



CEA CALGARY WORKSHOP SUMMARY

In October 2013, over 300 workshop delegates – from the entire spectrum of the Canadian education stakeholder community – congregated in Calgary to share what they thought was standing in the way of change in education. Too rarely do these diverse voices gather in the same room, let alone collaborate around the same table – in doing so, they illustrated their deep commitment to enhancing the learning experience for every student by discussing:

- 1. Their visions of what schools should be.**
- 2. The barriers that stand in the way of achieving those visions.**
- 3. The assumptions about teaching and learning that keep those barriers intact that prevent change.**

Full CEA Calgary Workshop Report: www.cea-ace.ca/CalgaryReport

BARRIERS THAT STAND IN THE WAY OF CHANGE

Here are some key barriers to change that Calgary participants shared.

Barriers to authentic and meaningful learning

- A misalignment between the '21st century' curriculum, and the 20th century assessment rubrics containing discipline-based, grade-defined expectations.
- A school's physical design and timetables, which don't support inquiry-based experiences.
- Change rhetoric overshadows the reality that old traditional structures and practices remain firmly in place.

Barriers to a more responsive and personalized education system

- Overly prescriptive curricula resulting in lockstep progress through topics discourages creativity, stands in the way of professional autonomy, and silences student voice.
 - The age/grade-based organization of time and physical space trumps providing students with a learning path that resonates with their needs, skills, interests and individual learning pace.
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EXPLORING OUR ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT EDUCATION

Participants also identified and explored some of the following longstanding assumptions about teaching and learning that hold our systems in place:

- That the current model of education has worked well in the past and, therefore, should continue to allow us to meet our needs.
- That standardized curriculum, assessments, and design models are essential to maintaining the structure of school.
- That schools are primarily places of individual academic growth.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

1. Build new levels of trust among educators, administrators, ministries, faculties of education and the school community to create systems that respond better to the needs of learners.
2. Build understanding that schools are complex communities where strong relationships, health and wellness, and attention to the whole person are essential to address the needs of the learner in a more integrated holistic way.
3. Launch a series of public advocacy campaigns designed to stir up a sense of urgency for change that draws the public into authentic conversations with policy-makers, educators, students and parents.



CEA ANALYSIS

While CEA readily acknowledges that the visions, barriers and assumptions identified in Calgary were not necessarily new, the following conclusions were reached about the Calgary workshop model, which reinforces our commitment to continuing this dialogue in regional workshops across Canada:

1. ***What's standing in the way of change in education?*** was not only a timely question that resonated with Canadian educators and drew them to the Calgary workshop – it also compelled many Calgary workshop participants to bring it back to their staff meetings and classrooms as a catalyst for change discussions in their own schools.
2. Convening the divergent perspectives of students, teachers, principals, and representatives of teacher unions, ministries of education, faculties of education, and other stakeholders ‘around the same table’ teased out some of the deep-rooted conflicting ideologies about education that prevent real change from occurring.
3. By virtue of their proximity to the heart of teaching and learning, students’ and teachers’ voices were pivotal in separating change rhetoric from reality during these discussions. As a result, their voices served as powerful levers for stakeholders to think critically about their own roles in driving, or hindering change.
4. This workshop illustrated that mutual trust, respect and openness between these diverse perspectives – and the courage to leave organizational agendas at the door – are essential to defining a path forward for true education systems change.
5. CEA must continue to refine this workshop model so that these important change conversations branch out into schools and classrooms, and mobilize a groundswell of support for those seeking system-wide policy and practice changes.





NEXT STEP – CEA REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

The CEA Calgary workshop serves as a prototype of what a change strategy could look like – a facilitated discussion involving a wide range of stakeholders who can retain their ideal vision for public education, while developing a set of actions that could get to the heart of dissolving the barriers that stand in the way of the changes they want to see.

Inspired by the openness, courage, and energy displayed among the Calgary delegates, CEA will move this thought work forward by hosting similar events in five regions in the Spring and Summer of 2014 to provoke more education stakeholders to think differently and bring about change.

The sheer volume of data and insights collected at the Calgary workshop and at the subsequent regional workshops will drive the development of a discussion guide to help kick-start conversations for what's standing in the way of change in education in school staff rooms and classrooms across the country. Beyond school communities, CEA will be presenting findings from all ***What's standing in the way of change in education?*** Workshops to CEA's Advisory Council of education leaders, and other policymakers as a catalyst to define how CEA can support all stakeholders in moving a true education change agenda forward.



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