Education 20/20 Inc.
Education 20/20 is a national, not-for-profit education organization, located in Charlottetown, PEI. We are governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, comprised of people who have demonstrated an interest in and knowledge of education, but are not representative of an educational constituency. Our mission is to improve the quality of education for every Canadian. Our activities to date include newsletters, workshops, a website, a presence in the social media, and an award to an Island school for demonstrating a high level of engagement in its day-to-day operation.

Education
We believe that education is the most important issue of the day, an issue that confronts parents, students, teachers, teaching and learning experts and everyday Canadians concerned with the challenges we encounter within our system and beyond. Education is the force that shapes who we are as individuals; shapes our communities and our country. It is our view that, with a quality education, many of our other problems would be reduced and some even eliminated.

Education is a community issue and a complex one at that; it is important, therefore, that we work from a common set of beliefs or at least know where each is coming from. The brochure in front of you provides some working definitions; they may not be the ones you see in education text books or dictionaries but we consider them practical working definitions for everyday use.

In summary, we believe:

• Education consists of experiences that have a formative effect on the way we feel, think and act.
• Its purpose is to help each of us develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge needed help us cope with, enjoy and contribute to the situations we create or those that befall us during the rest of our lives.
• Education starts in the home with family being the main source of instruction, help and influence.
• Our community invests heavily in schools for two purposes, to help individual Islanders develop their full potential and to ensure that our community has the people needed to grow and prosper.
• Learning results in change, not just about new knowledge, but changes in the way we think, feel and act.
• The role of a teacher is to help us change from what we are to what we want to be – to gain new information, gain new skills or change the way we feel and act.
• Education and schooling are not the same; one gains an education whether or not one attends school.
• Education is more than the acquisition of knowledge.
• Being educated is a process of changing behaviour.
• Being taught is the act of accepting help in making that change.
**Education system**
An education system includes the following services:

- Instruction
- Funding
- Credentialing service
- Leadership and governance
- Information and counseling services

Provinces organize and coordinate educational services through Departments of Education; even a quick examination of Provincial organizations, however, reveals the focus of Departments to be on schools and schooling rather than education; this is the equivalent of operating a health system through our hospitals. While education in the US is a responsibility of state governments, Departments of Education include both a Board of Education to set policy and a Department of Public Instruction to carry it out.

**Changing world**
The world around us is changing; so must education:

- Core citizenship skills are as important as ever
- The need to deliver knowledge has been replaced by information technology;
- The world still needs skilled workers,
- Research confirms that experience in the early years, getting the right start, influences the whole of one’s development including ones physical and mental health,
- The global workplace demands people with interpersonal and cultural sensitivities as never before.
- As we speak, events taking place in the Middle East give urgency to developing interpersonal skills as well as the skills of citizenship.

**Conversations with Islanders**
Islanders want to see changes in their education system; they want to engage in the change process and be a continuing part of its operation. Islanders want a system focused on developing lifelong learners rather than our current system focused on the acquisition of knowledge and delivery of curriculum outcomes. There is a need for greater flexibility within the system to take advantage of new opportunities and innovations at the local school level. The call for change is widespread but there is little evidence that it is being heard. If the call was heard, it is being ignored, or decision makers have decided not to engage the community in the change process, or the system may not have the tools or systems in place to enact required changes.

Education 20/20 has spent considerable time during the past few months conversing with Islanders about education. Some of the conversations occurred during a series of workshops held across the Island. Participants were both articulate and passionate in their comments, and most discussions continued long past the allotted time. We came away from these sessions realizing that Islanders know what they want in the way of education. What they do not understand is why they are not included in the discussion about bringing about desired changes. In the words of one Islander, “Government talks a great story about education being a partnership, but it’s only talk.”
Where should change begin?
Change can begin almost anywhere; it can start wherever a person and the education system intersect. Change should be not only allowed, it should be encouraged; in fact, not only encouraged but required.

One obvious place is to start with a learner or learners, your child or grandchild, or a neighbour’s child. What kind of help does the child need? counseling? better reading skills? personal management skills? technical skills? How we can provide that help and what priority should it have?

A second possibility, and one that may help you to understand the frustrations of parents, is to identify an area of study that should be added to the curriculum; coding or robotics for instance. Once you’ve chosen a subject, follow the steps and timelines from inception to students actually enrolling.

Last January, Education 20/20 convened a workshop at the Town Hall in Stratford. When it came time for discussion, the first question asked was “What is the role of schools?” The fact that it was asked tells us something about our school system and explains in part why there is a difference in expectations between the people who operate the school system and those who use it. That question would be a good place to start – but there are many others.

In closing, we call your attention again to the small brochure in front of you where you will find a list of characteristics of a quality education. This list draws heavily on a couple of OECD and UNICEF reports but it also reflects, we believe, comments and suggestions that Islanders shared with us. It could provide a good jumping off point for further discussion.

A quality education system is one where:

- learners are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate
- environments are safe and respectful
- content is relevant to living in a modern society
- outcomes are linked to personal and community objectives
- support is focused on learners and learning.
- information and advice are both timely and independent.
- teachers are professional, autonomous and accountable

We thank you for the invitation to make a presentation, we wish you well in your deliberations and we offer our services to help in your work. We’d also be pleased to continue the discussion or respond to questions.

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