

**CREATING DYNAMIC LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS
THAT ENSURE STUDENT SUCCESS**

Schooling for Tomorrow Canada (Alberta)

Canadian Rockies Public Schools – Futures Planning

“Inspiring Hearts and Minds”

Creating dynamic learning environments that ensure student success

Background:

The Canadian Rockies Public Schools (CRPS) futures planning process “Inspiring Hearts and Minds” was established by the Board of Trustees in May of 2007. During the first two years (2004-2006) of the three-year mandate of the trustees numerous public consultation processes (public board meetings, meetings with school councils, meetings Teachers Union representatives etc) surfaced a desire from stakeholders to see a more long term approach to planning in the division.

The Board in consultation with Administration developed an approach, engaged consultants, and formed a planning group at the end of the 2006-2007 school year.

This initiative is part of a larger change process. The Board and Administration embarked on a process of re-creating the district into a Learning Organization starting in 2004. A thorough policy and governance review occurred in 2005 guided by the Alberta School Boards Association. A number of initiatives were also undertaken to advance teaching practice and professional development within the division.

The concept of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) was researched. The teachers union (ATA) partnered with the district to initiate the process of PLC development within the division. This process has advanced and has included school calendar changes to accommodate district wide PLC work. It is now an embedded process for professional development and provides a means for on-going development and improvement of classroom teaching and learning.

The CRPS Futures Planning process has been designed to surface key directions for moving further towards creating a Learning Organization and a 21st century approach to education and learning in our schools.

Key issues that the district is facing that futures planning could inform are:

- Declining enrolment
- Increased desire for choice with parents and students
- Delivery options given our small schools
- Increased role of technology in education
- Worker shortages and changing needs of employers
- Parental desire for whole child education
- Curriculum overload and relevancy

The Futures Planning process is meant to create a background of information and knowledge-building to support decision-making in the future to address these and other emergent issues.

Aims:

The Futures Planning process is meant to achieve the following:

- Identify community values, education trends and the forces of change affecting education
- Determine future directions for public education in the Bow Valley
- Inform future CRPS strategic planning and decision making
- Create actions that will support achievement of the CRPS mission “Creating dynamic learning environments that ensure student success”
- Challenge the status quo thinking about: what is important for children and their development, what learning environments (classrooms) look like
- Examine how to address the desire for access to a broad range of programs within small schools
- Examine how to enliven program delivery and increase engagement with students
- Engage stakeholders (students, teachers, administration, parents, and community) to identify key directions for action
- Create dialogue between the key stakeholders

The Reform process of developing a learning organization is an abstract concept for many stakeholders and in particular staff. Futures planning provides, an opportunity for the stakeholders including staff to look at the key issue of providing a 21st century approach to education and learning as a concrete goal. This concrete goal will then provide a vehicle for the background work of developing a learning organization approach to support this delivery of 21st century education and learning. Futures planning has a primary focus on students and learning whereas the reform into a learning organization focuses on the enhancing CRPS as an organization towards this goal focused on students.

Design and Methodology:

The Futures Planning process is designed to engage key stakeholders to increase the dialogue about education. Forums for Teachers, Students and Community will be held that create dialogue around specific themes and questions that will inform the work of the Futures Planning Group.

The CRPS Board will invite members to join the Futures Planning Group (FPG) who will provide focus for the work. The group will comprise people with a range of experience, who are credible and who have demonstrated the ability to take a strategic view of issues facing public schooling in this area. The FPG will furnish the School Board with a completed document in June 2008.

The Futures Planning Group shall play the following **roles**:

1. Provide public and internal leadership to futures planning.

2. Provide input to the direction to the futures planning process.
3. Master the content that is required in order to oversee the futures planning process.
4. Take responsibility for reviewing the final report.
5. Encourage colleagues to participate in the three community forums, teacher forums and student forums.

The **FPG** shall be charged with the following **mandate**:

1. Help to develop and deliver to the School Board a complete report that includes community values, trends and forces for change and key directions.
2. Participate in the futures planning process in close collaboration with interested people in the Bow Valley, in ways that build awareness, understanding, participation and commitment to the process, its outcomes and its implementation.

The FPG as a group shall have the following **characteristics**:

1. Be no larger than 24 members (one staff from each of 6 schools, one representative from each of 6 school councils, 2 School Board representatives, 2 agency representatives, 3 interested citizens, 2 students and Superintendent of Schools and Gov't of Alberta representative as ex-officio members).
2. Include an appropriate mix of gender, school representation, community representation, age and experience.
3. There will be no chair as the process facilitators will facilitate and keep notes for the FPG meetings.

Project Plan:

The process will include three phases of dialogue and information generation:

Phase 1: Community Values (October – November 2007)

Identification of community values relating to public education – what is important and what is possible for the future of education in the Bow Valley, and the future education needs of our children (discussion is bounded by set criteria regarding what CRPS is mandated to deliver)

Phase 2: Education Trends and Forces of Change (January – February 2008)

Exploration of education and demographic trends, and driving forces of change in relation to public education program delivery. Development of future scenarios for Phase 3. The OECD scenarios will be used to inform this process.

Phase 3: Key Directions (March – May 2008)

Exploration of future scenarios, and identification of key directions and recommendations to guide future CRPS planning and decision-making.

Seven concurrent methods are proposed to gather, discuss and synthesize information and to inform people about the CRPS process. Meetings and events are to be planned and facilitated by the Process Managers.

1. Futures Planning Group (FPG)

- Working meetings of the FPG (before Phase 1 begins and following each of the forums) to analyze and synthesize the information generated by the events and website questionnaire
- Based on information received, the group determines the specific focus and questions for the next phase.

2. Education Constituents' Forums (3 events)

- Large forums for constituents from the various education interest areas (teachers, staff, parents, trustees, school councils, administration, students, community agencies and organisations, general public) to learn, dialogue and generate information in relation to the process phases.
- One 3 hour event for each of three phases (move event between Canmore and Banff)
- Separate forums will be organized for Teachers to ensure that we have this key voice well represented

3. Students Forums (2 events – phases one and three)

- Large group forums to involve junior high and high school students in facilitated dialogue and activities
- One 2-3 hour event in Canmore; one in Banff

4. Website Questionnaire (ongoing)

- A website, (linked from CRPS website) to be built and maintained by the consultant team, to host information about the futures planning process and an ongoing questionnaire
- Questionnaire to follow same progression and question of 3 phases
- Provide opportunity to general public to give input; allowing individuals to give input anonymously

5. Community Outreach

- Press releases to local media to inform the public of the general progress and results

- Use of available CRPS outreach mechanisms, e.g. website, newsletters, student notices, school council, to build public awareness.
- Outreach materials to be generated by consultants and distributed by CRPS

6. Speaker Series

- The Speaker Series should coordinate both its timing and its topics with the three phases of the Futures Planning Process - occurring in the month prior to the Forums, so as to inform the discussions there. The proposed months are October, 2007 and January and April, 2008 as follows:
 - Community values
 - David King – Executive Director of the Public School Boards Association of Alberta
 - Education trends and forces of change
 - Ruben Nelson - Futurist
 - Key Directions
 - Emery Dosdall – Former Superintendent of Edmonton Public Schools

7. Ongoing research

- Ongoing will be research into demographics, futures, education trends and a scan of effective methods from Canada and across the world.
- The FPG will determine the research needed
- CRPS will engage a skilled consultant to conduct this research

Leadership and Reporting of Results

The Futures Planning process will be guided by a team of people formed to provide leadership to the process. This group is called the Futures Planning Group (FPG).

A report, synthesizing and presenting the information gathered and the results, will be generated following the final forum and working group meeting in Phase 3 with the final report due June 15, 2008.

This project will use information and processes from the OECD Schooling for Tomorrow initiative to inform the work and design as it is adapted over time.

Year Two: Implementation Phase (June 2008-June 2009)

This phase will see the development of action plans based on the key directions established in phase three. An implementation facilitator will be hired to coordinate this phase. They will work with staff, school councils, students, administration and the community to create action plans based on the recommendations that were developed in year one by the FPG.

There is provincial government funding for this phase that will cover the cost of: Implementation facilitator salary, process facilitators from phase one continuing their work, travel costs to OECD Helsinki conference, public information/marketing, a contract person to assist with OECD reporting requirements.

OECD Schooling for Tomorrow projects from other countries will also guide the work towards creating action plans. Learning from the successes and challenges of implementing futures work in other projects in the Schooling for Tomorrow project will broaden the possibilities and create efficiencies.

Main Actors:

The Futures Planning Group as identified above are key players. The Board, administration, staff, students, parents, and the communities at large are also key players.

Futures Methodology:

Key engagement processes for the forums will be conversation cafes. This method was selected as it is more open and accessible to a variety of stakeholders and is less intimidating to a varied public due to its conversational nature.

The key directions phase will be preceded by the development of scenarios. The OECD Schooling for Tomorrow scenarios will be used as background information and Bow Valley specific scenarios will be built.

Review Procedures:

There will be a summative evaluation at the end of the initiative. There will be informal evaluation during the process through the FPG and the process facilitators.

Measures and indicators are under development for the initiative and will be presented to the FPG.