

**Schedule .B.2..**  
**of the**  
**Administrative Memorandum**

**Meeting Date:** April 20, 2010  **Board**  **Board, in camera**

**Topic (as per the Memorandum):** **Report on the *Restructuring 2010* Consultation Process – Closures, Consolidations, and Reconfiguration**

**Narration:**

At its Public Meeting on December 8, 2009, the Board of Education received the *Budget Challenge 2010 – Board Budget Directions* report. With an estimated challenge of \$6 to \$7 million for the 2010/2011 school year, the Board directed the Superintendent to proceed with the following budget directions:

1. Proceed with a consultation process for the consideration of the future configuration and delivery of alternate programs to best address the needs of students and support student achievement.
2. Proceed with a consultation process for the consideration of potential elementary school facility consolidations. At its Public Meeting on January 19, 2010, the Board decided to proceed with the consultation process in accordance with *Policy 610: Closure of Schools (Permanent)* regarding the potential closures of Blueridge, Plymouth, Seymour Heights, and Fromme elementary schools, as of June 30, 2010.
3. Proceed with a community consultation process for the consideration of the future configuration and delivery of the French Immersion program, including the potential feasibility of consolidating French Immersion into a single track elementary school, or schools, and the implications resulting from the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten. The consultation process would first conduct preliminary research and identify priorities for further consideration.

The Board of Education invited the public to an information meeting on February 3, 2010, regarding the consultation processes. John Lewis, Superintendent of Schools, presented to the audience the rationale for the consideration of potential school closures and program reconfigurations, opportunities for input, and the process for public consultation. Working Groups were established for:

- Alternate Programs
- Fromme School
- Seymour Area Schools, and
- French Immersion Program.

The Working Groups included representation from:

- Parent Advisory Councils at schools and programs being considered in the consultation process
- North Vancouver Parent Advisory Council
- North Vancouver Teachers' Association
- Canadian Union of Public Employees – Local 389
- District of North Vancouver Municipality
- Squamish Nation

## Schedule ....B.2..... (continued)

### Narration (continued)

- Vancouver Coastal Health
- Hollyburn Family Services
- North Vancouver Chapter of Canadian Parents for French, and
- School District Executive and Administrative staff.

The Working Group sessions were held on March 4 and 18, and April 1, 2010. The representatives served as contacts, liaisons, and spokespersons for their respective groups. Trustees participated as observers. The community was invited to provide its feedback through the Working Group representatives and/or the Restructuring 2010 e-mailbox. On April 12, 2010, at the conclusion of the workshop series, each Working Group's summary of findings was presented and posted on the School District's website.

The Board has given thoughtful consideration to the Working Group findings and the community's input. The Board will now receive the Superintendent's *Report on the Restructuring 2010 Consultation Process* and consider the recommendations from staff before making its decisions.

John Lewis, Superintendent of Schools, will present to the Board the *Report on the Restructuring 2010 Consultation Process*.

### Attachment:

*Superintendent Report to the Board of Education – Final Report regarding Restructuring 2010 Public Consultation* April 16, 2010

# Superintendent Report to the Board of Education

Final Report regarding *Restructuring 2010* Public Consultation

April 16, 2010

## Introduction

To sustain the quality of education desired and expected within the North Vancouver School District, the Board of Education is faced with very difficult decisions. The capacity of the Board to proceed with confidence in its long-range strategic planning has been seriously hindered by the consistently unreliable funding policies and practices of the Ministry of Education. The school district must continue to pursue long-term and sustainable solutions to provide stability and certainty for our students and community.

The Budget Directions 2010 and *Restructuring 2010* consultation processes have increased awareness of the challenges being addressed. These consultation processes have also resulted in the development of a broad range of proposals for consideration in the preparation of the Operating Budget. The School District's long-term planning could be more clearly integrated and articulated to support future directions.

The Board of Education has received thoughtful input and perspective from its partner groups to help protect quality public education and maintain a positive focus on the future of the North Vancouver School District. The Board must make difficult decisions now to provide a foundation of increased certainty for the effective restructuring of the School District for the long-term benefit of students.

## Key Challenges and Community Consultation

During the past decade, declining enrolment, increasing surplus capacity, aging facilities, and significant financial challenges are critical issues that have required continuous attention by the Board of Education.

Throughout this time, the Board has engaged the community in extensive consultation and communication processes: to heighten awareness of impending challenges; to address emerging issues and demands; to develop a compelling *Vision* for the future; to formulate and implement plans to respond to changing circumstances; and to receive and consider a full range of input and perspective to assist in making difficult decisions necessary to balance budgets. Our Board has continued to sustain its focus on student achievement and the needs of all students.

- The Board engaged the broader community in consultation during the fall of 2003, establishing its First Annual Community Forum "*Community Input to School Changes: Protecting Quality Education*". This community consultation identified the potential for school closures and consolidations, the reconfiguration of programs and services provided to students, and revenue generation strategies related to the expansion of the international student program, the rental and lease of facilities, and the potential sale of parcels of land and full school sites.
- The Board engaged the community in extensive consultation processes regarding the potential closures of schools in 2004, 2005, 2007 and 2009. The Board proceeded with closures of Maplewood, Monterey and Westover in 2004 and the closure and consolidation of Lonsdale in 2005 with the completion of a replacement of Westview School in 2007. The Board proceeded in 2009 with the closure and consolidation of Ridgeway Annex (effective June 2011), coinciding with the completion of the Ridgeway Elementary Heritage restoration project, and the closure and consolidation of Balmoral Secondary (effective June 2012), coinciding with the completion of the new Carson Graham Secondary scheduled for the summer of 2012.
- The *Vision* process of 2007 engaged the community in consultation and resulted in the identification of key areas to enhance the quality of instructional services and educational opportunities for students. This became the focus for the 5th Annual Community Forum, "*Creating an Inspiring and Collaborative Vision for Student Success*," held in November 2007. The Board adopted its *Vision* in June 2008.

- The *Towards the Future for Schools* consultative process of 2007 and 2008 addressed the conditions of declining enrolment, increased surplus capacity, aging facilities and financial challenge. This culminated in the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Forum, engaging the community in discussions related to “*Building New Schools to Achieve the 2020 Vision*”. These meetings identified the potential for the closure and consolidation of schools. Further community meetings were held in 2009 to share the findings of the *Towards the Future for Schools* community consultation process.
- The Board has consistently engaged the broader community in public consultation regarding the development of its Annual Operating Budget. Through its public Finance and Facilities Standing Committee and representative partner group meetings, the Board has developed comprehensive strategies to achieve budget reductions, cost savings, and generate revenue to ensure the preparation of a balanced Operating Budget, as required by the Ministry of Education.
- Recognizing the impending financial challenges and the unexpected elimination of the \$3 million Annual Facilities Grant by the Ministry of Education, the Board advanced its budget development processes for the preparation of the 2010 Operating Budget.
- The *Budget Challenge 2010* consultation process engaged the broader community from October 20 to December 1, 2009. This process served to identify the magnitude of the financial challenges and to develop proposed options and alternatives for consideration by the Board.

### **Declining Enrolment**

Since 2002, when enrolment peaked at more than 18,500 students, the North Vancouver School District has experienced a total enrolment decline of more than 3,300 students. Over the next three to five years, a further projected decline of 500 to 700 students will result in a total decline close to 4,000 students over the past 10 years, a 20% decline in total enrolment:

- Declining enrolment will continue to be a challenge facing the School District for the next three to five years, primarily as a consequence of the declining birth rate, but also as a result of a lack of affordable housing, an increasing proportion of the student population attending private and independent schools, and movement of students to other school districts.
- The implementation of full day Kindergarten is expected to ‘buffer’ the enrolment decline over the next two years before further declines over the shorter term, followed by a period of relative stability

The Board has employed a range of strategies to address the challenges associated with declining enrolment, expanding these efforts in recent years:

- The Board established a *Sustaining Schools Working Committee* in 2007 with partner group representation to help sustain the operation of schools within the School District as an alternative to the consideration of the closure of schools. This committee has been actively engaged over the past three years in pursuing initiatives to maintain the viability of schools in all areas of the School District.
- *Towards the Future for Schools* in 2008 identified key themes for the sustained operations of schools within the North Vancouver School District and planning for the future: enhancing program offerings; supporting early learning; preschool, out of school care; expanding community use and partnerships; coordinating community planning; and building new schools.
- The Board of Education has actively embraced and invested in program initiatives to help maintain the student population including: the introduction and expansion of program opportunities and academies for students in the areas of early learning, International Baccalaureate, French Immersion, careers, sports, visual arts, digital media and the Peak Performance Program. Program studies have also been conducted through the *Sustaining Schools Working Committee* in the areas of Montessori, Mandarin, Music, Fine Arts, Outdoor Education and Sports.

- The Board has invested in enhanced communications to ensure that the quality of the educational experiences and program opportunities available to students in the North Vancouver School District are effectively communicated, promoted and marketed. A strategic communication plan is in effect to build upon the strong foundation and reputation of the school district as a very high performing school system and to continue to improve the 'welcoming' experience for our students and our families.
- The Board has actively grown and expanded the International Education program by more than 500 students over the past eight years (from 150 to 650 students), attracting both secondary and elementary students from more than twenty nations. The inclusion of International Students has helped to 'buffer' the enrolment decline and reduce the surplus capacity in schools.
- The school district has continued to work with the City and District of North Vancouver to address the issue of affordable housing for young families and to coordinate the design and construction of new schools to incorporate community amenities to address community needs (health, social, recreation).

### Surplus Capacity

- As a consequence of continued declining enrolment, there is surplus capacity within existing School District facilities. This surplus capacity is expected to increase over the longer term, even with the implementation of full day kindergarten. The current surplus capacity of 2400 student spaces is expected to increase to nearly 2800 spaces within three to five years.
- Stretching instructional resources to address facility operating expenses detracts from the instructional services and program offerings available to all students.
- The closure and consolidation of schools and/or programs and the shared use of facilities helps reduce surplus capacity and facility operating costs, while preserving financial resources for instructional services and program delivery purposes.
- The rental and lease of surplus classrooms and full schools has enabled the Board to increase its short-term revenue generating capacity. However, short-term revenue must also be balanced against longer-term capital costs required to provide for the continued operation of aging facilities.

### Aging Facilities and infrastructure

- The facilities in the North Vancouver School District have an average age of nearly 50 years. Many are nearing, or are past, the end of their functional life. The school district has made very good progress in upgrading existing facilities. However, the additional costs associated with aging facilities places significant strain on the funding provided by the Ministry of Education.
- The Annual Facilities Grant has not been sufficient to meet current and future anticipated needs. The recent decision of the Ministry of Education to eliminate and reduce this source of funding has created further challenges and concerns for the future.
- The *Towards the Future for Schools* process identified the theme of Building New Schools as an integral component in addressing the demands for the future. The *Vision* for the future is to provide welcoming, safe and sustainable facilities that enhance the learning and teaching environment.
  - *The consolidation and construction of new facilities is preferred to renovating existing facilities; new buildings will be an asset to the school district; enabling increased joint use, reduced operating costs, implementation of energy efficiencies & 'green' building measures, foster a welcoming environment, and enhancing pride in our schools and in our community.*

- Between 1998 and 2009 the School District completed more than \$130 million in capital projects. Renovations, additions and new replacement schools included Lynn Valley (2005), Westview Elementary (2007), Sutherland Secondary (2008) and Highlands Elementary (2009).
- New and heritage restoration schools valued at more than \$80 million are now in process at Ridgeway Elementary (2011), Carson Graham Secondary (2012), and Queen Mary Elementary (2013). The heritage restoration projects have been made possible through the transfer of equity realized through the development of the Education Services Centre and Artist for Kids Gallery on the former Lonsdale School site.
- The School District has identified a further \$200 million in capital requirements in the current five-year Capital Plan including a number of replacement schools including Argyle, Seymour Heights and Handsworth.

## Financial Challenges

The Board of Education has consistently advocated for the Ministry of Education to provide for the true costs of public education through the funding allocation system. Previously supported by local taxation, the North Vancouver School District was able to develop an educational delivery model based on small schools in each community or neighbourhood. While small schools are attractive from an educational and community perspective, as a result of the Ministry funding allocation system based upon student enrollment, the small neighbourhood school model that was formerly a cornerstone of the community is no longer sustainable.

- Funding challenges will continue to arise as a consequence of declining enrolment and the funding allocation practices of the Ministry of Education. Funding has not kept pace with inflation and does not fully address the increased costs related to salaries and benefits. A range of Ministry initiatives including early learning, literacy and health, have been mandated, but have not been adequately funded.
- The Board has demonstrated strong fiscal management and has increased its revenue generating capacity through expanding its International Education program; sale of curriculum resources and services; expanding the use of facilities; the renting and lease of surplus classrooms and schools; system-wide closures; and the introduction of cost savings initiatives such as the implementation of energy efficiency measures in all buildings.
- The Board has also determined that it has been necessary to consider the closure and consolidation of schools to direct as many funds as possible to students and to the classrooms. Closed schools have also been leased to generate additional revenues to support instructional and program needs.
- The Board has continued to preserve and enhance the quality of instructional services and educational opportunities for students within public education in North Vancouver while simultaneously striving to maintain the viability of schools in all areas of the community.
- The ongoing commitment to the *Instructional Institute*, Collegial Conferencing, Action Research, Curriculum and Professional Development has continued to support the high quality of instructional practices evident throughout the School District.
- The Board has also identified the need for a long-term strategy to generate revenue through land, while still retaining the land for future needs.

The School District must continue to become increasingly innovative and diversified in its revenue generation strategies to increase its capacity to supplement the resources currently provided through the funding allocation system of the Ministry of Education.

## **Board Budget Directions 2010 and Restructuring 2010 Consultation**

In providing its direction for the preparation of the 2010/2011 Operating Budget, the Board directed the Superintendent to proceed with budget direction number 18:

*Proceed with a consultation process in January 2010 for the consideration of the future configuration and delivery of alternate programs to best address the needs of students and support student achievement. Considerations may include: co-habitation, consolidation, and/or closure to achieve operational savings.*

Alternate programs identified include: Keith Lynn Alternate Secondary School (KLASS), the Therapeutic Day Program (TDP), Third Step, Windsor House, and the Youth Learning Centre (YLC).

The Board also provided direction to the Superintendent to proceed with budget direction number 20:

*Proceed with a consultation process in January 2010 for the consideration of potential elementary school facility consolidations and/or closures.*

At the Public Board Meeting of January 19, 2010 the Board of Education received the Budget Challenge 2010 Outcome report. Contained within Appendix A of this report were the criteria used for the selection of schools for consideration for potential closure. A revised and enhanced set of criteria was developed in consultation with a representative working group that included the School District partner groups and Trustees. Also included within the Appendices of the Budget Challenge 2010 Outcomes report presented at the Public Board Meeting was the Criteria Summary by school which provided the summary analysis of each elementary school in the School District using the revised criteria.

The Board of Education applied the criteria to each elementary school in the School District and based upon its review, decided to proceed with the consultation process in accordance with Policy 610 regarding the potential closure of Plymouth Elementary School, Seymour Heights Elementary School, Blueridge Elementary School and Fromme Elementary School as of June 30, 2010.

A future planning item identified within the *Budget Challenge 2010* report that is closely associated with the future configuration of elementary schools and the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten in 2011/2012 is the elementary French Immersion program. The future planning item identified within the Budget Directions 2010 Report:

*Proceed with a community consultation process for the consideration of the future configuration and delivery of the French Immersion program, including the potential feasibility of consolidating French Immersion into a single track elementary school, or schools, and the implications resulting from the implementation of Full Kindergarten. The consultation process is expected to take place in two stages. The first stage is to conduct preliminary research and identify priorities for further consideration.*

No savings were identified within the examination of the elementary French Immersion program.

The February 25, 2010 *Budget Directions Interim Report* acknowledged that the options and alternatives identified through the public consultation process are not desirable directions, but arise as a consequence of the funding restrictions being placed upon the Board of Education by the Ministry of Education. Each direction within the report requires thoughtful consideration.

<http://www.nvsd44.bc.ca/Trustees/Restructuring2010/~media/58395F318911432796DDC56BCE8C56A7.ashx>

## **Restructuring 2010 Consultation Process**

A *Restructuring 2010* public information meeting was held on February 3, 2010 to provide comprehensive background information to the public regarding the consultation process that would be held regarding alternate programs, potential elementary school closures and potential changes to the delivery of the Elementary French Immersion program. This meeting was advertised through the local newspaper, the school district website, and notices and messages to schools. The presentation materials were posted on February 4, 2010 to the school district website.

<http://www.nvsd44.bc.ca/sitecore/content/Home/Trustees/~media/AEC4D43104484C4A887C6EF52F366A75.ashx>

Questions submitted as input at the February 3 meeting and through the *Restructuring 2010* e-mail address were communicated through a Q and A forum on the school district's website. Additional questions and answers were posted through regular website updates on February 11, 15, 17 and 22.

<http://www.nvsd44.bc.ca/sitecore/content/Home/Trustees/Restructuring2010.aspx>

Representative Working Groups were established to facilitate the consultation processes related to *Restructuring 2010*. Representatives to each of the Working Groups were selected by school Parent Advisory Councils, the North Vancouver Parent Advisory Council, North Vancouver Teachers' Association, Canadian Union of Public Employees (Local 389), Canadian Parents for French (North Vancouver Chapter), and community and municipal partner groups.

The contact information for the Working Group Representatives was listed on the school district's website. Representatives were to receive input and serve as contacts, liaisons and spokespersons for their respective group through the workshop series and between meetings. Members of the general public were encouraged to contact the representatives as listed or to submit their input directly through the *Restructuring 2010* e-mail address.

Working Group meetings were held March 4, 18 and April 1. At their initial meeting, the Working Groups considered the proposed options and alternatives identified within the Budget Directions Interim Report. Observations and input were gathered during the meetings and notes were published to the school district website. The Working Group Findings were presented to the Working Group Representatives on April 12 and posted to the School District website on April 13, 2010.

Working Group representatives and members of the public were provided with a final opportunity to submit any input for the consideration by the Board to *Restructuring 2010* no later than noon, April 15, 2010.

More detailed information regarding the representative Working Groups is posted to the School District's website.

<http://www.nvsd44.bc.ca/Trustees/Restructuring2010/WorkingGroups.aspx>

Details related to the Working Group Findings and Working Group Meeting notes have also been included as Appendices to this report.

The Board of Education and the School District has sincerely appreciated the passion, dedication and commitment that has been demonstrated by Working Group representatives, Parent Advisory Councils, educational partners and the community to provide their input and perspectives on these difficult issues.

As a result of insufficient funding and the legal requirement to submit a balanced Operating Budget each year, the Board is forced to make decisions that will require compromise. The challenge for the Board of Education is to make these difficult decisions in a manner that will mitigate the extent of impact to the entire School District and the entire student population. The Board must make difficult decisions now to provide a foundation of increased certainty for the effective restructuring of the school district for the long-term benefit of all students.

## **Consideration of the future configuration and delivery of Alternate Programs**

The potential future configuration and delivery of Alternate Programs has been identified as having potential for operational savings while also providing an opportunity to best address the needs of students and to support student achievement.

The Alternate Programs Working Group has explored the options of consolidation, cohabitation, and closures, identifying a wide variety of alternatives within consolidation, cohabitation and closure. Pluses and minuses were identified and consideration was given to the transition processes that would best address identified concerns. The Working Group identified a series of actions for consideration that would facilitate transition, perhaps supported through a phased approach.

There was general agreement within the Working Group that further consultation would be desirable before committing to a set course of action and that input from the students would be considered. In addition to identifying key aspects and positive attributes of the current alternate programs there would also be an opportunity to examine how mainstream schools may increase their capacity to support the learning and development needs of students.

The Working Group Findings and input provided through the Restructuring 2010 process and the Budget Challenge 2010 process have served to reinforce the need to maintain the student as the central focus for the design and delivery of educational programs. Additionally, there has been an expressed need to reinforce the mandate of the Board to focus on student achievement and to improve graduation rates.

### Consolidation of alternate programs

The option of consolidating the existing alternate programs into a new program provides the School District with the opportunity to create and design a program that will meet a broad spectrum of student needs and interests. This would enable the continuation of the positive attributes of existing programs that should be preserved and maintained in support of vulnerable students. The opportunity to design a new program to meet the diverse needs of students will also enable the implementation of enhanced instructional practices that will further support student achievement and contribute towards improved graduation rates.

Developing and introducing a new program will require careful planning and consideration. A number of factors identified for consideration include; the breadth of the program, the number and age of students to be accommodated, the number of students who may return to 'mainstream' schools, the potential to provide 'wraparound' service, opportunities for efficiencies and cost savings, and the future location of the program. Each of these factors needs to be given careful consideration within the broader context of the school district and its long-range planning to support the learner.

It is also important to be aware of additional possibilities that include the delivery of educational programs and services within the community, either separately, or in partnership with the School District. These options may be of interest to constituent groups and would have an impact on planning. Successful partnerships have been developed between the North Vancouver School District and service providers in the past to enable the provision of community-based services.

Building on the momentum established in the *Restructuring 2010* Working Group process, the development of a new district program could be completed during the coming school year. This would provide an opportunity to proceed with a scheduled implementation as early as the 2011/2012 school year, and no later than the 2012/2013 school year, should additional transition time be required. Establishing a new district program will also provide an opportunity to attract new students to the School District.

### Cohabitation of Alternate Programs

The option of cohabitating the alternate programs within existing facilities would enable the continuation of programs within their current configuration. Operational savings may be achieved through shared services, shared staffing, and a shared facility. There has been support expressed for this option within the Working Group and through input received in the consultation process.

The option of cohabitation was also identified as having the potential to serve as a basis for the future development of a consolidated program. Bringing the programs together into a single location could help facilitate the development of a new district program.

Another perspective on the continuation of current programs within a single facility is that it may reduce the impetus of change for the future delivery of programs and services for students. There is concern that individual programs will continue to focus on preserving their own identity. As a consequence there will be missed opportunities for the development of a more collaborative approach to meet the needs of the learner.

#### Closure of alternate programs

The option of closing alternate programs received little support within the Working Group with concerns expressed for the vulnerability of the students served by the alternate programs and the limited capacity or readiness of 'mainstream' schools to meet the needs of these students through differentiated approaches to teaching and learning. Additional concerns were expressed regarding the unique features of a number of the alternate programs and how these differences would make it difficult for integration with other programs, or within mainstream schools.

#### **Recommendations regarding the future configuration and delivery of Alternate Programs**

The following recommendations of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education are presented as options for the consideration of the Board regarding the future configuration of Alternate Programs:

- 1) Proceed with the design and development of **one consolidated program** to address the diverse learning needs of students and to further support student achievement. To facilitate the design and implementation of this new program, proceed with the closure of each of the Alternate Programs; Keith Lynn Alternate Secondary School, the Therapeutic Day Program, Third Step, Windsor House Program, and the Youth Learning Centre, effective, as early as June 2011, and no later than June 2012.

The new *North Vancouver Community Learning Program* will be developed in consultation with partner groups and representatives of the current alternate programs to prepare this program for delivery at a suitable location commencing as early as September 2011, and no later than September 2012.

The *North Vancouver Community Learning Program Committee* is to be established no later than June 15, 2010 for the purposes of designing and developing one consolidated program to address the diverse needs of learners presently served by the Alternate Programs, and to report to the Superintendent of Schools no later than December 15, 2010 and a final report no later than February 28, 2011.

or,

- 2) Proceed with a transition process leading to the **co-habitation** of the Alternate Programs; Keith Lynn Alternate Secondary School, the Therapeutic Day Program, Third Step, Windsor House Program, and the Youth Learning Centre at a suitable location commencing as early as September 2011 and no later than September 2012. Planning for the successful co-habitation of alternate programs within a single facility will be developed in consultation with partner groups and representatives of the current alternate programs.

The *Alternate Programs Cohabitation Committee* is to be established no later than June 15, 2010 for the purposes of planning for the successful co-habitation of alternate programs within a single facility, and to provide an Interim Report to the Superintendent of Schools no later than December 15, 2010 and a Final Report no later than February 28, 2011.

## **Potential elementary school facility consolidations and/or closures**

The school district has engaged the public in consultations regarding the possibility of school closures and consolidations since 2003 in the context of declining enrolment, changes in funding policies, capital planning processes, developing the *Vision* for the school district, the *Sustaining Schools Working Committee*, and the *Towards the Future for Schools* consultation process.

The model of small neighbourhood schools established in the North Vancouver School District and supported through enrolment growth and local taxation is no longer sustainable in the context of the public education funding policies and practices of the Ministry of Education.

The consideration of potential school closures has not been introduced as a 'first consideration' by the Board of Education, but rather as an additional consideration to the proposed options and alternatives identified in the *Budget Directions 2010 Interim Report* that have far-reaching implications for instructional services and programs provided throughout the School District. The proposed changes identified in consultation with partner groups and the public will have an unavoidable impact on schools, classrooms, and students. Neither the closure of schools, nor reductions in programs and services are desired.

The consultation process for the consideration of the potential closure of Blueridge, Plymouth, Seymour Heights and Fromme has been conducted in accordance with the provisions of Policy 610: Closure of Schools (Permanent). The process gave members of the school district and the school communities with specific opportunities to provide input for the Board's consideration.

The commitment, passion, and dedication of the community for the continued operation of schools, the value for public education and the strong desire to continue to support and enhance the quality of educational services and programs provided to our students is consistently evident.

## **Consideration of options and alternatives to potential school closures**

The Elementary School Working Groups examined the proposed options and alternatives provided within the *Budget Directions 2010 Interim Report* as alternatives to the potential closures of Plymouth, Seymour Heights, Blueridge and Fromme. The Working Groups reported these budget measures as comprehensive while also identifying additional areas for potential savings and revenue generation.

Since 2007, additional alternatives and options to the potential closure of schools have been proposed through the Working Group process, by written input to *Restructuring 2010*, input to School Trustees, and the initiatives of the *Sustaining Schools Working Committee*. The alternatives and options identified are acknowledged and have been given thoughtful consideration. These include:

- As an alternative to the potential closures of schools, revenue generation strategies have been suggested, including the imposition of a standard student fee, and the sale of land. Although the Board is not permitted to impose a standard fee for services, the Board has identified and pursued additional opportunities to generate revenue, including the sale of land. Land sales and the use of their proceeds require authorization by the Minister of Education.
- The Board has previously acknowledged the suggestion to delay, or not proceed with, the development of the Educational Services Centre on Lonsdale and to consider locating the 'district offices' within a vacant or currently operating school. The comprehensive development of the Lonsdale property is the result of a long-term planning process that is integrated with the Heritage Restoration projects at Ridgeway and Queen Mary Schools. This development also includes the Board's commitment to providing community amenities including; housing for the HYAD Group, improvements to Ray Sargent Park, and a permanent location for the Artists for Kids' Gallery. The Lonsdale development provides a long-term solution to the provision of district services in one location, while also generating revenue necessary to support the heritage restoration of schools, and achieve operational savings through the consolidation of facilities.

- Increasing student enrolment has been identified as a means to address available surplus space. Various initiatives identified by the *Sustaining Schools Working Committee*—the expansion of program offerings, increased communication strategies, marketing and promotions, and the expansion of the International student program—have been implemented. These initiatives require the investment of operating funds, but are essential to continue. A degree of success has been experienced in relation to the retention of enrolment but the ‘gains’ are insufficient to ‘offset’ the decline in enrolment resulting from the current demographics and declining birth rate.
- Consistent with the findings of the *Towards the Future for Schools* process, the Board supports the use of space within schools for early learning initiatives including StrongStart, preschool, out of school care, and the ‘*Neighbourhood Learning Centre*’ concept. These initiatives have been provided primarily as a means to support families and to generate future enrolment. The funding available to support these initiatives has not been sufficient to meet all costs, resulting in a draw on the Board’s operating budget. As a result, viable expansion of a number of these initiatives is limited.
- The space available within schools currently exceeds the demand for these purposes when offered through rent or lease, on a cost-recovery basis. ‘*Neighbourhood Learning Centre*’ is still in its formative stage and is associated more with capital improvements to schools than with operational funding for services. The Ridgeway Heritage Restoration project will incorporate space for a ‘*Neighbourhood Learning Centre*’ maintaining a partnership with North Shore Neighbourhood House.
- Another alternative identified the demolition of portions of buildings as a cost savings measure that would also reduce excess capacity. This has been identified as a strategy in specific locations and would achieve some facility operational savings. However, the savings would be relatively small in comparison to the savings that are achieved through reduced staffing resulting from a school closure.
- The shared use of facilities has been suggested as a means to retain schools for continued operation. This strategy has been given careful consideration by the *Sustaining Schools Working Committee* and by the Alternate Programs Working Group. The need to consider the long-term accommodation of alternate programs, French Immersion, and Full Day Kindergarten is acknowledged as an important consideration for the Board of Education.
- Additionally, there were suggestions to examine the potential closure of other specific elementary schools, rather than those identified for consideration by the Board of Education.
- Another concern raised regarding the potential closure of schools is that a reduction in the number of operating schools within the school district will limit the options available for the future. Preserving sufficient space and school sites to address long-term needs must also be balanced with the need to protect services and supports to students and to achieve balanced operating budgets.

### **Transition Concerns related to potential school closures**

Transition concerns were addressed within each of the Elementary Working Groups and have been reported within the Working Group Findings and Meeting notes included within the Appendices to this report. Additional concerns have been identified and provided through input to Restructuring 2010 and to the Trustees.

Thoughtful consideration has been demonstrated in the identification of strategies to address the identified concerns should the decision be reached by the Board of Education to proceed with a school closure, or closures. With a primary concern for the impact on children, transition strategies have been identified to pay particular attention to the needs of students. Planning for the accommodation and reception of students in potential receiving schools needs to proceed at the earliest opportunity following any closure decision.

The identified strategies provided within the Working Group Findings and Meeting notes are complementary to those that have been effectively implemented in the past by the School District in cooperation with the school communities impacted by school closures. With a primary focus on the needs of children, transition issues are addressed with the greatest of sensitivity and concern.

## Seymour Area Schools (Blueridge, Plymouth, and Seymour Heights)

The Seymour Area has experienced a dramatic decline in student enrolment during the past fifteen years and surplus space has been steadily increasing. This decline in enrolment has also been experienced in the neighbouring communities to the west and to the east. Student movement within this area of the School District has also been influenced by the location of district programs and policies and legislation introduced by the Ministry of Education. In combination, these factors have had a significant impact on capacity utilization which is an important criteria by the Ministry to support capital project requests.

The French Immersion program situated at Dorothy Lynas and Sherwood Park Elementary Schools has served to attract students from the Seymour Area. The Ministry of Education introduced legislation in 2002 that provides parents with the opportunity to register their child at any school with space and resources available to accommodate their child. This legislation has contributed to increased movement of children between schools and communities, impacting some schools more than others. A further consequence of the priority placed on 'choice' rather than local neighbourhood schools, has been the increased driving of children (and greenhouse gas emissions) to neighbouring schools and to other school districts.

The Report of the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Forum received by the Board of Education identified the theme of Building New Schools (East) as an integral component in addressing the demands for the future:

- *Support was indicated for the **consolidation** of identified elementary feeder schools (Plymouth, Seymour Heights, Blueridge) to Windsor Secondary at the earliest opportunity through the commencement of a feasibility study; positive benefits would be realized through the provision of a new school in this community.*

The Board of Education proceeded with the completion of a comprehensive *Project Identification Report* with the involvement of its partner groups. The Board has identified the replacement of Seymour Heights Elementary as its second highest priority in its approved capital plan submitted to the Ministry of Education. The *Project Identification Report* that supports this application is based on the long-term consolidation of the three elementary schools in the Seymour Area: Blueridge, Seymour Heights and Plymouth.

The consideration of the consolidation of elementary schools within the Windsor Family of Schools has been openly discussed in the community for the past two years and has received strong support. The identification of specific school closures and dates for closures would serve to clarify the direction of the Board of Education in regards to the plan for consolidation of schools.

The potential closure of Plymouth, Seymour Heights and Blueridge was examined by the Working Group to consider the pluses and minuses associated with each of the respective schools. The notes of the Seymour Area working Group acknowledge:

*"No one wants to close schools, but the community wants certainty and commitment to a plan for the broader community".*

Although the Ministry of Education has not provided approval for the funding of a replacement school for Seymour Heights, the potential closure of a school or schools in this area of the School District will result in operational savings over the shorter term. The average annual operational savings from the closure of a single elementary school are approximately \$400,000. Over a five-year period, this would result in approximately \$2 million in savings that could be used to protect the quality of educational programs and services provided to students throughout the School District. With a clearly articulated plan for the future configuration of schools in the Seymour Area of the school district, the community will be able to proceed with greater confidence and certainty and increase its advocacy in support of the consolidation plan.

The variability in the short-term financial savings between Blueridge, Seymour Heights, and Plymouth is acknowledged. The consolidation of schools into a single, larger elementary school will achieve significant long-term operational savings, while significantly reducing long-term capital costs.

The benefits associated with a larger new school at Seymour Heights to accommodate the combined student populations of Plymouth, Blueridge and Seymour Heights will be significant. All students will be provided with a safe, new, sustainable facility that will enhance the learning and teaching environment. The North Vancouver School District will benefit by significantly reducing operational costs to help preserve much needed resources for the instructional services and program opportunities provided to all students across the School District and to invest further in specific initiatives designed to retain and attract students.

An additional consideration identified in relation to the potential closure of schools within the Seymour Area is the opportunity to build a larger sense of community through the consolidation of schools. The initiatives undertaken by the Parent Advisory Councils within the Windsor Family of Schools working together to foster a commitment to greater community-building has served to advance a more encouraging perspective for the future and has had a noticeable positive impact on the community.

The opportunity to build upon this commitment to further advance community-building is an important factor for consideration, particularly in relation to the welcoming that will be extended to children and families who may be impacted by a school closure in this area of the School District.

The Working Group representatives for the Seymour Area have given careful consideration to the potential closures of Blueridge, Plymouth and Seymour Heights and have provided their collective and individual perspectives. The dedication and commitment of the Working Group representatives to their respective schools, the community, and the School District is greatly appreciated.

Understandably, differing views and perspectives have been advanced, reflecting the varying impact that potential school closures will have for families and neighbourhoods. The process of consultation regarding any potential school closure does have a significant impact on the community. The outcomes of this process must be met with understanding and compassion to support students, families and community.

There is considerable space available within the Seymour Area schools to accommodate students impacted by a potential school closure. Transition concerns and strategies to alleviate such concerns have been identified and well-documented through the consultation process. With a primary focus on the needs of children, transition issues will be addressed with the greatest of sensitivity and concern.

The potential closures of Plymouth, Seymour Heights and Blueridge in June 2010 have been carefully considered and thoughtfully examined. The consultation process has been conducted in accordance with Board Policy. The Seymour Area Working Group has provided their perspectives for consideration by the Board of Education. Additional input has been provided through *Restructuring 2010* and correspondence to Trustees.

### **Recommendations regarding the Seymour Area Schools (Blueridge, Plymouth, Seymour Heights)**

The following recommendations are presented by the Executive Committee for the consideration of the Board regarding the potential closure of schools in the Seymour Area.

The recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education is to proceed with the closure of Plymouth Elementary School, effective June 30, 2010.

The recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education is to proceed with the closure of Blueridge Elementary School, effective June 30, 2013, or upon the completion of the new Seymour Heights replacement school, whichever is later.

The Superintendent of Schools further recommends that the School District engage the Ministry of Education and the District of North Vancouver in discussions regarding the opportunity to proceed with the replacement of Seymour Heights Elementary School at the earliest opportunity to enable the consolidation of schools in the Seymour Area of the School District.

## **Fromme Elementary School**

The Board of Education sincerely appreciates and acknowledges that the consideration of the potential closure of Fromme School has had a profound impact on the school community. The quality of the educational experience provided to students, the dedication of staff, and the commitment of the parents and community towards the continued operation of Fromme School have been evidenced and communicated through the consultative process.

The Working Group representatives for Fromme Elementary have given careful consideration to the potential closure of Fromme and have provided their collective and individual perspectives. The dedication and commitment of the Working Group representatives, the school Parent Advisory Councils, the Lynn Valley community, and the members of the School District are greatly appreciated.

The Fromme Working Group Findings have acknowledged:

*Closing a school is not a desirable alternative. Having to make cuts in areas such as staffing (for example teacher/librarians) and programs that make the NVSD a desirable district for students to attend is not a desirable alternative either.*

The current funding allocation system of the Ministry of Education makes it exceedingly difficult to sustain the operation of small schools. North Vancouver School District was able to develop an educational delivery model based on small schools in each community or neighbourhood when funding was locally controlled and when operational funding was provided to support facilities. While small schools are attractive from an educational and community perspective, the small neighbourhood school model that was formerly a cornerstone of the community is no longer sustainable due to the Ministry funding allocation system based upon student enrollment.

The consideration of the potential closure of Fromme is a result of the proximity to neighbouring schools, the availability of space within those schools, and the smaller capacity of Fromme School in comparison to the neighbouring schools, and the potential to achieve financial savings.

Fromme School is situated in the Lynn Valley area and is in close proximity to neighbouring schools (Lynn Valley, Upper Lynn and Boundary) that will have space available in the next school year to accommodate additional students. Of these four schools, Fromme Elementary has the least capacity as provided by the Ministry of Education with 20 Kindergarten plus 225 Grade 1 to 7. Lynn Valley's capacity is 40 Kindergarten plus 275 Grade 1 to 7, Upper Lynn's capacity is 80 Kindergarten plus 500 Grade 1 to 7, and Boundary's capacity is 40 Kindergarten plus 375 Grade 1 to 7.

In combination, Lynn Valley, Upper Lynn and Boundary schools will have more than 350 spaces available next school year to accommodate the projected 215 students who would be impacted by the potential closure of Fromme School. Some of this space within these schools has been used to house district programs which can be relocated to other schools where space is available to accommodate these programs. Other classroom space used on a temporary basis to provide for an art room or other purposes can be used to provide an additional classroom for an enrolling division. Preliminary school organizations for September 2010 also indicate that Carisbrooke Elementary neighbouring Fromme to the west will have limited space available to accommodate students.

During the consultation process the parents of Fromme students were provided with an opportunity to indicate their school of preference should the decision be made to close Fromme. Lynn Valley was indicated most frequently (36) as a preferred school, followed by Upper Lynn (5) and Boundary (3). A number of parents (7) also indicated their preference to attend other schools in North Vancouver.

As a consequence of the limited response of surveys, staff was unable to determine the ability to provide parents with their first choice for placement, should the decision be reached to close Fromme School. If necessary, the accommodation of students may proceed on the basis of residence, should the decision be made to close Fromme School. The need to work closely with parents to achieve a smooth transition for children is acknowledged.

The average annual operational savings from the closure of an elementary school is approximately \$400,000. This is consistent with the savings expected from the potential closure of Fromme School. Over a five-year period, this would result in approximately \$2 million in savings. These funds could be used to protect the quality of educational programs and services provided to students throughout the School District and to invest further in initiatives designed to retain and attract students. There is potential to generate additional revenue through the rent or lease of closed school facilities.

The Board of Education is in an unenviable position of having to make difficult decisions from a host of unattractive options that will impact schools, classrooms and students. In reaching its decisions, the Board must consider the implications not only for the immediate school community, but also for the entire School District.

### **Recommendation regarding Fromme Elementary School**

The recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education is to proceed with the closure of Fromme Elementary School, effective June 30, 2010.

### **French Immersion Program**

The French Immersion Working Group examined various options for the future configuration and delivery of the elementary French Immersion program, including the potential feasibility of consolidating French Immersion into a single track elementary school, or schools, and the implications resulting from the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten during the next two years.

The purpose of this consultation process was to conduct preliminary research and to identify priorities for further consideration. No savings were identified within the examination of the French Immersion program. In addition to the Working Group Findings and Meeting Notes reported in the Appendices of this report, input was also provided through surveys developed by parent groups and through input to the Restructuring 2010 e-mail address. Input was received from parents, staff and community members representing both the French Immersion and the English programs.

Consistent with prior public consultations related to the French Immersion program, great interest and enthusiasm was expressed towards strengthening the program within the School District. Although total enrolment has experienced a considerable decline over recent years, registration for the early French Immersion program within dual-track schools remains very robust. Space available for the program has consistently been filled, with French Immersion representing an increasing percentage of the School District's total enrolment.

Strategies previously established through consultation processes and feasibility studies have been implemented as a means to strengthen the French Immersion Program. These strategies, which include the following, have achieved the desired benefits for the program:

- The establishment of three secondary centres (Handsworth, Argyle and Windsor) to improve geographical access to the secondary program and to relieve enrolment pressures at Argyle
- The continued support of a 'critical mass' (250 to 300 students) within each of the three secondary centres, enhanced by the Early and Late French Immersion programs within each region of the school district
- The on-going promotion of a third Late French Immersion program as a 'feeder' to Windsor, in addition to the two district centres at Braemar and Boundary.

The Working Group findings have served to indicate strong support, particularly expressed by parents, for the continued operation of the dual-track French Immersion school model. Additionally, the consultation process served to identify the need to achieve a better balance between the French Immersion and English

programs within each of the dual-track schools. The balance of the student population between the programs was viewed as an important factor to maintain strong teaching and learning environments within the school and to maintain supportive relationships between and among the students, staff and community.

Through the consultation process, the Working Group identified additional strategies that were suggested as a means to improve the balance of populations within schools and to address the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten within the French Immersion program in 2011:

- Expand the 'twinning' of schools, similar to that in place between Sherwood Park and Dorothy Lynas, to moderate the intake of Kindergarten students to help improve the balance between the French and English programs.
- Identify an appropriate additional Early French Immersion site that could accommodate the intake of Kindergarten students within the central area of the School District. An additional site would serve the dual purpose of improving the balance of student populations between the programs within dual-track schools and facilitating the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten in 2011.

### **Recommendation regarding the elementary French Immersion Program**

The recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education is to proceed with the elementary French Immersion program strategies identified within this report as priority considerations for further examination by the French Advisory Planning Committee, and that a report with recommended actions for consideration be provided to the Superintendent of Schools no later than November 1, 2010.

### **Moving Forward - Restructuring 2020 Planning**

The Restructuring 2010 Public Consultation has provided the opportunity for the North Vancouver School District to identify and plan for changes that will help preserve and protect quality public education for the benefit of our learners.

Restructuring 2010 has built upon the Budget Challenge 2010 process and extensive community engagement conducted by the Board of Education during the past seven years. The Board has consistently engaged its community partners to pro-actively and affirmatively respond to the challenges of declining enrolment, increasing surplus capacity, aging facilities, and the significant financial challenges resulting from changes introduced by the Ministry of Education.

Planning is done on a regular basis relating to: instructional practices, program development, budget planning, enrolment planning and catchment area reviews, capital plans and facilities, community development, joint use, transportation, community planning and partnerships. Although the Board has regularly involved its partner groups and the community in its planning, the long-term objectives and outcomes have not always been clearly articulated, and/or understood.

To increase certainty, stability and confidence for the future within our community, an integrated, long-term, sustainable plan should be developed.

### **Recommendation regarding future planning**

The recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education is to establish a **Restructuring 2020 Planning Committee** for the purposes of developing an integrated long-term plan for the North Vancouver School District. The *Restructuring 2020 Planning Committee* will include partner group representatives and will be established by June 15, 2010. A Final Report of the Restructuring 2010 Planning Committee will be provided to the Superintendent no later than February 28, 2011.