be used to 'cheat'.</li> <li>• Students feel there is adequate time to study for exams, and that preparation should occur throughout the semester, not just at the end.</li> <li>• Exams should not be written at home, as they need to be properly supervised.</li> </ul>
Exam Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for the use of computers or ipads to complete the exam, however, students should still have the choice to use the traditional 'pencil and paper' approach.</li> <li>• Diploma preparation classes and access to old practice exams</li> </ul>

Theme	Issues Discussed
	<p>are very useful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited support for open book exams/ access to notes; doesn't incent students to study or to know the subject area.</li> </ul>
Math Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More weighing on classwork, less on testing; diploma is too heavily weighted at 50%.</li> <li>Mixed reviews on if the math curriculum provides you with the necessary life skills; some support that math teaches you necessary problem solving skills.</li> <li>Support for multiple streams of math: pure and applied.</li> <li>Distance-learning programs do not necessarily prepare you well-enough for diploma exams.</li> </ul>

*“Math is important to the curriculum and although much of the knowledge which we absorb in math class is forgotten, the skills are not”.*

*“Although I do feel guilty about the amount of paper wasted in the creation of exam booklets, I am inclined to believe that they are a more effective means of testing than on the computer (digital)”.*

*“Because this is a formal exam, I would argue students should not be able to choose their environments. Sure, we have different learning styles, prefer different learning environments, but we simply don't have the resource or the time to accommodate every single student.”*

## International Education

**Forum Topics: What does being globally engaged mean to you? How does your school get involved in International Education? What do you do to be globally engaged? What word, other than 'global citizen' would you use to refer to someone who is globally engaged? How important are global activities in a school? What skills and knowledge do you need after you graduate to live in a global environment?**

Theme	Issues Discussed
Meaning of 'globally engaged'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be aware of what going on in the world around you.</li> <li>Doesn't necessarily mean you need to travel.</li> <li>Going anywhere in the world, and being able to connect with the people there.</li> <li>Understanding and respecting different cultures and customs.</li> <li>Awareness of current events and global issues.</li> <li>Getting out of your 'bubble'; stepping outside your comfort zone.</li> <li>Understanding how your actions impact the different levels of society (i.e. local, provincial, national and international level).</li> <li>Engaging in the common bonds of humanity.</li> <li>Sharing your culture with others.</li> <li>Having awareness of how you are interconnected/ interdependent with others.</li> <li>Link to the environment and philanthropy.</li> </ul>
How your school gets involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual international trips (i.e. Europe, Asia and South America).</li> <li>Foster children.</li> <li>International exchanges/ host exchange students.</li> <li>Mission trips.</li> <li>Fundraising for 'Change for Change' and 'Me to We'.</li> <li>Clubs that promote international relations.</li> <li>One school has an international certificate program; however, enrollment in this program is limited.</li> </ul>
How you get involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Travel.</li> <li>Participate in annual international trips/ exchanges.</li> <li>Keep up-to-date on current affairs (i.e. watch the news, read articles).</li> <li>Volunteer for international organizations (i.e. Red Cross, Free the Children, etc.)</li> <li>Meet international exchange students.</li> <li>Skype, penpal.</li> </ul>
Other words to describe a 'global citizen'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broader view.</li> <li>Worldly person.</li> <li>Participant.</li> <li>Interested, involved.</li> </ul>

Theme	Issues Discussed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cosmopolitan.</li> <li>• Current, up-to-date.</li> <li>• Internationally involved.</li> </ul>
Importance of global activities in school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global activities are very important.</li> <li>• Opens student's minds to the privileges they have in Canada.</li> <li>• The future is globalization; need to educate students so they are prepared for this interconnected future.</li> <li>• Allows students to experience other places, cultures, languages and beliefs.</li> <li>• Allows student to learn about diversity.</li> <li>• Allows students to be active in global issues.</li> <li>• Allows for real life experiences.</li> </ul>
Skills and knowledge needed to live globally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tact, diplomacy.</li> <li>• Technological skills to operate in the global economy.</li> <li>• Communication skills.</li> <li>• Knowledge of other cultures, beliefs, customs, and appropriate behaviours; sense of diversity.</li> <li>• Language skills.</li> <li>• Ability to be tolerant and open-minded.</li> <li>• Mathematical skills, in particular basic addition/ subtraction skills.</li> <li>• Ability to create networks.</li> <li>• Social skills.</li> <li>• Critical thinking skills; including the ability to see 'both sides of the story'.</li> </ul>

*"My school is an International Baccalaureate (IB) world school... the very essence of an 'international education'."*

*"Especially in a cultural crossroads such as Canada, I believe it is fundamentally important for schools to be globally focused, and schools should strive to be as globally connected as possible."*

*"A lot can be found, and learnt, from outside of Canada, and I think that new connections are one of our most important resources in this new technology-gearred age."*

*"The more engaged the world is the more we can understand each other".*

## Our Children, our Future: Getting it Right – Education Act

**Forum Topics:** How can we make schools more welcoming and safe environments? What can be done to help more students complete high school? What do you think you should be learning to prepare you for life after high school? What does it look like when you are learning at your best?

*Please refer to **Exprime-toi: Viser juste – Questions concernant la Loi sur l'éducation** for responses to similar questions in French.*

Theme	Issues Discussed
<p>How to make schools more welcoming and safe, including to stop bullying</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools feel more welcoming/ safe when there is:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Artwork on the walls.</li> <li>○ Warm paint colours.</li> <li>○ Common areas for student to come together; spaces for students to sit and relax.</li> <li>○ Clean spaces (demonstrates a place people care about).</li> <li>○ Outdoor 'curb appeal' such as a welcoming entrance and flowers.</li> <li>○ Security guards/ cameras/ monitoring.</li> <li>○ Timely repairs.</li> <li>○ Friendliness of people within the building.</li> <li>○ A map/ someone to assist with directions.</li> <li>○ A welcoming committee for new students; welcome week.</li> <li>○ Events at the school that foster a school community.</li> <li>○ Fellow students and teachers that are welcoming (smile, greet you, joke with you, etc.).</li> <li>○ Opportunities to build social bonds through extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>○ A sense of school spirit.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• To stop bullying need to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Create awareness and to demonstrate the long term effects of bullying.</li> <li>○ Have smaller class sizes; more personal/ community feel.</li> <li>○ 'Call out' the bully; support someone you see being bullied.</li> <li>○ Empower those being bullied to stand up for themselves.</li> <li>○ Have a strict no-tolerance, anti-bullying policy.</li> <li>○ Recognize cyber-bullying (that occurs through social media).</li> <li>○ Access to moderation/ supports to work through issues.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Theme	Issues Discussed
<p>What can be done to assist students complete high school</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need more interesting and engaging activities (i.e. projects, labs, debates, mock trials, fun activities, etc.)</li> <li>• Demonstrate the value of an education, and how subjects can be applied to the real world/ future careers.</li> <li>• Need more respect for different types of learning abilities, styles and program interests.</li> <li>• Need to get at the root of issues impacting school participation.</li> <li>• Emphasize the support students need from others (teachers, family, etc.) to be successful at school.</li> <li>• Need to proactively 'reach out' to students at risk.</li> <li>• Encourage programs like Work Experience and Registered Apprenticeship Programs, which allows and helps students to work while attending school, or to learn a trade.</li> <li>• Reduce stress, peer pressure and expectations around getting good grades.</li> <li>• General support for a minimum/ mandatory education to age 16 to 18.</li> <li>• General support for government funding high school students until they reached the age of 19 (allows for an extra year of completion; most students have already completed by this age, etc.)</li> </ul>
<p>What students should be learning to prepare them after high school</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.</li> <li>• Career and life management (CALM) – learning practical topics such as potential careers, how to make a budget, rent an apartment, grocery shop, complete your taxes, etc.</li> <li>• Social skills/ social interaction – prepare students for interviews, presentations, meeting new people, and any other basic human interaction.</li> <li>• Financial skills (i.e. banking, saving, investing).</li> <li>• Basic household skills such as cooking, cleaning, hardware fixes, etc.</li> <li>• Common sense and the ability to understand and respect others.</li> <li>• Proper work ethic.</li> </ul>
<p>I am learning at my best when...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a positive/ comfortable work environment – quiet, calm/ relaxed, warm, good lighting, etc.</li> <li>• Teachers are there to support and guide, when needed.</li> <li>• Teachers cater to all learning styles – videos, PowerPoint, diagrams, lectures, skits, worksheets, discussion, etc.</li> <li>• Teachers are passionate and care about their subject and students.</li> <li>• I feel comfortable voicing my opinion/ participating in discussion.</li> <li>• The lesson is fun and engaging.</li> <li>• I am alone and focused.</li> </ul>

Theme	Issues Discussed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am on the computer/ utilizing technology.</li> </ul>

*“Schools are more welcoming when the individual personalities within the school are allowed to flourish”.*

*“Sure the aesthetics of the school affect how we perceive it, but ultimately it's the staff and the students that create the atmosphere”.*

*“Completing high school is one of the best things you can do in your life, but many students decline this wonderful opportunity”.*

*“When I am learning at my best I am on task and focused. I am in a comfortable place with NO distractions”.*

*“When I am learning at my best, I am having fun”.*

## The Environment and You

**Forum Topics:** What inspires you to get involved in environmental action? Would it be better to learn about the environment in specific subjects or have it distributed evenly across the curriculum? What does the word “nature” mean to you? What does the word “environment” mean to you? In your opinion, what can you do to influence change related to environmental concerns in Alberta?

Theme	Issues Discussed
Inspiration to get involved in environmental action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowing the consequences of current actions and the impact on future generations.</li> <li>Videos/ movies (i.e. We Are Here: The Pale Blue Dot, An Inconvenient Truth, and WALL-E).</li> <li>The love for natural beauty/ the outdoors.</li> <li>Visible pollution.</li> <li>Environmental activists such as David Attenborough, David Suzuki, shoe company: Toms, etc.</li> </ul>
Specific subjects vs. distributed through curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General support for learning about the environment in specific subjects such as science or social studies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Science for the biology/ ecosystem perspective, and social studies for the political perspective.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Suggestion that environment could be a fourth science: environmental studies.</li> <li>Some students feel the environment should be incorporated into all subjects.</li> </ul>
<p>The word ‘nature’ means...</p> <p>The word ‘environment’ means...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific things like plants, animals, trees, wildlife, etc.</li> <li>Everything that is natural around us.</li> <li>Beauty of the environment/ earth.</li> <li>Natural way things are supposed to be; not created by humans.</li> <li>The outdoors/ serenity.</li> <li>Your surroundings/ area around us.</li> <li>Where we live/ conditions in which we live.</li> <li>Could be a home or school environment.</li> </ul>
What can be done to influence change in Alberta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start with individual change; individual contributions can combine to make a difference.</li> <li>Create awareness on reducing environmental impacts in the oil sands.</li> <li>Students need to come together/ organize themselves.</li> <li>Become informed/ raise awareness.</li> <li>Support for incentives (i.e. lower prices of public transit, taxes on gas/ carbon, tax-credits for environmental friendly initiatives,</li> </ul>



Theme	Issues Discussed
	LEAD standards for new public buildings, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin educating children about the environment at a young age.</li> </ul>

*“Knowing that I can make a difference inspires me to make a difference”.*

*“Nature is the sound of the birds that wake you up in the morning or the beauty of the flowers and how they smell”.*

*“Nature is everything that is beautiful in our world that occurs without human interaction, environment is the collective area where all organisms interact”.*

*“The greatest thing you can truly do to influence change is to truly become informed upon the issues themselves before taking action”.*

## High School Diploma: What's up with that?

**Forum Topics:** Should Diploma Examinations be a fundamental part of earning a high school diploma? Is it important to receive a high school diploma? If so, why? If not, why? How does earning a high school diploma help you prepare for a future career? For post-secondary studies? Do you think the requirements for earning a high school diploma are fair?

Theme	Issues Discussed
Diploma examinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong support for continuing the use of diploma exams because they are standardized across all students/ the province.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Also assist to standardize the curriculum.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Weighting could be adjusted; concerns about text anxiety.</li> <li>• Diploma examinations prepare students for future challenges/ ability to work under pressure.</li> </ul>
Importance of receiving a high school diploma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very important!</li> <li>• Critical for future employment.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Demonstrates to employers your achievement/ accomplishment.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provides you with internationally recognized credentials.</li> </ul>
Preparing for future careers/ post-secondary studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a diploma 'enables' you to get a job/ enter post-secondary.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Post-secondary institutions require a diploma as an entry requirement.</li> <li>◦ Opens opportunities/ employers require it.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A diploma gives you the basic skills to succeed in the future.</li> <li>• Achieving a diploma (and the requirement of diploma exams) prepares you for future examinations in post-secondary.</li> </ul>
Requirements for earning a high school diploma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally class/ credit requirements for a diploma are considered reasonable.</li> <li>• 100 credits is fair/ achievable, and there is flexibility on how this can be accomplished.</li> <li>• Demonstrates an equitable standard across all students in the province.</li> </ul>

*"I personally believe that the Alberta Diploma Examinations are an integral part of earning your high school diploma".*

*"The fact that Alberta students have a responsibility to prepare for these large exams allows students some insight into what they can expect entering post-secondary".*

*“In today's society and economy you cannot get a decent job without a high school diploma”.*

*“I think most students see the required classes for graduating high school (getting a diploma) as being fair but the issue of diploma exams is controversial”.*

## Technology in Your Learning & Life

**Forum Topics:** How do you use technology? How could you use a cell phone / smartphone in class to help with your school work? What does it mean to be a digital citizen?

Theme	Issues Discussed
How technology is used to...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do research.</li> <li>• Make presentations.</li> <li>• Make videos.</li> <li>• Write reports/ essays.</li> <li>• Listen to music.</li> <li>• Access websites.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Search answers to questions.</li> <li>○ Look up definitions; use the dictionary.</li> <li>○ Connect with social networking/ class sites (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Collaborate with other students on group projects and assignments.</li> <li>• Take notes.</li> <li>• Email.</li> <li>• Read the newspaper.</li> <li>• Be a student – distance learning, or full-time online student.</li> </ul>
Cell phone/ smartphone can be used in class to...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look up/ view PowerPoint presentations.</li> <li>• Use the calculator.</li> <li>• Use the calendar; set up homework reminders.</li> <li>• Use the internet; search the internet for information.</li> <li>• Email students worksheets, notes, or website links that would assist with schoolwork.</li> <li>• Take notes.</li> <li>• Participate on a class discussion board.</li> <li>• Capture pictures of the lecture notes.</li> <li>• Concern that a cell phone/ smart phone may cause a distraction and can be used to cheat.</li> <li>• Most schools do not allow the use of phones because students often abuse the privilege.</li> </ul>
Being a 'digital citizen' means to...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect technology.</li> <li>• Use social media safely.</li> <li>• Be part of an online community.</li> <li>• Behave in the same manor online as you behave in real life.</li> <li>• Follow the rules and regulations of an online environment.</li> <li>• Take responsibility for your actions online.</li> </ul>

*“In some of my science classes we use Edmodo which is like an educational Facebook”.*

*“While technology provides many great opportunities for learning and accessing extraneous information, technology can have many detrimental consequences, such as plagiarism, and loss of individual identity. Technology needs to be used to aid and support the traditional methods of learning, and not replace it”.*

*Digital citizenship means to be part of an online community. With that, comes the responsibility of being aware of what you post”.*

## 2011 Speak Out Conference Feedback

**Forum Topics: Feedback on the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Speak Out Conference held April 15-17, 2011.**

Theme	Issues Discussed
2011 Speak Out Conference Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The sessions were interesting, informative, interactive and fun.</li> <li>• Suggestion to align the student and chaperone session schedule.</li> <li>• Suggestion to have a group activity such as renting the West Edmonton Mall Galaxyland or waterpark.</li> <li>• Suggestion for a group photo.</li> </ul>

*“I thought the sessions were amazing, especially with the fact that they were run by the Minister's Student Advisory Council kids”.*

*“I was so glad that I got to meet new people, make long lasting friends, and the best part, share my education stories”.*

## Exprime-toi: Viser juste – Questions concernant la Loi sur l'éducation

**Forum Topics:** Selon toi, qu'est-ce que tu devrais être en train d'apprendre pour te préparer à la vie après l'écoles? Pour toi, quelles sont les meilleures conditions d'apprentissage? Que peut-on faire pour aider plus d'élèves à obtenir leur diplôme d'études secondaires? Comment pouvons-nous rendre les écoles plus accueillantes et plus sécuritaires?

Theme	Issues Discussed
<p>Selon toi, qu'est-ce que tu devrais être en train d'apprendre pour te préparer à la vie après l'écoles?</p> <p><i>In your opinion, what you should be trying to learn to prepare you for life after high school?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need more visual education (i.e. videos, trips).</li> <li>• Suggestion to 'major' in a particular subject that applies to student's future careers; currently the curriculum is too focused on specific subjects such as math and science.</li> <li>• It would be good for students to know how a particular subject applies to future careers.</li> <li>• In grade 12, students need to be taught practical things, such as writing a resume.</li> </ul>
<p>Pour toi, quelles sont les meilleures conditions d'apprentissage?</p> <p><i>For you, what are the best conditions for learning?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers need to facilitate interesting and interactive things such as presentations, projects, games, and experiments.</li> <li>• If teachers take interest in their course, it is likely that students will want to participate too (and will also adopt this attitude).</li> <li>• Prefer teachers who care about their students.</li> <li>• Teachers need to ensure all students have the opportunity to participate in class discussions.</li> <li>• Suggestion that the best way to learn is through your peers.</li> </ul>
<p>Que peut-on faire pour aider plus d'élèves à obtenir leur diplôme d'études secondaires?</p> <p><i>What can we do to help more students graduate from high school?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work is important, but education is too, and therefore, there should continue to be a minimum of mandatory education (to age 16).</li> <li>• General support for the government funding high school students until they reached the age of 19.</li> <li>• Need to demonstrate to students that education is an investment/ value of their time.</li> <li>• To demonstrate value, suggestions to increase the number of student apprenticeships and CTS courses available to those pursuing trade careers.</li> </ul>
<p>Comment pouvons-nous rendre les écoles plus accueillantes et plus sécuritaires?</p> <p><i>How can we make schools more welcoming and safer?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important to have the secretary/ administration close to the main entrance to provide directions to visitors.</li> <li>• To have a safe school, students need to be friendlier to one another, and to adults.</li> </ul>

## Open Mic/ Tribune libre

This section of the website provides students the opportunity to debate, discuss and talk about almost anything you encounter in your education. *Due to the large number of posts, this section has been summarized into broad categorical themes.*

Theme	Issues Discussed
Extra-curricular activities/ sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally students believe tryouts are a fair way to form sports teams.</li> <li>• Generally academics were viewed as more important than sports.</li> <li>• Band would be beneficial to have all year round.</li> <li>• If a coach has selected you for a sports team, you should play a fair amount of time; fair play.</li> <li>• Participating in school sports should be a reasonable cost to students; support for fundraising assists to cover costs.</li> <li>• It is possible to balance participation in sports and homework.</li> <li>• Track and field preparation is limited, but students feel extra preparation should occur outside of school time.</li> <li>• The best sports are: baseball, basketball, badminton, table tennis, volleyball, rock climbing, soccer, hockey, and snowboarding!</li> <li>• Suggestions for other school activities other than sports include: choir, glee club, jazz band, percussion ensemble, yearbook, science/ environmental club, international club, spelling bee, book club, debate club, chess club, youth volunteer corp, academic clubs, and homework help.</li> <li>• Generally gym equipment is new/ in good shape.</li> <li>• Mixed support on if contact sports (i.e. football, lacrosse, rugby) should be allowed to be played in schools; fear of injury.</li> <li>• Strong support for students participating on student councils.</li> </ul>
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for blocking inappropriate websites, however, unfortunately sometimes websites that are good resources/ have relevant information are blocked.</li> <li>• Strong support for students using their cellphones during breaks and at lunch.</li> <li>• Support for teachers getting involved to assist when a student is being cyber-bullied.</li> <li>• Listening to music help students to focus on their work; mixed reviews on if Ipods/ MP3 players should be allowed in the classroom.</li> <li>• Some schools have enough computers for students to use, others do not.</li> <li>• Support for the use of technology in classes, however, SMART boards are distracting when teachers do not use them properly.</li> <li>• Strong support for students using their personal laptops at school.</li> <li>• Students should have access to school laptops to use; some feel the school should provide them to each student.</li> </ul>



Theme	Issues Discussed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for using the graphing calculator app available on iPods, however, not on tests (concerns about cheating); some students question the use of calculators/ app at all.</li> <li>• Mixed support on if there should be a 'free-time' computer class – some support as it allows you to explore/ be creative, others feel it would be wasting time.</li> <li>• Teachers should not use their cellphones in class if students are not allowed to; need to model behaviour.</li> <li>• Support for the increased use of technology; however, caution that there needs to be a balance of technology and traditional teaching methods.</li> <li>• Wifi is beneficial to have in schools.</li> </ul>
Time/ Breaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School assemblies are generally long enough, perhaps too long.</li> <li>• Mixed support for 'free-time' in your schedule every day; some feel 'free-time' should be reserved for after-school hours.</li> <li>• Students feel they get sufficient time off for holiday breaks (approximately 2 weeks).</li> <li>• Generally, school day hours are appropriate, with some minor modifications.</li> <li>• Generally, students are given enough time/ notice to study for exams.</li> <li>• Lunch time needs to be 45-60 minutes long.</li> <li>• Most schools have teacher supervision during lunch hours.</li> <li>• Support for regular breaks; some students feel breaks are long enough (and prefer an earlier dismissal time), some feel they should be extended.</li> <li>• Generally, students have enough time (3-6 minutes) to get to their next class.</li> </ul>
Exams/ Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to limit distractions during tests (i.e. noise, disruptions, announcements, people leaving, etc.)</li> <li>• Diplomas are weighted too heavily at 50%.</li> <li>• Generally students feel students should not leave the room when taking a test, unless they need to use the washroom or there is a medical emergency.</li> <li>• Students would like the ability to check their grades online; some schools already have this functionality.</li> <li>• Students feel 50% is an acceptable pass grade, others feel the passing grade should be set higher.</li> <li>• Homework should be limited in exam periods.</li> <li>• Support for Provincial Achievement Exams (PATs) as a way to standardize the curriculum and compare across schools; pro is that they prepare you for future diplomas; some cons include that they are stressful for lower grade levels (3, 6) and for the amount of work to prepare, are not necessarily counted towards a final grade.</li> <li>• Students prefer if teachers mark their tests.</li> <li>• General support for retaking tests if you did not pass or are not</li> </ul>

Theme	Issues Discussed
	<p>satisfied with the grade; re-writes need to be fair/ offered to all students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for essay questions in testing; demonstrates your writing skills, and the ability to apply broad topics.</li> </ul>
Options/ Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools generally offer a wide range of option classes; it is the students responsibility to be aware of all offerings.</li> <li>• Mixed reviews on if language classes are relevant; some feel they are very important to integrate with other cultures and for future job opportunities, others are disappointed with the inability to speak a language after multiple courses.</li> <li>• French is offered at most schools, but some students would like to see more language options.</li> <li>• Students want schools to offer both music and art.</li> <li>• Option fees should be reasonable/ subsidized by the school.</li> <li>• It would be helpful to get an outline of the topics/ projects that will be covered to assist students in selecting option classes.</li> </ul>
Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are generally not getting enough sleep.</li> <li>• Some students feel you should ask the teacher when requiring a bathroom break, others feel you should just slip out to go when needed.</li> <li>• Schools should not force/ have a rule to ensure students are eating breakfast; this should remain a personal choice.</li> <li>• Suggestions for schools to provide breakfast food in the cafeteria.</li> <li>• Support for microwaves in schools.</li> <li>• Generally, students do not support drinking energy drinks in the classroom, as they are considered unhealthy.</li> <li>• Schools should support healthy eating (and students should have access to healthy options), but selling 'junk food' in moderation is still acceptable.</li> <li>• Most school cafeterias offer healthy food options.</li> <li>• Many schools have guidance counsellors, but their schedules are often busy, and they are responsible for hundreds of students; some schools have a school therapist/ psychiatrist/ family resource worker to be accessed if needed.</li> <li>• Smoking should not be allowed on school grounds, should be done in designated smoking areas, and should be regularly monitored; mixed reviews on appropriate consequences.</li> <li>• Food should be allowed in class.</li> </ul>
School environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools should have air conditionings so students/ teachers are comfortable in the building.</li> <li>• Students want comfy chairs similar to chairs for the teacher.</li> <li>• Generally students prefer desks over tables in the classroom.</li> <li>• School doors should be open earlier, especially in the winter months.</li> <li>• Mixed support on if desks need to be more comfortable; suggestions to provide seat cushions and to expand desks.</li> </ul>

Theme	Issues Discussed
Post-Secondary/ Careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scholarships are a good incentive to advance to post-secondary.</li> <li>• Students generally feel they are being pushed to pick a future profession too early; some students feel you should have a general idea about the career path you are pursuing.</li> <li>• Students are going to pay for post-secondary through: savings/ RESPs, scholarships, assistance from parents, loan/ loan from parents, and having a part-time job.</li> <li>• Post-secondary is important, as it teaches you the skills you will need for your career; many students are pursuing post-secondary.</li> </ul>
School spirit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School spirit is very important!</li> <li>• Some schools are very committed to school spirit; others find it difficult to promote and have a lack of participation at events.</li> <li>• Students should have a choice on whether or not they would like to participate in school spirit events (i.e. Terry Fox Run, Christmas Concert), but should be encouraged to participate as they do promote school spirit.</li> <li>• School spirit ideas include: school merchandise/ colours, prep rallies, talent shows and concerts, fun days, spirit days, dances, assemblies, homeroom challenges, pajama day, chant/ stomp, and support for school teams.</li> </ul>
Teachers/ Homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers can be fun, but need to respect their professional bounds.</li> <li>• Generally students feel they get enough help from their teachers on topics or homework, but this assistance needs to be requested.</li> <li>• There should be a balance between modern (i.e. use of technology) and traditional teaching styles.</li> <li>• Some students feel they have too much homework, and not enough time to complete; others feel the amount of assigned homework is reasonable. One issue is that teachers do not necessarily coordinate, and therefore, homework compounds.</li> <li>• Students generally have a 'couple hours' worth of homework.</li> <li>• A teacher definitely reflects the way you see a subject, and depends heavily on their teaching style.</li> <li>• It is important to get along with your teacher in class if you want to succeed in school.</li> <li>• Homework assists to build time management skills.</li> <li>• It is important to have a variety of teachers year over year; allows for exposure to various teaching styles.</li> <li>• There should be a mechanism for students to evaluate teachers.</li> <li>• Teachers should not share marks in front of the class, and should respect a student's personal business/ email.</li> <li>• Teachers should give students a chance before calling home.</li> <li>• Teachers should be focused and prepared, and limit off-topic conversations.</li> </ul>
Bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers need to care about bullying, and assist to identify and take action against it.</li> </ul>

Theme	Issues Discussed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bullying is a huge issue in schools, but often, no action is taken by the school, teachers, or student being bullied.</li> <li>• To stop bullying, students should: be aware of bullying issues, set a good example (and not be bullies themselves), stand up for one another/ peer intervention, and speak up to an adult; schools should have a no-tolerance policy with consequences.</li> </ul>

*“Academic should always come first because even if you are the best athlete in your school, as the chances of you becoming a major league professional athlete are still extremely small.”*

*“While I don’t think that schools rely on technology any more than society does, I do believe that society relies on technology too much”.*

*“Lunch isn't only about eating lunch; it's a break in your school day and a break for teachers”.*

*“I think that to create "global citizens" it is important for schools to offer second language classes”.*

*“My school shows school spirit when it just treats everybody with respect”.*

*“I think students get enough time to do homework if they use their time wisely at school and at home”.*

*“I think that bullying goes "unnoticed" in a sense as there is so much bullying in a school that people learn to just ignore it when it happens”.*