



SHAPING THE FUTURE

Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools

A Report to the Board of Education
February 1, 2017

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Shaping the Future

The Board of Education of School District #68 - Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools (NLPS) initiated **2020 Vision: A Three Year Plan** process to address current and future learning, budget and facilities challenges and to propose strategic actions for the Board to consider in early 2017. This *Shaping the Future* report is one part of *2020 Vision*. It asks: *What should Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools look like if the Board is to meet student needs, align and integrate with community priorities and ensure responsible stewardship of available capital assets and other resources?*

Within that broad question, this Report focuses on education services, resources and facilities in:

- Ladysmith - program locations, grade configuration, schools as community hubs, consideration of school consolidations and disposal of surplus property assets;
- Nanaimo – focusing on specific schools and program locations, schools as community hubs, school consolidations and disposal of surplus property assets as part of an overall community plan.

Over the past several years, the Board has received reports targeting several areas in need of attention including: student achievement results; facilities condition; property assets and potential alternative uses; catchment areas/population trends; potential budget efficiencies; and program options and delivery. Some options available to the Board today have been discussed in previous consultation and strategic planning processes and adopted wholly, in part or not at all.

Shaping the Future is not intended to replicate, validate or challenge the findings of previous reports. Rather, given the information available as of Fall 2016, the report identifies current realities and explores available options to achieve a preferred future – one that meets student and community needs and aspirations. Part of moving forward in a strategic manner requires revisiting previous proposals – individually and in combination - and considering new ones has become a more pressing need as expectations for student achievement and for programs and services increase, as resources become tighter and as several facility conditions continue to decline.

The *Shaping the Future* project has included meetings, discussions and presentations involving:

- Municipal councils in Nanaimo and Ladysmith;
- Representatives of local Aboriginal communities;
- Partner group organizations including VIHA, VIU, DPAC and school district employee groups; and
- Members of the parent and public communities from Nanaimo and Ladysmith in two community engagement sessions that had low attendance but very thoughtful input.

Trustees and district senior staff have been closely involved in the development of the project direction and in engaging with the community throughout the process.

Additional input was received from students and parents via an electronic survey completed by 1300 Grade 7-12 students and 170 parents. *Shaping the Future* considers many perspectives offered during the engagement sessions and via surveys by communities served by Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools.

The Board as a Community Leader

The NLPS Board of Education plays a key role in the future of the community it serves. Most directly, the Board holds the public trust for delivery of educational services to students from Kindergarten through Grade 12. Survey responses and participant input at forum sessions highlight the importance of education in the communities NLPS serves. Parents and students have high expectations of their school system to provide quality programs and services and to make responsible and responsive decisions in creating a strong future for each learner and for the wider community.

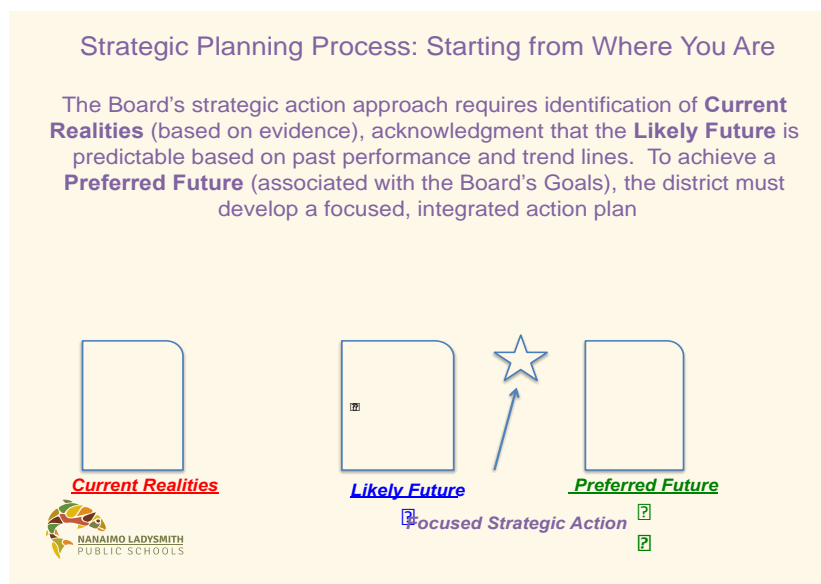
From an integrated perspective, the school district shares responsibility with other agencies for building a strong community social fabric, creating a skilled future labour force and shaping a positive and attractive “narrative” about the region as a good place to live, to work and to learn. NLPS is a major employer, landowner and contributor to the local economy. With an annual operating budget of almost \$120 million, the school district has the opportunity to leverage substantial influence as it carries out its responsibilities in concert with the mandates of other agencies. Developing deeper interagency relationships and shared efforts are becoming a priority for future-oriented public institutions as increasing demands for services and pressures on budgets cause organizations to identify:

- Common/shared needs in service of their communities;

- Emerging trends based on data that is regularly shared among agencies; and
- Current specialized resources that may be used more broadly to achieve maximum benefit for the whole community.

The Board's clear commitment to *2020 Vision* is best achieved when planning and action take place in the kind of integrated environment that was strongly endorsed by participants during the consultation sessions: one where shared efforts and effective & aligned use of available resources help to achieve the future the community deserves.

During partner group and public consultations the following framework was used as an organizer:



Overview of Current District Realities/Challenges

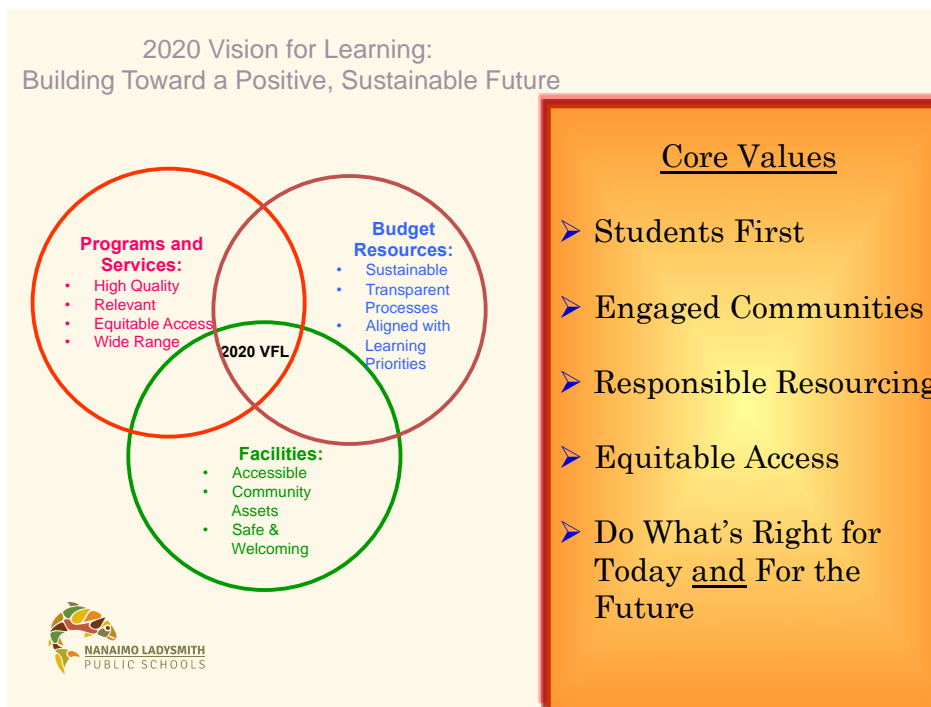
The Board governs and provides leadership for a complex and rapidly changing system. The following areas for priority attention were referenced at the consultation sessions and were generally acknowledged as appropriate for the Board's attention and action. Some of these themes have been referenced in previous studies and reports:

- Management of unevenly distributed student enrolment growth in specific zones of the school district;
- Concern regarding student achievement levels, from core skills in the early years to graduation;
- Lack of adequate resources to cope with increasing need for youth mental health services;

- Strong demand for trades-oriented program options which require updated equipment and facilities;
- Continued commitment to increasing success for Aboriginal learners and to ensuring that all students in the district have a deeper connection with *Aboriginal Understandings*;
- Opportunities for strategic growth as more per-student funding comes to the district following emergence from *funding protection* as the overall student population increases;
- Curriculum renewal requiring new resources and professional development support for educators throughout the system;
- Several school sites where the facility conditions are poor and require attention and significant investment causing a disproportionate drain on maintenance budget resources;
- Available student space inventory that is greater than current or projected enrolment trends indicate will be required in the near to mid-term future;
- Loyalty to the local neighbourhood school resulting in community resistance to consolidating school communities;
- Public expectations that the district provide wide range of programs in each of the school district's zones; and,
- Operating budget pressures due to ongoing increased costs for salaries, benefits and supplies and services.

As noted earlier in this report, many of these issues have been identified in previous documents and strategic plans. *2020 Vision* aims to address these and other current/emerging issues while at the same time ensuring that mid and long-term challenges can be responded to in the context of a viable strategic plan.

To make the kind of difference the community expects and needs, it is useful to consider three key areas in relation to each other. They are: ***Programs and Services, Budget Resources, and Facilities***. The community and partner consultation processes were organized around these three areas as illustrated below and underscored by Core Values shared at each session.



For the Board to effectively activate and sustain *2020 Vision*, focused attention and alignment of resources is required for the following:

Programs and Services

Core Literacy and Numeracy Skills

While the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) program does not provide a full picture of student achievement at Grades 4 and 7, it does allow for some useful comparative analysis. In NLPS schools, students who participated in the 2015/16 FSA were behind the provincial averages as follows:

- Grade 4 Reading *Not Yet Meeting Expectations*: **31% NLPS / 18% Province**
- Grade 4 Writing *Not Yet Meeting Expectations*: **33% NLPS / 16% Province**
- Grade 4 Numeracy *Not Yet Meeting Expectations*: **35% NLPS / 20% Province**

- Grade 7 Reading *Not Yet Meeting Expectations*: **26% NLPS / 22% Province**
- Grade 7 Writing *Not Yet Meeting Expectations*: **19% NLPS / 14% Province**
- Grade 7 Numeracy *Not Yet Meeting Expectations*: **36% NLPS / 27% Province**

These achievement trends are likely to continue without increasing targeted and strategic interventions to support student success in core skill areas. Each time this information has been shared previously with the community in consultation sessions, there has been concern regarding the achievement gap.

Graduation Rate

Another significant challenge for NLPS schools is the school completion/graduation rate compared to the provincial average.

Data provided by the Ministry of Education indicates that 11% fewer NLPS students graduate within 6 years of starting Grade 8 than the provincial average: **73% NLPS / 84% Province**.

That gap has remained between 10% and 12% over the past 5 years. These graduation rates are likely to continue at similar levels unless there are increased targeted and strategic interventions to support higher levels of student engagement, sense of belonging and success throughout their secondary school years.

The Board, its staff and the community are very concerned about these disparities and recognize the importance of taking evidence-based action and assigning resources to address the issues. Research indicates that a focus on literacy, from pre-school through the early primary level, is directly linked to success throughout school years and life. At the other end of the K-12 continuum, graduation levels increase when students participate in relevant, relationship-rich and engaging secondary school options as they work to meet their goals.

Addressing Competing Resource Demands for Programs and Services

Whenever there are more needs and hopes/expectations than there are resources to support them all, it is necessary to deal with competing priorities in a thoughtful and sustainable way, always keeping student success at the center of the strategic focus. The Board faces challenge in fulfilling its responsibilities while also attempting to respond to a wide range of community expectations as follows:

- The need to enhance service levels to schools with a significant percentage of vulnerable learners and with low achievement results;
- Resourcing secondary schools that can offer full suite of programs;
- Maintaining neighbourhood elementary schools with a strong community connection and easily accessible for local children;

- The disparity of survey results showing that more parents than students are willing to go out of catchment to access specialized program options;
- Updating equipment and facilities to meet the requirements of specialized program options that fit with students' post-secondary and career aspirations; and
- Supporting staff to acquire the skills needed to engage students in a new curriculum and to deal with issues like youth mental health and other social-emotional parts of a student's school experience.

These and other pressures and competing priorities were shared with and identified by community members who attended the partner group and public forum sessions and/or completed the online surveys for parents and students from Grades 7-12. Themes emerging from forum participant and survey feedback included:

- Strong endorsement for the board to pursue partnership arrangements, particularly with Vancouver Island University;
- General understanding that not all schools can reasonably provide a full range of programs;
- Need for infrastructure renewal to support trades training courses;
- Emphasis of the importance of quality relationships with staff (and validating the role of caring/nurturing staff);
- Recognition of the value of school sports and other student activities that create identity and pride in the local school – and the importance of resourcing those opportunities;
- Desire for hands on activities/work experience/job shadowing or apprenticeships in a range of fields (eg. marine biology and social services);
- Potential for accessible youth mental health services 24/7 with the school as a hub;
- Development of an education system that teaches about real life issues/problems;
- Desire for a changed teacher/student relationship – with learning and the learner at the centre;
- Right-sized and responsive support for students who are struggling with meeting academic standards;

- Creation of environments that cultivate students' aspiration for graduation and beyond;
- Interest in specialized fields including robotics/engineering;
- Support for students who excel in non-curricular areas;
- Access to schools on weekends;
- Enhanced engagement with the community;
- Safe and relationship-rich learning environments;
- Support for learning environments that activate creative problem solving;
- Up to date assessment practices;
- Early access to CTC programs (before grade 11);
- Focus more on quality over quantity;
- Better understanding and accommodation by staff of what some students are going through in their lives inside and outside of school; and,
- Surveys that provide timely feedback to staff to enhance the quality of student/teacher relationships;

Given those realities and expressed needs, a *2020 Vision* that creates a *Preferred Future* for students' access to high quality programs and services requires re-directing some current resources and identifying additional resources to improve core literacy/numeracy, graduation rates and level of student engagement. It is also important to note that some of the hopes and expectations of the community conflict with other hopes and the Board will have to make some difficult decisions. In keeping learners at the center, the Board is encouraged to consider:

- Enhancing targeted literacy and numeracy supports in schools and communities with the most vulnerable populations (based on district and provincial assessment results and based on the Early Development Indicators data from the **Human Early Learning Partnership**). This will require additional specialized and targeted staffing at the school or zonal level;
- Developing a master plan for initiating or expanding and then sustaining specific program options for secondary students so they can engage with areas of interest. This will require acquisition of equipment and upgrading of facilities as well as increased linkages with worksite placements and with VIU programs;

- Attention to youth mental health. Many survey participants highlighted a significant concern with the challenges young people face and the feeling that they are facing them alone. Enhanced inter-agency cooperation particularly with MCFD and Island Health is a place to start. Seeing the school as a “safe and accessible hub” for students to seek mental health supports will require new working relationships and expanded hours of operation for core services on site;
- Increased resources to build professional staff capacity. With the many changes in education – new curriculum, updated assessment practices, expectations re. graduation levels, importance of a relationship-rich learning environment, attention to “the new basics”... - further resources are required for staff training and professional development. There were several comments in the student surveys that highlighted a feeling of disconnection between students and staff. That is an area that requires attention so that the school culture supports all learners; and
- Use of school-level surveys like “Tell Them From Me” to promote regular attention to the voices and concerns of students and to create real partnerships between students and teachers.

It is interesting to note that a recurring theme emerging through community feedback related to the Board’s previous changes in strategic direction. There were several comments encouraging the Board to maintain plans once decisions have been made. Going forward, it will be important to consider both immediate and long-term impacts of potential introduction of new or expanded program initiatives (French Immersion, International Baccalaureate, Trades School, other Academies) to ensure they are sustainable. Introducing programs requires attention to the following in order to ensure that due diligence has been done in response to the following questions:

- Does the student enrolment projection over the next several years indicate that the program can be resourced at or close to the regular program level, or will the district’s resources need to be disproportionately used to sustain the new program?;
- Will the initial school location for the program continue to have sufficient space so the program can remain in a constant location for the foreseeable future?;
- Does the district have the required specialist staff to teach the program and could there be future recruiting challenges?;
- Is there budget capacity for supply and equipment purchases that will keep the program current into the long-term future?;

- Will the introduction (or expansion) of the program attract new students to the school district or will it re-distribute the current population, possibly resulting in a negative impact on other schools' viability?;
- Are there clear understandings/commitments regarding transportation access to the program?; and
- Will new program costs decrease the resources needed to address significant student achievement issues in the general population?

Budget

Successful school districts ensure that budget decisions link directly to the system's capacity to provide quality education services, with a focus on learners, and in particular vulnerable learners. NLPS has specific student achievement needs while it also attends to expectations from its community for an increased array of program options. Both areas have been mentioned earlier in this report. It is not possible to respond positively to all of the expectations. There are constant challenges presented by increasing cost pressures from salaries and benefits (more than 88% of the operating budget) and escalating costs of maintaining old facilities. Deteriorating facility quality is further articulated later in this report.

Grappling with competing priorities (right versus right dilemmas) is not a new situation. The Board's strategic decision-making processes have addressed those issues for several years. Many ongoing issues have been the focus of previous public consultations and consultant reports. As stated earlier, some of the recommendations emerging from those consultations have been met with significant resistance. *2020 Vision* looks ahead with the expectation of creating a coordinated and future-oriented budget process that will be well understood, widely supported and sustainable. To achieve that, there is a need for:

- Careful and conservative planning following emergence from funding protection;
- Creating a stable budget base to support core services before launching new initiatives;
- Addressing the challenges of the increasing costs involved in maintenance upkeep for buildings with a poor Facility Condition Index score;
- Anticipating student population growth that is distributed unevenly across the district, and becoming more difficult to predict due to new regional, provincial and national migration patterns;

- Factoring in the changes that will occur due to the Supreme Court ruling re. the district/province's Collective Agreement with the BCTF. This may include additional learning space requirements;
- Effectively managing a very limited (approx. 10%) services and supplies budget available after the known costs associated with salaries and benefits are factored;
- Committing to expanded partnership relationships with other agencies to mitigate costs and increase quality of infrastructure and service;
- Developing budget and related communications processes that are transparent and accessible to build enhanced understanding and trust with the community;
- Prioritizing available capital resources (local capital and capital reserve) to address equipment and facilities issues so as to establish a new baseline from which to build programs and services; and
- Engaging in practical "table top" operational planning sessions with other local agencies to determine areas of common need and interest and to explore potential synergies.

The competition for resources is not a situation unique to NLPS. School districts and other public agencies are increasingly looking for new and innovative ways to meet community needs and to explain why particular choices have been made. Effective organizations are successful in establishing clear engagement and communications processes so that there is wide understanding of the consultation processes, the decision-making variables and the placement of some priorities over others. There were several comments at the engagement sessions and on the surveys expressing hope that the Board will find ways to inform its public more fully and more transparently in its resource allocation processes and decisions.

School Facilities

School facilities & grounds are essential to the development and maintenance of quality communities for learning and for living. During and beyond the school day, they provide space to learn, socialize, engage in recreation and participate in meetings. They are key parts of neighbourhood "green spaces." Over the past several years, many school districts and communities have begun to work more closely to identify and act upon common needs and interests, creating:

- Expanded indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities for all ages;
- Shared facilities for libraries and performing arts;

- Increased access to social services for students and for the overall community;
- Increased meeting space for profit and not for profit organizations;
- Post-secondary course options; and
- Early childhood and senior activity and care programs.

NLPS has several schools and sites included in the scope of this report. Each of these facilities has been reviewed, analyzed and has had recommendations made in previous reports, most recently in the Updated Facilities Plan 2015-2021 and the Brook Pooni Report, presented to the Board in Summer 2016. These reports and others identify potential changes from the status quo, whether grade configuration, ideal school size, program location or school closures. It is evident that the Board has a number of options that can help shape the future for students and communities in the district.

Such options are frequently met with strong opposition both informally and formally throughout public consultation processes. In advancing any of the current options for consideration, it will be important to directly link the efficiencies that can be achieved by specific consolidations to strategic expenditure plans in high priority areas. Generalized promises to re-allocate resources achieved from savings is not adequate. Rather, it is essential to commit savings to address at least some of the many hopes regarding program offerings, updated technology and trades equipment and facilities, more services for students at risk, and renewed/refreshed learning spaces.

Briefly, the following overview is provided to establish context for the options that may be available to the Board in its strategic planning:

Ladysmith Zone

North Oyster Elementary:

- Kindergarten to Grade 7
- Dual track (English and French Immersion)
- Over 100% utilization – Capacity 275/Enrolment 305
- Facility requires remediation (.53 FCI)
- Excess grounds with potential for sale

Ladysmith Primary:

- Kindergarten to Grade 3

- Over 100% utilization - Capacity 185/Enrolment 242
- Facility requires remediation (.52 FCI)

Ladysmith Intermediate:

- Grades 4-7
- Close to 100% utilization – Capacity 300/Enrolment 295
- Facility requires remediation (.62 FCI)
- Potential for repurposing or sale of asset

Ladysmith Secondary:

- Grades 8-12
- Dual track (Grade 8 French Immersion introduced in 2016/17)
- 75% utilization – Capacity 800/Enrolment 587
- Facility requires remediation (.52 FCI)

Davis Road Elementary:

- Closed
- Potential for sale of asset

Context:

Ladysmith has more education space than will be needed in the foreseeable future if school configuration can be effectively managed. Additionally, the Town of Ladysmith has expressed interest in planning some of its community growth and development with the potential of accessing some current school district property in order to develop public amenities and/or areas for residential growth. Parents and students in Ladysmith strongly desire an adequate range of options so their young people can be educated locally throughout their K-12 years.

To Consider:

In collaboration with the Township of Ladysmith and Cowichan Valley Regional District, develop a comprehensive plan for optimal school and community space utilization for presentation to the Ministry of Education's Capital Branch. Central to this plan would be reconfiguration of the Ladysmith Zone Schools to K-5 or K-6 and 6-12 or 7-12, with school expansions being funded by sale of excess properties.

- Relocate Grade 6/7 or Grade 7 French Immersion from North Oyster to Ladysmith Secondary, leaving North Oyster as a K-5 dual track school;
- Relocate Grade 6/7 or Grade 7 English program from North Oyster and Ladysmith Intermediate to Ladysmith Secondary, expanding Ladysmith Secondary to a Grades 6-12 or Grades 7-12 school;
- Commence school closure consultations for Ladysmith Intermediate;
- Apply to Ministry of Education for a capital grant (in addition to local capital reserve) to initiate building project to increase capacity of Ladysmith Primary to accommodate Grades K-5 or K-6. Interim capacity needs can be met by utilizing modular classrooms until expansion project is completed;
- Work with the Township of Ladysmith to envision a learning hub including Ladysmith Primary and Ladysmith Secondary with other community amenities (eg. library) in close proximity;
- Begin processes to discuss with the Town of Ladysmith on the dispersal of the Davis Road Elementary site, Ladysmith Intermediate site, and excess property at North Oyster Elementary;
- Use available funds from sale of assets and apply to Ministry of Education for additional capital support to fund facility remediation projects at North Oyster Elementary and Ladysmith Secondary, as well as the expansion and remediation project at Ladysmith Primary, and an update suite of trades/technical program offerings at Ladysmith Secondary;
- Further investigate the viability of extending the French Immersion program offering at Ladysmith Secondary to Grade 12 so that students who have been in the French Immersion stream can continue in their community throughout the program; and
- Engage with the Township of Ladysmith to identify and secure a future school site, potentially in the Holland Creek area, as the Official Community Plan leads to more residential growth in that area.

Nanaimo Zone

Woodlands Secondary:

- Closed
- Potential for sale

Dufferin Crescent Elementary:

- Closed
- On Crown Land (no sale option)
- Potential for re-opening as a school site for a district program and/or district program and neighbourhood program

Cilaire Elementary:

- Kindergarten to Grade 7
- 100% utilization – Capacity 205/Enrolment 208
- Facility requires remediation (.63 FCI)

Departure Bay Elementary:

- Kindergarten to Grade 7
- Eco-School program
- Near 100% utilization – Capacity 275/Enrolment 263
- Near average facility condition (.48 FCI)

Rock City Elementary:

- Kindergarten to Grade 7
- Over 100% utilization – Capacity 317/Enrolment 353
- Facility requires remediation (.59 FCI)

École Pauline Haarer:

- French Immersion Kindergarten to Grade 7
- Over 100% utilization – Capacity 205/Enrolment 254
- Near average facility condition (.39 FCI)

École Quarterway:

- French Immersion Kindergarten to Grade 7
- Over 100% utilization – Capacity 340/Enrolment 416
- Near average facility condition (.47 FCI)

École Hammond Bay:

- French Immersion Kindergarten to Grade 7
- Over 100% utilization – Capacity 224/Enrolment 356
- Low need for remediation (.29 FCI)

Context:

The issue of distance between schools is less of a concern in Nanaimo than in Ladysmith. Nanaimo has several schools that are in reasonable proximity, increasing the potential for consolidation. The age and condition of many elementary schools is of concern and it would require a disproportionate amount of the district's maintenance budget – over several years – to address the most pressing issues. Some school sites have high strategic value to the City of Nanaimo's long-range development plans – there is great opportunity to work with the city to maximize public benefit and to accumulate assets for the school district. In a community that is growing and renewing, it is essential to identify available options and assemble a coordinated plan to be endorsed and financially supported by the provincial government and to be understood and supported by the community.

To Consider:

- Work with the City, the Vancouver Island Health Authority and local First Nations to explore mutually beneficial site utilization including creation of community recreation and service hubs, early childhood and senior care centres, opportunities for local First Nations - Snuneymuxw, Stz'uminus and Snaw-Naw-As – to build on their commitments to delivering Aboriginal Education-focused learning environments for students who seek that option;
- Engage with the Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation to identify business/education opportunities for the school-based training to build a skilled workforce, particularly in the trades, technology and marine industries. While Cedar Secondary is remote from the Nanaimo core, it is worthwhile investigating the potential resourcing of that school as a hub for at least one *Trades Centre*, given its available space and the need to attract and retain student enrolment;
- Includes options for disposition of some of the surplus property at NDSS.
- Continue to develop plans with the MoE for the expansion project for Frank J. Ney Elementary in order to effectively use resources that would otherwise be required for ongoing maintenance and for seismic mitigation projects;

- Use funds from sale of surplus properties for the renewal other area elementary schools that are strategically located to accommodate population growth;
- Consider the Departure Bay Elementary site as a partnership opportunity with the City that would include a re-developed school (including the Eco-School program of choice), a re-built recreation centre and a sports field;
- Given the increasing interest in and demand for French Immersion options, it will be important to identify FI program space that is accessible to students from several neighbourhoods and will be sustainable over time. It is also crucial in planning for French Immersion or other programs of choice that there is sufficient enrolment for long-term viability. There have been several situations in B.C. and beyond where a program has been started when it met a baseline threshold for initial enrolment, but was not sustainable over time because of enrolment decline at entry level and through attrition; and
- Develop a series of options to explore the potential for school population and program consolidations including but not limited to Pauline Haarer, Quarterway, Cilaire and Hammond Bay elementary schools. A re-opened Dufferin Crescent may be an appropriate site for a French Immersion program and a re-developed Departure Bay Elementary can factor into long-term strategic site utilization as well.

Summary Observations:

Boards of Education deal with increasingly difficult decisions in providing quality service to all students. The simple decisions have already been made, resulting in Boards facing “right versus right” dilemmas that require making choices among competing options. In addition to the thoughtful and analytical governance role the Board has, it is expected to be responsive to their communities’ competing demands. The consultation and survey feedback illustrated that. People want community schools at the same time as they expect their students to have access to specialized/targeted programs which cannot be offered in all schools. They see the need for school facilities to be refreshed but may raise concerns with plans to close some sites in order to direct resources to physical plant and program improvements in others. There are many other “dilemma” examples facing the Board.

In brief, the Board is at a critical juncture as it embarks on an important strategic journey, one that requires vision and courage. Every Board of Education’s mandate is to provide quality programs and services for all

students. For NLPS, the development of 2020 Vision aims to include all of the key elements to ensure an aligned, sustainable and coherent plan of action. Objectively determining the facility quality and viability of its school buildings will lead to difficult but necessary decisions; ensuring that resources are allocated in the most appropriate way will promote an opportunity to explore real partnerships with municipalities and other agencies to meet efficiency and effectiveness targets; and, when facilities and resourcing decisions are strategically made, it becomes more possible to establish a clear and unwavering focus on improving student success as the Board's and the district's unambiguous priority.

In moving forward, it will be important for the Board to establish and communicate a clear plan and to identify the specific outcomes that will result from the adoption of that plan. Resourcing early skill development for elementary students and engaging, relevant course options for secondary students will require time, effort and financial resources above what would be available if the district were to maintain the status quo in its operations. When the community clearly sees the choice between programs versus facilities, there is a greater understanding of why some tough choices need to be made.

As Nanaimo and its surrounding regions continue to grow and re-develop, it will be important to create community partnerships and school hubs that include enhanced services for students and community members in areas including mental health, social services and recreation. Such expansion of the school as a hub will require the Board to enter into new relationships with other agencies. The result will change the look and feel of the school as it evolves into a central neighbourhood resource. Such efforts require time and effort and the outcomes will not be immediately comfortable for everyone.

The Board has clearly articulated, through the *2020 Vision* initiative, a desire to move from the current, unsustainable status quo to a strategic vision and action plan for the future. In doing so, it is important to ensure:

- There is clear and comprehensive communication regarding the direction the school district needs to go. Its future plan must be linked to the highest priority needs, with resourcing decisions directly tied to supporting those priorities;
- The community understands that consultation provides the public with input into the Board's plan, but the Board retains responsibility and authority for the final

development and initiation of that plan. Consultation is not an invitation to co-create a plan from the ground up. Public input is considered by the Board and staff and it may generate some new ideas, may prompt some adjustments in the plan or it may indicate that there is further communication needed in order to clarify the purpose and details of the plan;

- The Board's plan cannot rely solely on other parties (provincial government, local municipalities or agencies) providing extra-ordinary funding. While external funding sources would be useful to enhance or speed up the plan, the basics need to be achievable by the Board with the resources over which it has authority.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike McKay, Hadrian Educational Consulting