

## School planning is a process, not an event

### Introduction: Setting the Stage

Schools are foundational to creating society and the shared values that bind us together. A great school is often described as a community of learners including students, teachers, support staff, parents, and community members. Engaging the community of learners in recognizing the many quality attributes of the school while highlighting future directions and areas for focus is the intention behind school planning.

Historically, in British Columbia, school planning has taken a couple of different forms. Pre 2002, the school accreditation process that included an external team assessing the work of the school was the primary method to enable school planning. From 2002 to 2015, each school community was asked to develop a school growth plan. Unfortunately, the school growth plan movement was not designed in a collaborative manner - it was solely achievement oriented, and as such did not engender commitment from the full community of learners.

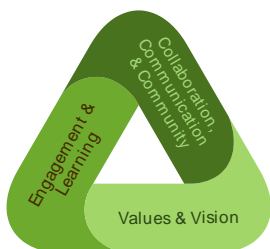
Moving forward, SD 44 has embarked on a process to define and develop a more authentic school planning process that reflects the values of individual communities while maintaining a commitment to the Mandate for Public Schooling.

### Design Process

From March 2015 to July 2015, in consultation with representative School Planning Councils and student leaders, a team of educators that included Teachers, Educational Assistants, School Principals, and Directors worked together to define the role, purpose, and direction of the school planning process. The working group developed shared understandings and general processes as the initial foundation to meaningful school planning. Meaningful school planning should enable the development of a 'vibrant community of learners' defined by:

- A focus on student engagement and learning
- A culture of teamwork and collaboration
- Respect for adult and student diversity
- A strong sense of community and collective responsibility
- Strong Systemic Structures (e.g., SBRT, Collaboration Time, Staff Meetings)
- Ongoing and relevant communication of student learning

## An Appreciative Inquiry Process



School planning is a collaborative process whereby we identify the strengths of our school and areas for further development for our students and ourselves. School planning enhances and supports meaningful learning and development at the classroom, school and district levels.

To this end, the working group identified the following three essential elements to school planning. These essential elements form the intended outcomes and provide clarity of focus for school planning and development.

### Values and Vision

- Begins with an understanding of classroom and school strengths
- Reflects and builds on the shared values of the district, school, and community
- Supports a school-wide focus on diversity, student engagement and learning
- Highlights and values current practice while identifying areas for focused development
- Reflects school-wide commitment to continuous improvement and life-long learning

### Engagement and Learning

- Encompasses the core goals of public schooling: intellectual, human and social, and career development.
- Provides a clear focus on the development of educational practice:
  - Curriculum Design
  - Instructional Differentiation
  - Assessment For, As and Of Learning
  - Social Emotional Learning
- Plans for Student Diversity with particular consideration of students of Aboriginal ancestry, children in care and students with special needs

### Collaboration, Communication and Community

- Values a collaborative process that involves educational partners in frank, rich and respectful dialogue
- Considers connections with school, community, Family of Schools and district Professional Learning Opportunities
- Includes priorities/goals, actions, and progress monitoring
- Enables a multi-year school plan, published as a living document that is reviewed, refined and reported on annually to the school's community

Learning organizations are...where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together.”

~ Peter Senge

### Next Step...

The next step in the process is for individual school communities to build from these foundational pieces in designing their school's planning process, and future directions.

# School Planning: a framework for enhancing learning

A school plan is built around 4 key house posts\*:

## Vision to Goal Setting

What is our 'raison d'être'? The visioning process encompasses reflecting on our core mandate and purpose, articulating our guiding beliefs and shared values, and goal-setting for a preferred future. In the North Vancouver School District, we envision a school-based engagement process that highlights the strengths in our school community while identifying areas for future focus and development.

- What are our unique strengths?
- What educational and social experiences do we offer as a school?
- What is our purpose as a learning community?
- What is our vision for a personalized education system?
- What kind of school do we hope to be?
- How do our values align with our aspirations for student learning?

*"Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes time. Vision with action can change the world"*

*~ Joel Barker*

## Planning and Implementation

Once goals have been identified, an implementation plan is developed that highlight strategies, activities, professional resources, and opportunities for professional development. Generally, implementation plans span one to three years and articulate stages of awareness, partial implementation, and full implementation or goal attainment. A key consideration in the implementation process is defining indicators of progress.

*"You only hit what you aim at..."*

*~ Thoreau*

- How can we build on the strengths of our learners?
- How do we build strong connections within the school community?
- How do we facilitate a culture of personalized learning involving student choice, engagement and differentiation?
- How do we ensure that we are meeting the needs of all learners including those of Aboriginal Ancestry, children in care, and students with special needs?

## Monitor, Evaluate and Adapt

The plan developed by the school community should clearly outline how progress on each goal will be monitored and evaluated. Many different possible indicators could be used depending on the nature of the goal and the type of progress the school wishes to focus on. Schools can use diverse indicators such as surveys for student or parent feedback, information from classroom teachers and specialist teachers, student data and testing to name just a few. Using different types of indicators could allow schools to monitor progress in different ways.

- How do we assess a personalized education system?
- Are we measuring progress across diverse student groups, especially children in care, students of Aboriginal ancestry and students with special needs?
- How and when will we know that there is improvement?
- What will the impact of change be?

*"It is important to note that all indicators are flawed, whether qualitative or quantitative. What matters is not finding the perfect indicator, but settling upon a consistent and intelligent method of assessing our output results."*

*~ Jim Collins*

## Communicating Progress

The school planning process is intended to support an ongoing dialogue within the community of learners promoting understanding, respect, and shared values. Communicating the school's vision, values, accomplishments, and future directions enables dialogue. Ultimately, schooling is a foundation to democracy and preparing students to be engaged citizens. An important feature to a Community of Learners is continual communication about what we value most.

*"The real methodology for system change begins and ends with ongoing conversations about important questions."*

*~ Tony Wagner*

- What are the most effective ways for school, home and community to share information?
- What is our story / narrative?
- How do we demonstrate mindfulness of others through our statements and actions, modeling our values of trust, respect, collaboration and responsibility?
- How do we encourage and nurture ongoing dialogue within our school and FOS to support all learners, including staff?

\* The term "house post" is significant in Aboriginal Culture. As the foundation of a stable home for people to live in, strong house posts represent a solid structure that withstands the forces against it.