

CANADA

(Alberta)

1. Aims and context

Inspiring Hearts and Minds is a result of CRPS Futures Planning Strategy (June 2008) that consisted of community consultation that identified community values, education trends and forces of change effecting education. This information was gathered through community consultation as a means to determine the future of public education in the Bow Valley.

Throughout the futures planning process two overarching themes emerged:

1. deliver education that fosters the development of the “whole child”(intellectual, emotional, social, physical and spiritual development) (see attachment of model) and
2. position schools as the centre of learning and development in the community with the aim of building strong connections among schools, families and community organizations in support of educational delivery and life-long learning.

The framework of the Inspiring Hearts and Minds futures strategy (see attachment – key directions) was built upon five integrated elements:

1. Whole child education
2. Whole community approach
3. Whole teacher approach
4. Whole learning approach
5. Whole world perspective

In establishing **whole child education** as the core of this strategy it was understood that for citizens of the Bow Valley the need to “prepare our children to thrive as individuals and to contribute as citizens and leaders in our interconnected, complex and exponentially changing world.” was crucial.

For CRPS, the IHM framework offered among other things an opportunity to work with a sense of “governance teams” to establish a future direction for our division. Kim Bater, Board Chairman describes four key roles for governance teams: detecting; sense-making; direction-setting and decision-making (see attachment – governance teams). Our IHM work showed us this. Students, teachers, community

members, parents all have a sense of what is important – when we tap into this sense and connect it with what is happening around Alberta and the world – the good ideas come to the surface and are really obvious. There is a strong belief in the concept of governance teams as a way of enlivening democracy and building a community approach to education as is evidenced from this framework. This creates the conditions for sustained innovation.

When we gather to discuss our “preferred future” in the Bow Valley it is apparent that schools are reflective of the communities in which they reside and their knowledge, skills, talents, energy and aspirations continue to shape the development and prosperity of these communities.

The Inspiring Hearts and Minds framework is designed to encourage the community to join in co-creating partnerships and places where services, supports and opportunities lead to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Now more than ever we need to be working with our community partners to increase the likelihood of student success. A sustained innovation approach is required to help CRPS shift towards a focus on 21st century learning skills.

2. Leadership and Partners

The Community Education Network (CEN) is comprised of internal and external partners including students. (See attached list of Community Education Network).

Leadership is provided by a design team of the Board Chair, the Superintendent, a School-based administrator and an outside consultant.

3. Strategies and activities

The CEN tackles issues of both community and district education importance. In 2011 the CEN used three meetings to address two key items: 3-year calendar design and CEO/Superintendent hiring approach. The CEN created the parameters for the School Board and Administration to approach the development of the 3-year school calendar using an innovative engagement process (see attachment - CRPS calendar input process steps). The key question that CEN developed that was used to guide all discussions was “What are your ideas about a school calendar that best supports learning?”

School administrators were trained to use a template for input and then guided the input from their staff and their school councils. The CEN was used to synthesize the information and then Administration developed multiple scenarios for calendars based on the input.

The CEO/Superintendent hiring approach was guided in a similar manner by the CEN and they created an ideal candidate profile (see attached for questions to create profile). This profile guided the advertising materials and helped to inform the questions used during candidate interviews.

*These two concrete tasks demonstrated that an innovative approach to engagement creates a strong network that increases the capacity of CRPS to make robust decisions. This process can now be used as we

move into changing our approach to teacher/staff development, instructional leadership with administrators and 21st century learning skills implementation.

4. Resources

The work load is being managed within each person's role functions; no additional resources are currently being used. In the initial phase of 2011 some consultants' time was being purchased.

5. Development over Time

In 2012 an additional CEN meeting has been held to take some next steps to address the IHM goal of a community approach to education. Small networks are being established to address key areas: Early childhood community, Life-long learning network, and financial stability task force.

6. Evidence of effectiveness and efficiency

Three years ago when a 3-year calendar was presented to the public 70 people attended the public board meeting and objected to the new calendar. This year 4 people attended and supported the new calendar. Another piece of evidence is the consistent attendance at CEN meetings that demonstrates a consistent high level of engagement. This level of engagement is crucial for the success of generative governance.

7. Success Factors

The most influential factors are a high level of communication with staff, school councils and the CEN. This has led to a more informed partnership. Another key factor would be framing each piece of work around a key question – i.e. the question posed to CEN and other stakeholders/partners for the calendar review - *What are your ideas about a school calendar that best supports learning?*"

8. Tensions and impediments

A key factor is time, people are busy and trying to function in a generative way to encourage and support innovation takes time that is precious away from other day to day tasks. Another factor is the lack of clarity about what 21st century learning means. The time factor can be managed through on-going conversations about time commitments. The clarity about what 21st century learning means will take time as we work with partners to develop broad understanding instead of the current pockets of understanding that exist with individuals who have taken the time to research the concept.

9. Sources

Please refer to the attachments provided with this document. The web-site for Canadian Rockies Public Schools has sections for both Inspiring Hearts and Minds (the vision process) and the Community Education Network (the innovation guide team). <http://www.crps.ab.ca/>

Additional information is available on this author's blog:
<http://www.kimbater.com/>