



THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE
REGINA SCHOOL DIVISION
NO. 4 OF SASKATCHEWAN

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RealRenewal
c/o Carla Beck
2277 Garnet Street
Regina SK S4T 3A1

Dear Ms. Beck:

The Regina Board of Education would like to thank your group for its presentation at two Renewal meetings. The presentations were informative and will be valuable in assisting the Board as it works toward making decisions regarding the 10-Year Renewal Plan.

Upon completion of the feedback meetings attended by Board members, the presentation information was reviewed and a general response was prepared to address the majority of the topics and questions raised at the meetings. A copy of that report is provided for your reference. A copy will also be posted on the Renewal website.

In addition, responses to the school-specific questions raised in your presentations will be forwarded to your attention in the near future.

On behalf of the Board of Education, I thank you for your participation in the renewal process.

Yours truly,

Debra G. Burnett
Deputy Director, Division Services;
Secretary-Treasurer

DGB:sjs
Enclosure



**REGINA
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**

February 19, 2008

As part of the Renewal feedback process, the Board attended meetings and accepted presentations at the five school locations affected by proposed changes within the first year of the 10-Year Renewal Plan. During these meetings, the Board received a variety of presentations and reports, including numerous questions.

Each of the following sections represents a theme of questions that were identified based on the presentations to the Board. Within each theme there is a Board response provided in italics. The themes are not listed in any particular order and, wherever possible, actual questions from presentations are used.

Plan Purpose

What are the guiding principles of the Renewal Plan? How will progress on these principles be measured?

The 10-Year Renewing Regina Public Schools Plan focuses on the indicators of quality education that have been recommended by parents, students, teachers, members of the public and identified educational research. These indicators support the continued development of safe and caring schools, increased emphasis on literacy and numeracy, meeting individual needs through equitable programs and facilities, and the provision of highly qualified teachers.

The Renewal process primarily focuses on educational needs by organizing students, staff and resources using Program Delivery Model guidelines; merging school communities to achieve the enrolment parameters in the Program Models; and directing the future facility capital improvement funding towards facilities involved in mergers. As a result of these proposed changes, fourteen school buildings may be retired, assessed for future uses, or otherwise sold. Controlling costs is an important part of school division operations. Ensuring a high standard of quality education for the benefit of students and Regina communities is of greater importance.

Program delivery model parameters are:

Elementary Programs (English and French Immersion) with core (kindergarten to Grade 8) enrolment of around 200-400 students for each program supported by 9 to 18 classroom teachers; 1 to 2 learning resource teachers/teacher librarians, 1.2 to 2.4 specialized program staff and 1 to 1.5 administrators. Research dictates that the lower range is more appropriate for programs that serve socially and economically disadvantaged populations.

Actual school building populations would vary depending upon additional programming within the school. This may include pre-kindergarten, special needs classes, on-site daycares, community organizations, and if there are both English and French Immersion programs in the same school building.

The proposed change at Wilfrid Walker was not based upon establishing a French Centre, but based upon addressing the English track enrollment that is projected to remain below the Program Delivery Model parameters. Merging the English program students with other local schools establishes program enrolments within the parameters, and results in a stand-alone French track, which also is maintained within the enrolment parameters.

A French Immersion programming Study has been undertaken to identify the opportunities and challenges associated with both types of programming. An interim report will be presented to the Board on March 4, 2008.

High Schools (Grade 9 – 12 enrolment of around 600-1000 students)

Actual school building populations would vary depending upon any additional programming within the school. This may include special needs classes, community organizations, and or additional programs such as night school. The lower range is considered for programs that serve socially and economically disadvantaged populations.

The Renewing Regina Public Schools Plan proposes mergers to create 18 new communities, 11 that will have significant facility redesigns – all featuring some level of building improvement. Facility condition, addressing deferred maintenance, and facility redesign are important components of the Board's Capital Strategy. They have, however, a secondary role in support of creating the appropriate teaching environments, through the program delivery model parameters, that will foster a high standard of quality learning.

Does the Board have performance plans, indicators and measures in place to assess the success of the Renewal Plan, and how does it plan to report to the public as the Plan proceeds?

*Regina Public Schools has developed a Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) as required by the Ministry of Education. It is based on key directions identified in the **RPS Strategic Plan** developed through significant public consultation and released in 2003. As part of its CIP, and as detailed in Chapter 2 of the Continuous Improvement Plan 2006-07: Planning for Student Success, Regina Public Schools has identified four priority areas. They include:*

- Higher Literacy and Achievement*
- Equitable Opportunities and Outcomes for All*
- Smooth Transitions into and through the System*
- Governance, Facilities and Accountability*

Find out more about Regina Public Schools' Continuous Improvement Plan at www.rbe.sk.ca.

Will class sizes be bigger?

There are no plans to change the staffing formula as part of the Renewal Process and, therefore, the average class size will not change. What may change is that an increased focus on small skill-based learning groups may result in more individual student-focused instruction. Efforts will be made to keep teachers with students, when possible, to ease the transitions for everyone - students, families and staff.

Questions on the Impact of School Closures on Fabric of Community

Changes have been necessary to address shifting demographics, as well as, ensuring a high quality of learning and instruction.

The historical policy framework for establishing schools was developed at a time when residential population densities were higher and any new neighbourhood development traditionally resulted in significant numbers of school-aged children.

In the past, neighbourhoods generated sufficient numbers of students to support learning and teaching from smaller, more local boundaries from which school communities traditionally developed. These school communities and the sense of the school's importance within its community continue to be of interest to the public.

The declining school and residential populations have dictated the need to extend beyond many of these "neighbourhood" boundaries to support school enrolment levels within the program delivery models. A significant concern with these changes is the perceived loss of community with the merger or closure of a school, not only for the students affected, but for the families and community members as well.

These changes do not occur without significant work among parents, community members, students and staff. For any merger or change situation, significant transition planning will occur including any community groups providing services in community schools.

In the future, aligning school attendance boundaries to support the educational Program Delivery Models, in addition to addressing issues such as transportation, will be important aspects of the decision-making process. School transportation alternatives will be considered, as well as the necessary school-based services required to create "community" as part of the Renewal Process.

RPS continues to work in concert with our Civic, Provincial and Community-based partners in their efforts to address the community and social needs of the citizens of Regina. The Board continues to exercise its authority under The Education Act, 1995 and its attendant Regulations, to implement provincial educational standards and policy to ensure a quality education for all.

Community School designations and supports will be maintained. Re-assignment of community school designations will be possible through program mergers.

General concerns about the “students’ ability to be accepted and adapt”

Regina Public Schools incorporates a number of initiatives at all of our schools to welcome students and to ease their transition in our school communities. This occurs for new students entering our system in the Pre-K and Kindergarten programs and for Grade 8 graduates who wish to explore one of our high school programs. Events such as open houses and welcoming week serve to introduce our high schools to elementary students. The Student Advisory Program at high schools helps to foster a closer relationship between teachers, students and their peers.

Regina Public Schools’ commitment to the Continuous Improvement Plan recognizes the importance of initiatives and programs that lead to smooth transitions into, through and out of the system.

“Inaction has impacted our community”

It was decided that no decision regarding Renewal would be made until the public consultation process had been completed and a plan presented to the Board for approval. Although it is not the intention of the Renewal Plan to disrupt the education process any more than necessary, there may be situations where, in the interests of student well-being and as a result of program changes, some students may have to move more than once.

RPS has always remained committed to ensuring a smooth transition for students, staff, parents and communities during past school and program mergers. Similar strategies will be implemented to work with all communities affected by change to provide assistance, wherever possible.

GENERAL QUESTIONS ON EDUCATION STANDARDS FOR OUR CHILDREN

The Renewal Plan is premised on Quality Learning, Quality Teaching, Quality Facilities and Choice. Program mergers have been established by focusing on education needs by organizing students, staff and resources using the program delivery model guidelines.

Please refer to the RPS website for a list of consultation activities and research that has been undertaken since 2005.

The 10-Year Renewal Plan merger activities will not result in programming reductions. Any program presently established as part of current operations will continue and will follow the students they support, wherever possible. Future programming changes will be as the result of new provincial and/or local policy direction.

GENERAL QUESTIONS ON POPULATION AND PROJECTIONS

Please refer to the Renewal Report, the Question and Answer Section on the www.renewRPS.rbe.sk.ca website and the School Profiles on the www.rbe.sk.ca website for information on enrolment projections. Projections are based on core K-12 enrolments as of the date identified in each report.

The Plan and the enrolment projections will be evaluated every two years.

Enrolment projections are based on actual and projected demographic trends and school enrolments differentiated by program and attendance area, not by student ethnicity, race or heritage.

Actual enrolment numbers in each of the merged programs will be dependant upon the choices parents make. Future changes in enrolment patterns, whether as a result of impacts or changes within the Plan, or the choices of parents/guardians, will be reviewed every two years as part of the Plan.

GENERAL QUESTIONS ON TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

RPS Transportation Procedure AP 570 is applied consistently across the Division. (Please refer to RPS website for a comprehensive list of all Procedures)

The safe and timely transportation of students to school is currently addressed within RPS Procedures. School bus routes are intended to safely transport students and address many of the concerns of the community they serve.

At present, students that are provided transportation according to procedure are returned from school approximately 10 minutes after they are dismissed or, at schools where there are double routes, some students leave one-half hour after dismissal.

According to current procedure, all Regina Public School students participating in after school activities are required to arrange for their own transportation home.

The Transportation Services Study is currently reviewing the Transportation Procedure to identify any necessary changes. All comments and questions arising from the stakeholder input process will be forwarded to the Committee reviewing transportation for its consideration. An interim report of the Committee will be provided to the Board on March 4, 2008

Each Regina public school that has students who are transported coordinates the space and supports necessary to ensure supervision over the lunch period. These efforts will continue to welcome and prepare for any additional students arriving at schools as a result of a merger. The Lunch Supervision Study is currently reviewing these activities on a system-wide basis and will be reported to the Board by March 4, 2008.

High School Transportation

At present, transportation is not provided for high school students with the exception of students with special needs and those that attend Cochrane High School, which is a school that services all of the City of Regina.

Many students use Regina Transit to get to school. In addition to their regular daily routes, Regina Transit has offered special chartered high school routes in some circumstances. These routes have traditionally been developed through discussions between the community and Regina Transit.

The Transportation Services Study is currently reviewing the Transportation Procedure to identify any necessary changes. All comments and questions arising from the stakeholder input process will be forwarded to the Committee reviewing transportation for its consideration. An interim report of the Committee will be provided to the Board on March 4, 2008

GENERAL QUESTIONS ON FINANCIAL CONCERNS

Schools are funded through provincial grants and the property tax base. Additional information on school funding can be obtained through the Ministry of Education website <http://www.learning.gov.sk.ca/EducationFinanceFacilities> or the City of Regina's Taxation Department. Provincial funding is principled on a per pupil basis. Property tax is assessed upon broad-based ownership of property in the school division.

By law, only homeowners/ratepayers of the Roman Catholic Faith may designate the education portion of their property taxes to the Separate School Division in Regina.

It is assumed that parents will continue to support their students' educational pursuits and that community-minded businesses will continue their involvement with the school division.

The Facilities Renewal Strategy has been aligned to support mergers within the Plan. Cost implications and/or savings realized are indicated in the Plan. Both costs and/or expenditures have been presented based upon 2006 figures. All assumptions will be updated as part of the Bi-Annual review of the Plan.

As of 2006, total deferred maintenance of Board Facilities is estimated to exceed \$122 million dollars. Please refer to the School Profiles on the www.rbe.sk.ca website for details.

Deferred maintenance costs have been determined through a combination of formal facility audits, compliance directives, and departmental evaluations and/or projections. Deferred maintenance costs are estimates for needed facility repairs. When a facility closes, its deferred maintenance costs are avoided as there is no longer a need to complete the repairs for a closed facility.

“Does the Board have an appraisal for the land value of the schools they propose to close? If so, what is the current appraisal?”

These discussions will occur on a case-by-case basis, timing to be based upon the implementation timeline of the Plan. Refer to the Question and Answer section on the www.renewRPS.rbe.sk.ca website for more information on this topic.

QUESTIONS ON OTHER PLAN DETAILS

“On what date will the results of the surveys that you are taking be made public?”

Survey information will be available no later than March 4, 2008.

“As you developed your proposal to close schools in Regina, did you consult with students? If not, why not? If so, how did you go about this consultation?”

Please refer to RPS website for a comprehensive list of consultation activities originating in 2005, including the involvement of students. Representatives from all high school Student Representative Councils were most recently consulted in February 2008.

RPS has always remained committed to ensuring a smooth transition for students, staff, parents and communities during past school and program mergers. Similar strategies along with supportive funding, will be provided to allow school communities to work together to create positive change.

Have you valued the historical significance of the school buildings that you are planning to close? Have you consulted with Heritage Regina about the closures and the future of these historic buildings?

These discussions will occur on a case-by-case basis.

Have you conducted an environmental impact study on the closure of schools including, among others concerns, the reliance of fossil fuels to transport children? If so, we would like to review that study as soon as possible.

The efficiency of RPS facilities and deferred maintenance initiatives are all considered as part of the overall capital renewal strategy.

Stakeholder input into the Transportation Services Study may identify reliance on fossil fuels as an issue in the provision of future transportation services.