

A Vision for the Future

Strategic Planning Workshop
March 22, 2009

BACKGROUND

In January 2008 parents and community members came together to fight against a plan to close up to 16 neighbourhood schools. Through this action, we began to develop a shared vision of community-based education. Our research and networking led us to an understanding of the effectiveness of smaller neighbourhood schools in providing quality education and much-needed community cohesion. One year later, we face the challenge of translating this vision into a working reality.

Communications specialist Susan Dusel led school supporters in a strategic planning workshop on Sunday, March 22. Parents talked about the community life they want for their families, and the role schools play. The goal was to define our key objectives, audience, message and goals. A follow-up meeting is planned to develop an action strategy to achieve our goals.

OUR OBJECTIVES

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

- ◆ Keep schools open
- ◆ Halt the board's 10-Year Plan
- ◆ Elect a parent-friendly school board
- ◆ Change the focus of the plan to best use of existing schools, rather than tearing them down
- ◆ Re-focus to an environmentally friendly community-based plan
- ◆ No to centralization
- ◆ Schools as part of a vibrant downtown
- ◆ Change in citizens' attitudes: education is important
- ◆ Value education as a contribution to the future
- ◆ Capitalize on changes at the provincial level – now is the time to get it right.
- ◆ Integrate childcare into our school discussions – recognize the close relationship between schools and childcare facilities

LOOKING BACK – OUR WORK SO FAR



WHAT WORKED?

- ◆ Tying stuffies to the fence
- ◆ Sign-making night
- ◆ Activities involving kids
- ◆ Green Home Show presence
- ◆ Tail-gate party at the Riders game
- ◆ Liaison with Save Our Schools Sask (rural schools campaign)
- ◆ Media attention
- ◆ Usher video
- ◆ Obtained meeting with deputy minister
- ◆ Website – links to resources
- ◆ Emails
- ◆ Facebook
- ◆ Credibility with the media

WHAT DIDN'T WORK?

- ◆ Decision-making: no executive body for quick decisions and media responses
- ◆ Outreach to other communities
- ◆ No influence over school board
- ◆ No real growth in core committee membership

OUR WEAKNESSES AND CHALLENGES

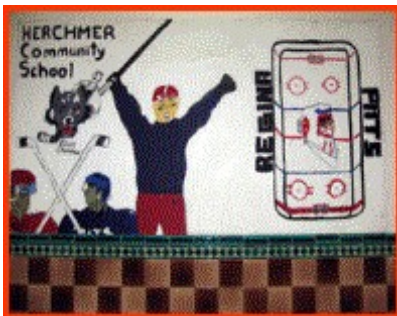
- ◆ The school board is using divide and conquer strategies
- ◆ 10 Year Plan – the timeframe is too long for people to get galvanized over the big picture
- ◆ ‘Conventional wisdom’: older schools are bad, busing is good, the plan will save money, we have no choice, I rode a bus when I was a kid
- ◆ Public apathy
- ◆ Public assumes the plan is cheaper
- ◆ Diversity of opinions
- ◆ Vast majority of people not directly affected
- ◆ Communication with families without children
- ◆ Lack of funds
- ◆ Poor voter turnout

- ◆ Ward system
- ◆ Community schools are under-resourced

OUR STRENGTHS

- ◆ Enrolment hasn't dropped at threatened schools
- ◆ Families without children still affected by downgrading neighbourhoods
- ◆ Broad public support
- ◆ Older schools can enhance communities
- ◆ Younger families moving into older neighbourhoods
- ◆ Demographics are on our side
- ◆ Increased public understanding and support on sustainability issues
- ◆ Downtown revitalization plan
- ◆ Lots of supporting research
 - Value of small schools
 - Benefits of walking to school
- ◆ The board's enrolment projections have been wrong

COMMUNICATING A VISION



WHAT DO REGINA FAMILIES WANT FOR THEIR CHILDREN?

- ◆ Safer communities
 - ◆ Smaller classrooms
 - ◆ Stronger neighbourhoods
 - ◆ High quality education: Emphasis on academics, plus access to the arts and phys ed
 - ◆ Physical health for children
- ◆ Accessibility and convenience
 - ◆ Childcare and after school care

OUR AUDIENCE – WHO ARE WE TALKING TO?

PRIMARY AUDIENCE

- ◆ Parents in affected schools
- ◆ The community immediately around schools
- ◆ The general public

SECONDARY AUDIENCE

- ◆ Parents in other schools
 - ◆ Decision-makers
 - ◆ Key city wards
 - ◆ People who vote
 - ◆ Inner city ring
 - ◆ Stakeholders and like-minded organizations
 - ◆ Environmental groups
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LOOKING FORWARD – STRATEGIC POSITIONING

AT THE END OF THE DAY, WHAT DO WE WANT REGINA RESIDENTS TO BE THINKING ABOUT THE SCHOOL SYSTEM?

- ◆ The value of schools in communities
- ◆ The downsides and weaknesses of the school board's plan
- ◆ There could be a much better plan
- ◆ Yes, we need renewal – but there is a better way
- ◆ The tangible benefits of community schools
- ◆ Why isn't there room for French education in all communities?
- ◆ Inner city schools as model community schools
- ◆ What would your community look like if you had no school?

KEY MESSAGES

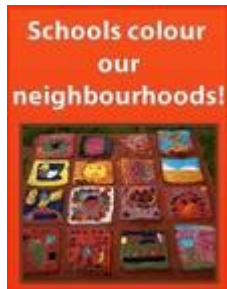
- ◆ Consolidation: big box schools will gut our communities
- ◆ Communities
- ◆ Happiness
- ◆ Safety
- ◆ Urban renewal
- ◆ How would you feel if you lost your neighbourhood school?
- ◆ There needs to be a good reason to close schools
- ◆ Regina is in a state of change – the board's plan will affect the city in a major way. Is this the change we want?
- ◆ We are the models of new communities
- ◆ This is the community of the future
- ◆ Yes to change – build don't destroy



- ◆ Sustainable schools for the future
- ◆ State of the art' is not about new buildings – it's about high quality education
- ◆ Walkable schools are part of walkable communities
- ◆ 'Construction' should mean retrofitting
- ◆ Plan for the future
- ◆ Quality, sustainable schools for a growing city
- ◆ Schools are the heart of the community, they are jewels in a jewel box
- ◆ Big box schools rip the heart out of communities
- ◆ Smart growth, smart schools
- ◆ Send the right message to our kids: Re-use your school
- ◆ Quality community schools for smart sustainable growth

MESSAGE VALIDATORS

- ◆ Teacher testimonials re. the benefits of small schools
- ◆ Research findings



ACTION PLANNING

KEY EVENTS

- ◆ Green Home Show – spring 2009
- ◆ Arts festival – May 2009
- ◆ Mayor's commuter challenge – May/June 2009
- ◆ School board elections October 2009
- ◆ Busing transition for Connaught – Sept. 2011
- ◆ Connaught/Davin closure – 2014

FUTURE ACTIONS

- ◆ Gather up-to-date data on Regina schools.
- ◆ Send regular communications to parents
- ◆ Develop brochures and posters
- ◆ Hold an action planning session within one week to identify and delegate key tasks

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