



Prince Edward Island  
Home and School Federation

# **Questions for the Leaders Debate on Education**

April 11, 2015

Rodd Charlottetown Hotel

As part of the Annual General Meeting of PEIHSF, delegates collaboratively developed questions for a “Leaders Debate on Education.”

The questions were then collated and boiled down to 11 questions that were asked to the candidates.

This document contains **all** of the questions that were developed.

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## **Food and Nutrition**

Food insecurity: we know it impacts how children learn. We know it touches every school in the English Language School Board. How do you propose to address it?

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## **Ratio**

Would you be committed to shifting from a student/educator to a classroom/teacher ratio?

How would you make the teacher-student ratio more equitable across the province?

Caps on class sizes, do they really exist?

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## **Rural/Urban**

Resources? Equity within the system?

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## **Sex Education**

What would you as leader put forward as the best process to update the health education curriculum to include age appropriate consent-based sexual health education and education for healthy relationships to meet today's students' needs?

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## **French Immersion**

Are there any plans to establish more French Immersion programs in Colonel Gray and Charlottetown Rural family of schools?

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## **IT / Technology**

With the commitment to implement Wi-Fi in schools province wide within the next five years, is this timeline adequate? What is your commitment to moving it forward?

What is your party's commitment to accelerating the use of computer and digital technology in all schools?

Why is it taking five years to have Wi-Fi access in our schools?

Current commitments to getting Wi-Fi in the classroom is 4-5 years. How do you propose to accelerate the budget in order to expedite wireless access in schools and the adoption of technology in the classroom?

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## **Governance**

What is your view of the amalgamation of the Eastern and Western School Boards?

Gary Clarke spoke of a partner group in Nova Scotia which includes representatives of the Teachers Union, senior management of school board, and home and school which advocates for our students and allows for a unified voice. We feel there is a disconnect between the department and board. Could a similar group be developed on PEI?

Could you comment on the establishment of one English Language School Board despite the recommendation of the PEIHSF and the Education Governance Committee to remain as two? Also, would you support elected vs. current appointed trustees?

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## **General**

What is your top priority in education?

What qualities will you look for in your key education leadership positions (Minister and Deputy Minister)?

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## **Accountability/Teachers**

How could we improve on teacher/administration accountability? Parent performance review – student reviews/evaluations

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## **Mental Health**

What is your understanding of how mental health and addiction issues are affecting our students?

Currently, PEI has an approximate ratio of 1 psychologist per 3000-4000 students with mental health problems and learning disabilities to assess and intervene. National Association of School Psychologists had recommended a minimum ratio of 1:1000 for youth in schools. This shortage is contributing to reduced academic achievement, increased mental health issues, school dropout and great frustration

for families and teachers. What is your plan to address this gross shortage of school psychologists?

What can PEI do to expedite access to psychological testing for our students?

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## **Evaluation – Outcomes and Assessment**

Every other province has exemptions at the high school level. With this being an incentive for students to learn and perform well through the semester, would you commit to reinstating exemptions by September 2015?

With the use of progress monitoring, what other options could be explored for implementation to ensure students are meeting outcomes?

Every other province has exemptions at the high school level. With this being an incentive for students to learn and perform well through the semester, what other measures would be an option to assess academic success other than exams? (not all students do well with exams)

What is your position on the role of common/standardized testing?

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## **Achievement**

How do you propose to set our ELSB students up to meet or exceed national levels test scores – especially taking into consideration the large number of hours lost to cancellations due to safety and weather issues?

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## **Art/Curriculum**

Given the competencies we are looking to develop in our students – such as creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, critical thinking, collaboration, cultural and ethical citizenship – and given that arts education develops all of these, what do you see as the role of arts based learning in classrooms, schools and the education system?

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## **Classroom Time**

There is an increasing tendency of administrators, councillors and non-classroom positions requiring taking time away from their said duties to be in the classroom for instructional time.

How would you address getting them back to focus on the respective duties to increased school effectiveness?

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## **\$/Budget**

Specifically, where do you intend to invest the increased education budget dollars?

What is your opinion on current budget allocation for education?

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## **Class Size and Composition**

Given learning and social challenges, what are your thoughts on class composition?

We know that class size as well as composition has a huge impact on student achievement. How will you ensure that both of these are considered to promote the most effective learning environment for our children?

As a follow up to the 2009 Gar Andrew report, what is your plan to address the class size/class composition struggles across the island?

What will your government do to ensure smaller teacher/student ratios, in particular preventing blended classes such as kindergarten and grade one?

Reduced numbers of teachers across the school system are creating pressures in the classrooms and for students – including growing teacher/student ratios and blended classes in inappropriate circumstances (such as blended kindergarten and grade one classes). What will your government do to reduce this pressure on schools, classrooms and students?

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## **Equity**

What do you view as the most critical socio-economic issue within schools and how do you intend to address this issue?

Equality of services: How would you improve the equality of access to services (such as psychologists/OT/speech) programming and activities that support looking outside the school (field trips, cultural events)?

Public education is supposed to be free: if children need tutoring then why isn't there a funded, subsidized program to assist families?

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## **Inclusion Services**

Why is the wait time to have a child – either gifted or lower achieving - tested so long?

Need an enrichment program for gifted children.

With a total of about 4000 students with either diagnosed or undiagnosed learning disabilities or limitations, how will your party respond to the needs for early intervention and timely assessment for these students as the present system is minimum 4 year wait or \$3000 (plus) for private assessment costs?

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## **Zoning and School Closures**

Is it possible to review and re-establish zoning of schools? There are children who attend schools that are further than local schools in their communities – closing. How are the zoning areas established?

Small school closures: are they planned for the future?

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## **Infrastructure**

How are you going to address issues in schools with such problems as inadequate parking lots, old buildings (safety issues), overcrowding, lack of technology, mobility issues of special needs students?

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## **French Language Education**

How to you propose to address the current inequities across the province with respect to French education?