



Renewing Regina Public Schools: Report on Phase 4 Consultations

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Executive Summary

This report concludes Phase 4 of the four-phase consultation process for Renewing Regina Public Schools, a process begun in 2006 by the Regina Public School Division (RPS).

In Phase 4, RPS presented a draft 10-year renewal plan for public feedback, based on consultation findings in the previous phases. The 10-year plan was posted on the RPS website and meetings were held with stakeholders.

The primary consultation initiative was a set of school-based meetings accompanied by a survey questionnaire; this initiative included the following components:

- A public meeting was held in each of the 57 elementary and secondary schools in the Division; the meetings were facilitated by members of the Division's senior management, and involved a presentation of the plan followed by a recorded feedback discussion with participants.
- A feedback survey was distributed at every meeting and also made available through the Internet.

The role of HJ Linnen Associates was to:

- attend the 57 meetings to assist in recording of discussion notes;
- maintain the feedback questionnaire website; and
- collect, analyze and report on the discussion notes and questionnaires that were collected through this round of consultation.

The detailed feedback: As with previous rounds of consultation in the Renewing Regina Public Schools process, Phase 4 consultation produced a large number and wide range of opinions and ideas. The report identifies five dominant categories of feedback, and more than 40 specific topics of comment that comprise those categories. In addition, to ensure that the Board can be fully aware of the full range of opinion, this report includes extensive appendices that contain the actual meeting notes and questionnaire comments received.

The primary conclusions: Three major findings emerge from the meeting and questionnaire feedback:

1. Support: Any plan that includes significant changes in the school system, especially if closures are included, is contentious. Nevertheless, there is clear overall support for the 10-year plan and the process under which it was developed.
2. Expectations: There is a high expectation that the plan will be implemented in a way that minimizes disruption to the programs, educational quality and positive school cultures that currently exist. This includes identification of many areas in which further information and consultation is anticipated as part of the immediate and long-term implementation.
3. Opposition: Parents in schools that face closure most often (though not always) demonstrate a very high and determined level of opposition to the closure of their particular school.

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Introduction and Background

This document is a report on Phase 4 of a Regina Public Schools public consultation program called Renewing Regina Public Schools. The phases of the consultation were intended to help the school division develop a long-term Renewal Plan to address three significant issues facing the school division:

- declining enrollment;
- deteriorating infrastructure; and
- available revenue.

A prior consultation program in 2005 did lead to a plan; however, the Board rescinded that plan prior to its implementation. The Board determined that a more extensive consultation and a stronger focus on the broader goals of the system were needed, prior to developing and approving a new plan for eventual implementation.

The new, four-phase consultation program that was adopted was based on stakeholder and professional advice the Board sought, and in general is founded on the principles of:

- taking more time for consultation;
- holding consultations in smaller groups for greater participation;
- moving through a series of consultation rounds – phases that begin with broader questions, and then move in clear steps toward more specific choices, and finally lead to the consideration of a formal renewal plan; and
- enhancing the consultation process with techniques such as consistent discussion guides, formal recording, questionnaires, online Internet support, feedback-of-the-feedback to participants, and an environment of broad public disclosure.

The consultation process was as follows:

Consultation Phases	Focus of Consultation	Outcome of Consultation	Next Step
<u>Phase 1</u> Ending in Jan. '07	Broad directions	Report identifies range of opinions and areas of priority	Develop options for program delivery
<u>Phase 2</u> March-April '07	Options for program delivery	Report recommends preferred option	Report to be taken for further consultation
<u>Phase 3</u> May-June '07	A recommended option for program delivery	Feedback to the Phase 2 Report	Draft a plan for Renewing Regina Public Schools
<u>Phase 4</u> Dec. '07 – Mar. '08	Proposed Renewal Plan	Report identifies public response to the proposed plan	Finalize and adopt a Renewal Plan

The intent of this report is to convey to the Board a fair representation and interpretation of the feedback received from Phase 4's 57 scheduled, school-based public meetings and their accompanying survey questionnaire.

Because it is important to the Board to have full access to ideas and opinions that emerged during the consultation, this report carries an extensive set of Appendices. The Appendices ensure the detailed record of the meetings and individual comments on questionnaires can be seen first-hand. The Appendices include:

- meeting notes as recorded during the session; and
- the write-in responses to open-ended questions on the questionnaire.

Numerical questionnaire data, along with summaries of meeting notes and questionnaire comments, are contained within the main body of this report.

Methodology for Consultation and Analysis

Consultation Methodology

The Board determined that the draft Renewal Plan should be made available on the Division's website, and then should be the focus of a series of discussion and feedback meetings, along with a questionnaire that would be available at meetings and through the Internet.

The draft Plan was made public at a School Board meeting in November 2007 and was immediately posted to the Regina Public Schools' website. This included a link to the online survey questionnaire website that was maintained by HJ Linnen Associates.

Public meetings began almost immediately and continued until the end of January, 2008. A total of 57 public meetings were scheduled – one in each of the Division's schools.

Each meeting was facilitated by a team of two management staff from the Division, with one acting as a presenter of the plan, and the other as facilitator of the feedback discussion. Each meeting followed a consistent, two-part agenda:

1. **Presentation:** a presentation describing the draft Renewal Plan. A scripted presentation was followed at the meetings, accompanied by PowerPoint audiovisual support, so that each meeting received the same introductory information.
2. **Feedback discussion:** a facilitated discussion. The feedback used a standard "guided conversation" methodology that Division personnel had previously adopted, received training in and used in other settings.

The guided conversation structured discussion around the following questions:

1. Are there any questions of clarification?
2. What was upsetting or concerns you?
3. What parts of the plan do you feel good about?
4. What impacts or implications will this plan have for students in this neighbourhood? Positive?
5. What impacts or implications will this plan have for students in this neighbourhood? Negative?
6. What impact or implications will this plan have for students in the City? Positive?
7. What impact or implications will this plan have for students in the City? Negative?
8. What parts look like they will work best?
9. What parts look like they will work the least?
10. What might you recommend, given what you have heard?

These questions served as a general guide. Discussions were also guided by the interests and intentions of the attendees, and the facilitators adapted the process to be most appropriate for each meeting environment as discussion occurred.

Notes of responses to each of the questions were publicly captured by a recorder, usually on a flip chart (and often in a notebook, depending on what was appropriate to the setting and the nature of discussion).

Recording was done by the meeting facilitator or assigned school staff, with the support of a representative from HJ Linnen Associates if required.

A representative from HJ Linnen Associates attended every meeting to observe, to assist in note-taking if required, to collect flip chart notes at the end of the meeting, and to distribute and collect questionnaires.

Analysis

Questionnaires were collected in paper form and through the online survey web site. The results were entered into a database for analysis. Numerical data was tabulated with standard research practice and software through HJ Linnen Associates research arm, Sigma Analytics. Write-in responses were entered in a database, then reviewed to identify emerging categories based on messages or comments that were identified on multiple occasions. These preliminary message categories were then grouped into larger, more general topic categories.

Meeting notes from every meeting were then reviewed and assessed to identify comments that fell into the categories and sub-categories generated from the survey, and to identify any new categories.

The result was a set of five major categories comprising approximately 40 sub-categories, which are presented in the “Feedback” section of this report.

Methodology Note

The questionnaire facet of this project was intended to gather and express the views of persons who participated in the consultation process.

The questionnaire was widely distributed and available to anyone who chose to respond at meetings, on the survey web site, or by submitting a paper form of the questionnaire to a school, to the Division office or to HJ Linnen Associates. The survey is therefore a census that accurately reflects the opinion of all those who chose to submit a response.

Objective of the Methodology

The objective of the meeting-and-questionnaire methodology is – consistent with the consultation principles established at the beginning of the Renewing Regina Public Schools process – to maximize opportunity for discussion and public feedback, particularly by taking the time for many small-group meetings that could reach the whole city in a representative way and could provide greater opportunity for attendance and participation.

The process also aims for openness through full reporting of findings.

The questionnaire methodology enriches feedback by providing a limited but valuable degree of quantifiable numbers to balance the fundamental, but necessarily subjective, qualitative nature of meetings and discussions. The survey also allows individuals who might not be able to attend a meeting – or who might not be willing to express themselves in a public forum – to access a more comfortable means of expressing their views.

The objective of HJ Linnen Associates in its analysis of the feedback is to:

- provide a full and fair representation of the feedback that was received;
- identify areas where there seems to be consensus around specific ideas, suggestions and concerns; and
- identify the degree to which there is a general public direction on the broad question of the plan's viability and support.

The consulting team's own analysis and conclusions are balanced by including in the Appendices the full written information collected from questionnaires and meetings – ensuring the Trustees full access to the detailed feedback received from all sources and events. This gives each participant the opportunity to have their individual voice communicated directly to Trustees.

Feedback

A total of 1,156 responses (824 electronic; 332 paper) were collected prior to the start of analysis on February 4, 2008. There were 57 scheduled school-based public meetings, of which 8 drew no attendees. The other meetings ranged in attendance from as low as one to as high as approximately 300.

The feedback in this section is reported in two parts: first, quantitative feedback based on the multiple choice questions in the survey; second, qualitative feedback combining the open-ended survey questions and the notes from the public meetings.

Quantitative Feedback: Survey Questions 1-4

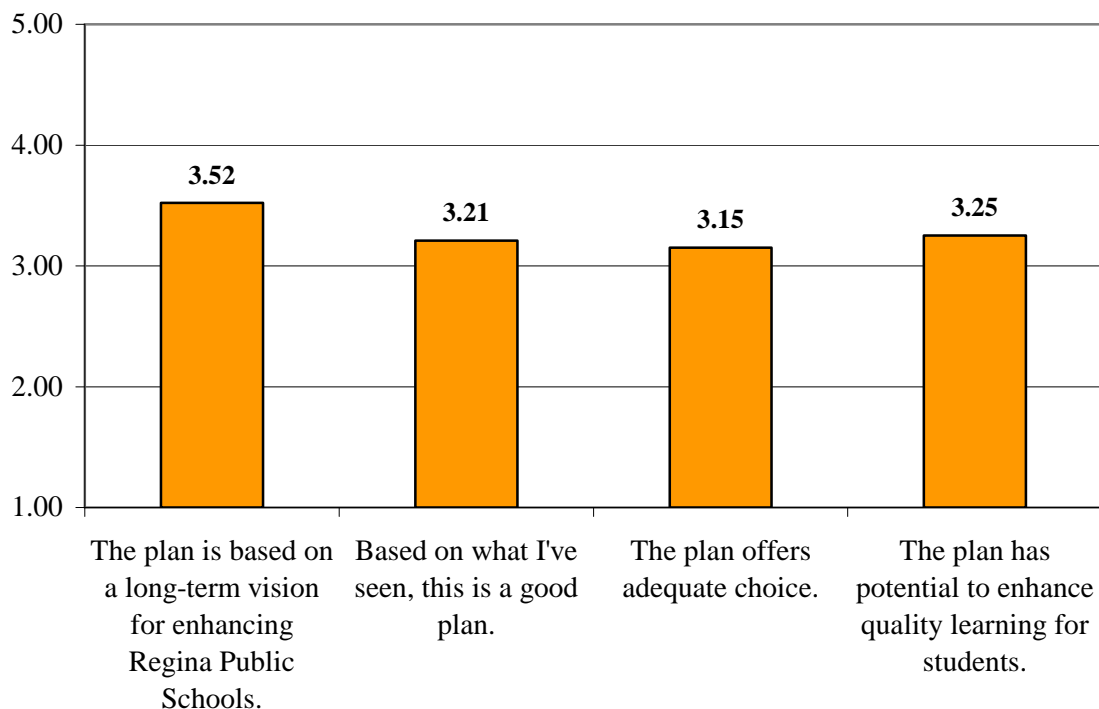
Survey questions #1 through #4 allowed numerical tabulation. The questions appear below, followed by a chart that reports the overall responses.

On a 1 to 5 scale where 1 is "Strongly Disagree" and 5 is "Strongly Agree", how would you agree or disagree with the following statements? (circle the appropriate number):

	Strongly <u>Disagree</u>				Strongly <u>Agree</u>
1. The plan is based on a long-term vision for enhancing Regina Public Schools.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Based on what I've seen, this is a good plan.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The plan offers adequate choice.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The plan has potential to enhance quality learning for students.	1	2	3	4	5

A mean response level was calculated, showing the overall level of support for each of these four questions. Since 3.0 is the mid-point on a 1-5 scale, a mean over 3.0 indicates overall agreement, and a mean of less than 3.0 indicates overall disagreement.

On a 1 to 5 scale where 1 is "Strongly disagree" and 5 is "Strongly agree",
how would you agree or disagree with the following statements?



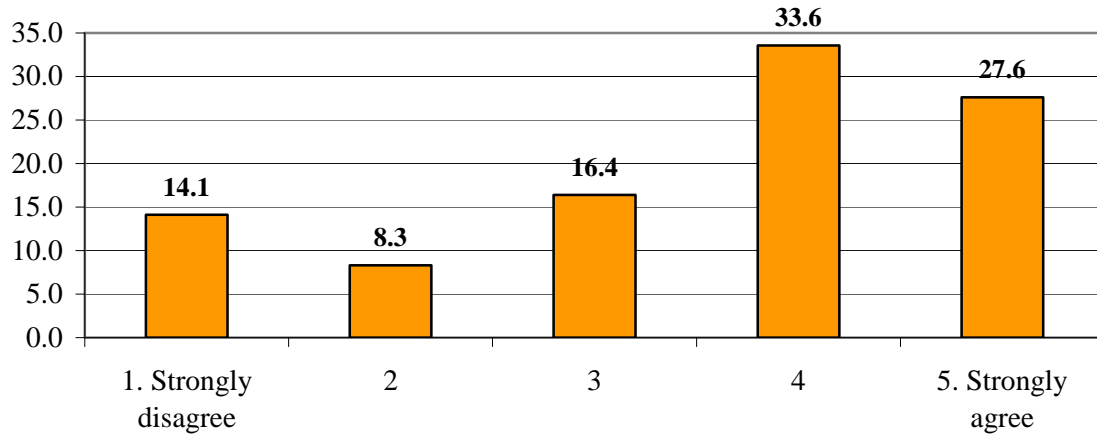
The chart above shows that on each factor the average response is positive.

The next four tables examine each of the four questions in turn, showing the range of response in each of the 1-to-5 selection choices.

These charts demonstrate the distribution of opinion at each point on the continuum from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." They also allow a comparison between the number of "1" and "2" responses (disagreement) with the number of "4" and "5" responses (agreement).

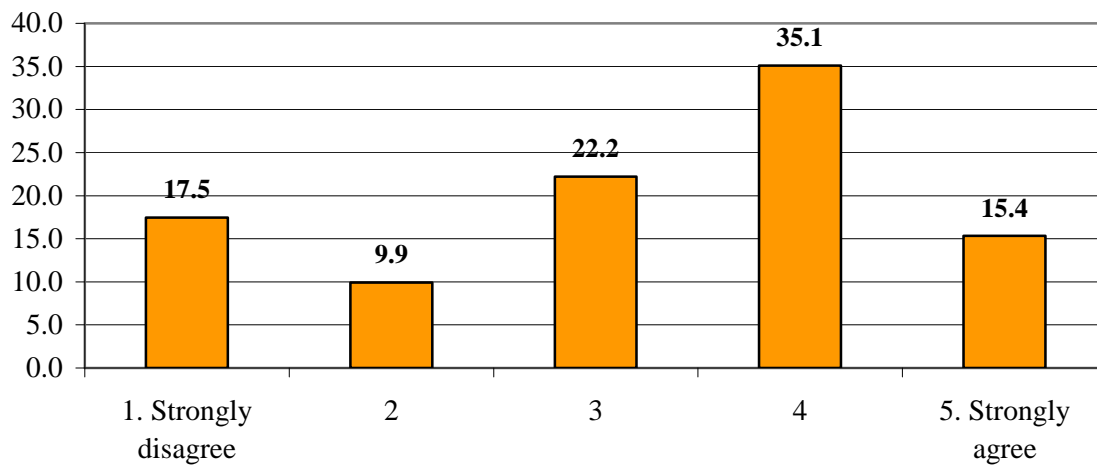
The plan is based on a long-term vision for enhancing Regina Public Schools.

Mean response level = 3.52

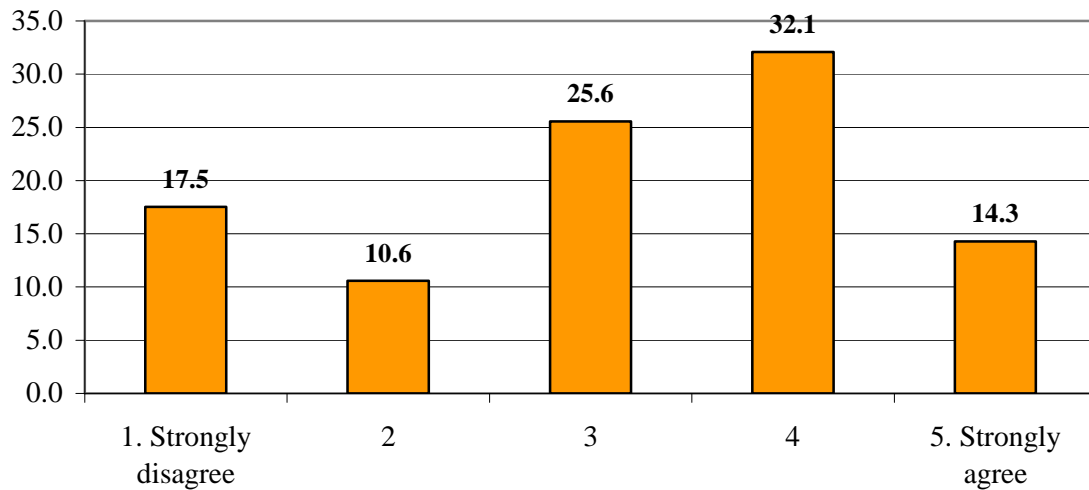


Based on what I've seen, this is a good plan.

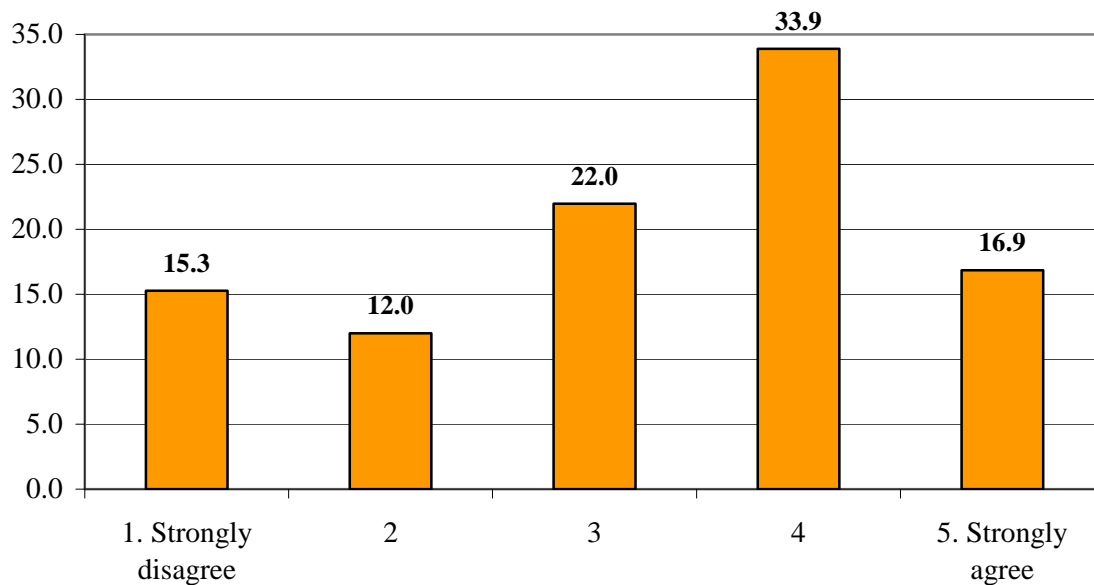
Mean response level = 3.21



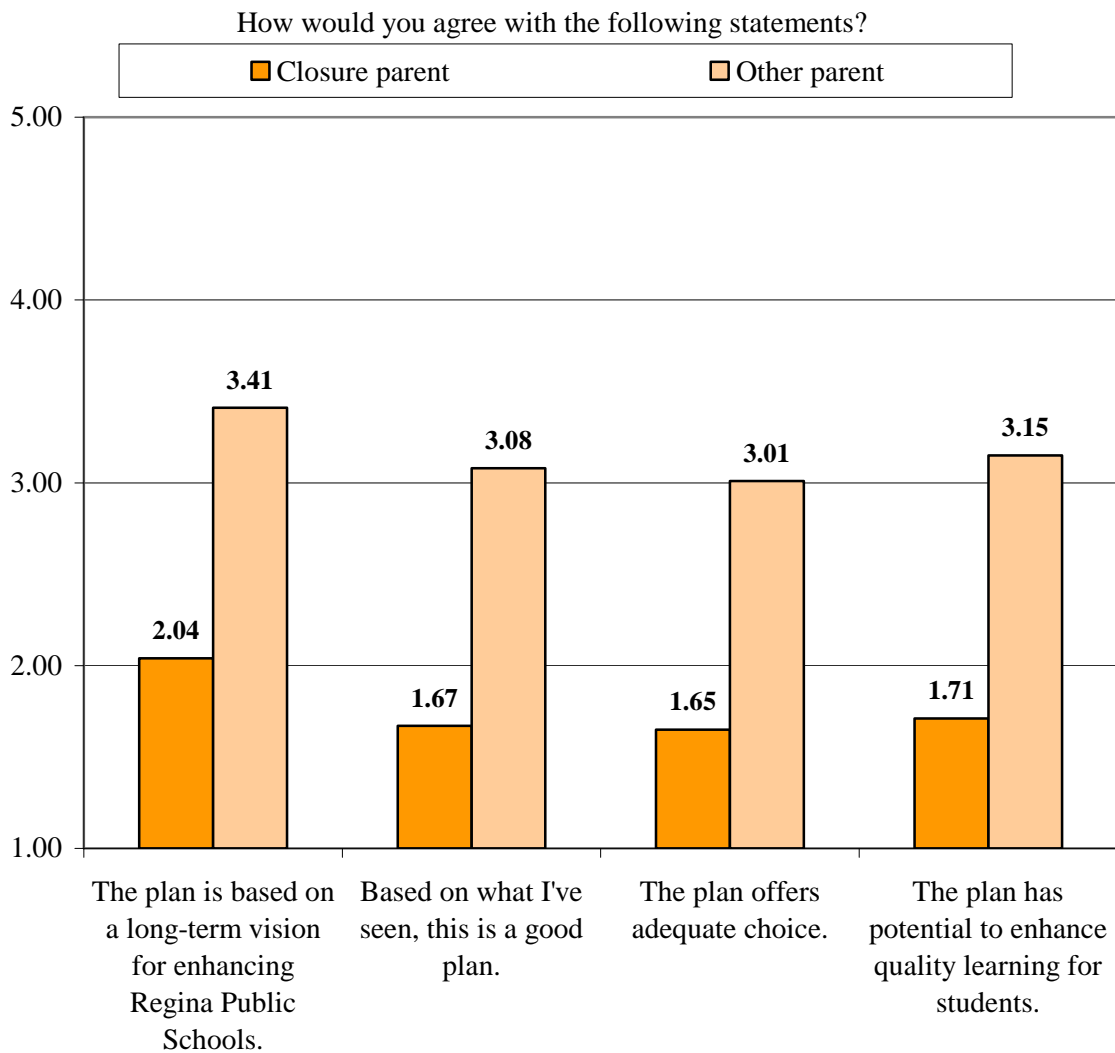
The plan offers adequate choice.
Mean response level = 3.15



The plan has potential to enhance quality learning for students.
Mean response level = 3.25



The table below shows the results for parents only, and compares the views of parents involved in three schools slated for closure (Usher; Herchmer; Russell) with the views of parents involved in other schools. The strong opposition from the closure group is apparent.



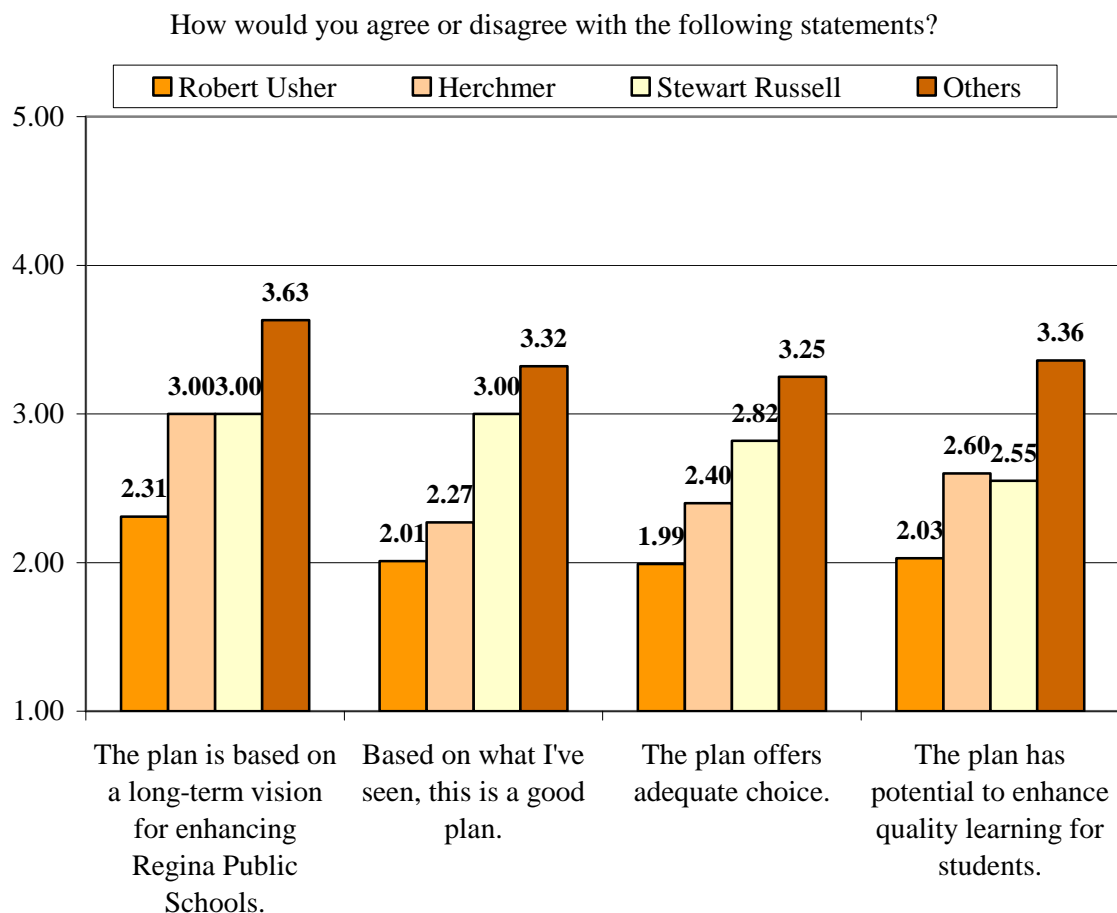
Schools facing most immediate impacts. As noted earlier, opinions across the city as a whole differed from the opinions of those in schools facing closure or major program change.

The next two charts compare general views with the views of respondents at schools with the most significant, immediate-term impacts:

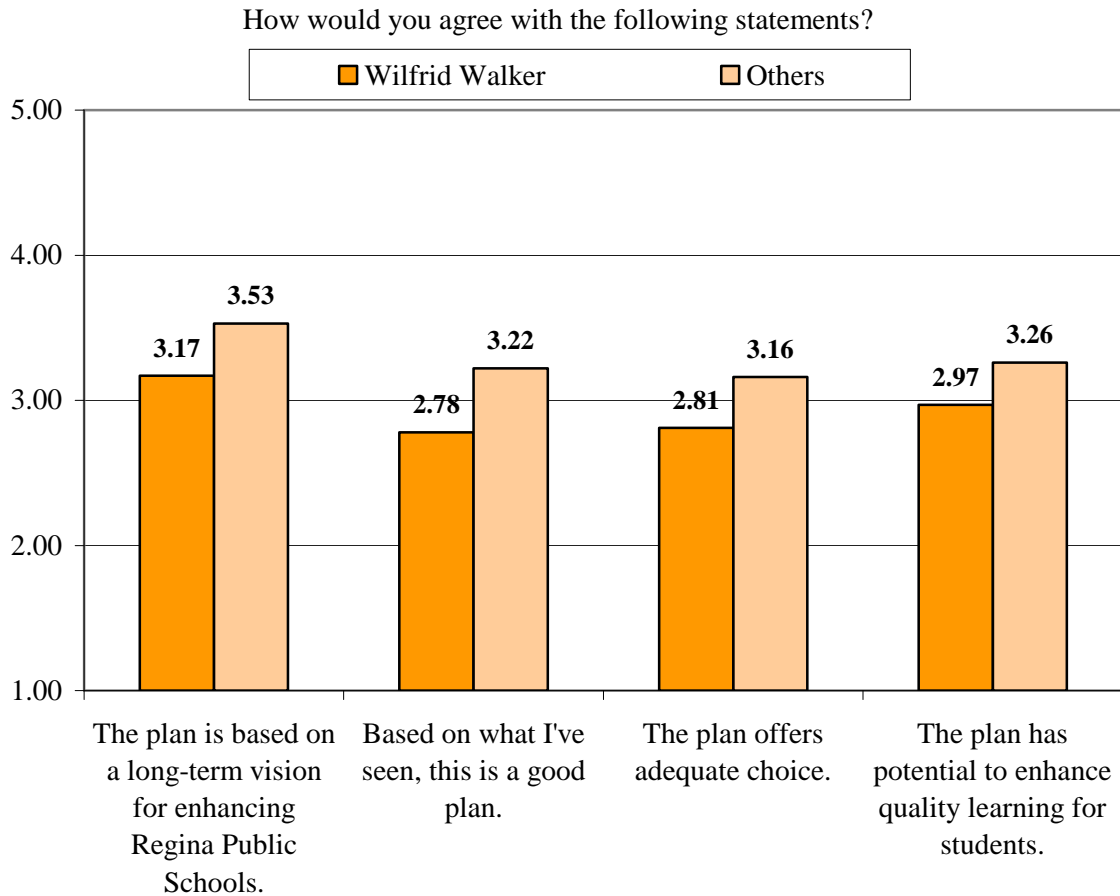
- The chart on this page relates to the three schools facing closure soonest (Robert Usher, Herchmer and Stewart Russell).
- The chart on the next page relates to the school that faces the soonest major program change (Wilfrid Walker).

In the chart below relating to closure, opposition varies – very strong among Robert Usher responses, mixed but generally opposed among Herchmer parent responses, and mixed/slightly opposed among Stewart Russell responses.

79 respondents indicated they were from Robert Usher, 15 respondents indicated they were from Herchmer, and 11 respondents indicated they were from Stewart Russell.

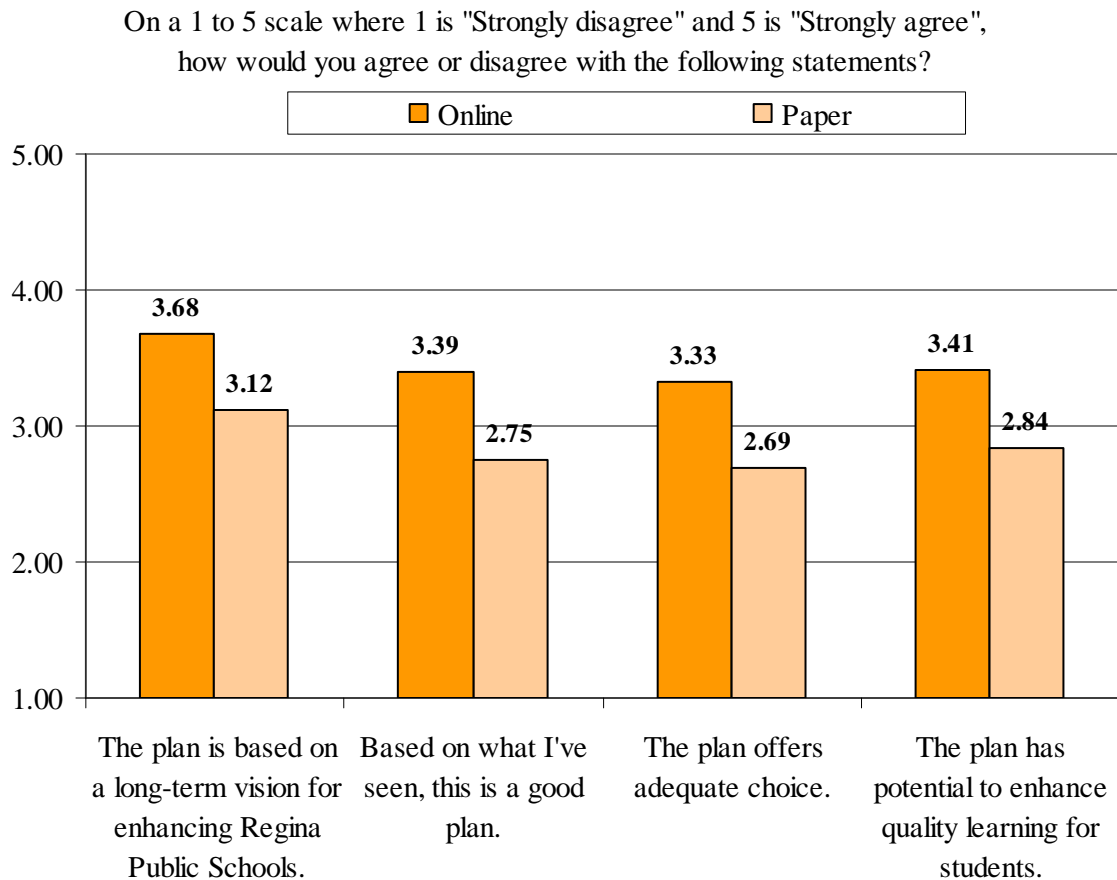


The table below relates to Wilfrid Walker, whose English attendance area is proposed to combine with Wilfred Hunt. The French Immersion program is proposed to remain at Wilfrid Walker as the school becomes a French Centre. A total of 38 respondents indicated they were from Wilfrid Walker.



Comparison of paper and electronic responses: The table below shows the comparison, indicating higher agreement with the plan among those who responded to the electronic surveys versus those who chose paper surveys.

The electronic forms tended to come from a wider range of areas of the city, while the paper surveys were more likely to come from meetings held at schools facing potential closure.



Qualitative Feedback: Meeting Discussions and Survey Questions 5 and 6

As indicated in the “Methodology” section, the discussion meetings involved conversations guided by a series of questions that began with clarification about the plan, and moved on to concerns and impacts, and finally to recommendations.

The questionnaire form necessarily presented a simpler, shorter format for the same general purpose, asking respondents to write answers to the following two questions:

-
5. Are there any important changes that would make the plan better?
 6. Do you have any other comments?
-

Through a process of page-by-page review of questionnaires and meeting notes, the analysis team distilled the thousands of individual comments into a series of categories and sub-categories. Each sub-category captures a concern, opinion or idea that is noteworthy because it surfaced on repeated occasions.

The table below captures these items. Each set of sub-categories is listed in order of frequency of citations, from highest to lowest, to help provide a further sense of priority. (Even though professionally approached by an analysis team that attended all the meetings, the process of categorization and allocation of numbers involves a level of subjectivity. The team’s goal was to present a fair, accurate and actionable summary of the notes and write-in comments. For comparison purposes, this report includes the actual meeting notes and written survey response in the Appendices.)

Topic
1-PROCEED
Follow through with plan
Closures need to happen
Redesigns/facility upgrades are good
Process needs to be quicker; plan needs to implement faster
French Centres are good
2-DON'T PROCEED
Keep schools open
Put plan on hold

Topic
3-COMMENTS ABOUT OUTCOMES OF THE PLAN
Need small class sizes/Maintain student:teacher ratio
Concerns about transportation
Concerns about impact on communities
Improve and protect specialized programs/staffing
Need to create/maintain sense of community
Concerns about boundaries
Need improved quality/more equity
Concerns about additional costs
Change is difficult/stressful for students
Why are some older buildings being kept while newer buildings are being closed?
Will kids get "lost" in larger schools?
Concern of ill-will/violence between kids in merged schools
Difficult to adapt to extra-curricular activities at new schools because of distance/transportation
Property values will be adversely affected
Do not agree with French Centres
Difficult for kids to make school teams in large schools
Pre-schools will be adversely affected
4-COMMENTS ABOUT THE WAY THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED OR PRESENTED
Long-term planning, regular reviews and consultation process are good
Concern about accuracy of demographic projections; consider new housing and migration from Alberta
Do not list schools slated for closure in long-term/Concerns of "self-fulfilling prophecy"
Need improved information from administration
Plan needs more choice/flexibility
More information needed on French Immersion
More information for schools not closing
Do not look only at money
Use local consultants or experts only

5-MISCELLANEOUS RECOMMENDATIONS
Make sure schools with increased students have adequate facilities/resources/programs
Need to plan for transition
Consider different merger options
Don't let school closures take away from importance of plan / Show the benefits of the plan
Do not put high school in SE
After closure, don't lose facilities/services/playgrounds
Need improved Aboriginal studies/focus on Aboriginal students
Consider creating a junior high
Create a super elementary school
After closure, don't lose school-business partnerships
Argyle, Athabasca and Lakeview parents should consult jointly on a new facility

The topics listed below were not mentioned frequently enough to create a category, or were specific to only one meeting:

- Will some schools become too big?
- Why not move ESL programs to Milliken?
- Turn school into a recreation centre
- Timing of change for Grade 11
- There is more choice available in the plan
- Some prefer dual-track, and some French Centres; we like having the choice
- Show costs of the status quo
- Set English closure date for Massey, then grandfather students
- Schools should be wheelchair accessible
- Rebuild Rosemont, turn Martin into junior high
- Protect community school funding
- Promote SchoolPLUS (schools as community centres)
- Preserve "Hawks Nest" at Herchmer
- Prefer a new building to redesign
- Plan allows more resources for individual schools
- Peer/Community review
- Obesity - no exercise walking to school
- No other facility for recreation in this area
- Need high school in the South East
- More people should attend meetings
- Make it a 10 year rolling plan
- We will lose the Usher choir
- Look at building utilization rates before deciding to close
- Transported children can't go home at lunch to look after younger siblings
- Is parent participation less in bigger schools?
- Impact on musical band membership?

- Immersion will be stronger with the new plan
- How to care for kids during renovation of a building?
- What are environmental/health impacts of transportation?
- English parents want to keep Massey as is
- Dual track schools are better
- Don't want a new facility or school
- Davin and Connaught have heritage and other value
- Consider transporting Bo Peep daycare students to Dieppe
- Concern that both high school and elementary schools are closing in same area
- Concern over English moving out
- Can't find professional bus drivers

Overall direction of meetings: The analysts assessed meeting notes, including their own on-site observations of the discussion and tone of each meeting, and allocated the meetings into four types of direction. Two of the directions are supportive towards the plan, and two are negative. The table below shows the four directions, and indicates the percentage of meetings that fell into each type:

Overall Direction of the Meeting	Number of Meetings	Percentage of Meetings
SUPPORTIVE DIRECTIONS		
The overall plan is sound and should be implemented	20	40%
Implementation must take account of a number of concerns, issues and priorities	19	38%
NON-SUPPORTIVE DIRECTIONS		
The overall plan is unsound and should not be implemented	4	8%
The primary issue is opposition to closure or major change at my specific school	7	14%

The table above reinforces two fundamental observations:

- Support for the plan is general across the city, except in schools facing potential closure, in which case opposition to that school closure in particular is often very strong.
- Support is not given in an unthinking way. For a great many, support carries with it a number of expectations for minimizing negative impacts and protecting current programs and services.

Other Observations

The analysis team noted a number of other observations from the meetings and written materials. These are listed here in no particular order.

- **Comparison of meetings and questionnaires**

A meeting tended to be better attended when that particular school was facing possible closure or other change. The closure situation created strong emotions in the affected schools, and those particular school meetings tended to set a tone that resisted change, supported the status quo, and criticized the long-term plan.

Questionnaires, on the other hand, reflected a wider diversity of schools and areas of the city, and were, in general, more positive – by and large endorsing the plan and encouraging early implementation. This was true with electronic questionnaires, but even in schools where the predominant speakers were opposed to the plan, the written questionnaires were less strident and indicated some support for the plan, even within schools facing amalgamation and possible closure.

- **The challenge of contradictions**

Observing 50 meetings provides some insight into the contradictions that face a school division and make policy decisions difficult. The following contradictions surfaced regularly:

- Change and choice versus resistance and status quo

The first round of consultations – seeking ideas for desired change in the school system – produced a wealth of ideas and a high level of expectations for the school board to do things in better and more innovative ways.

It was remarkable to the observers that when a plan was developed that undertook changes to the system to achieve those higher goals, the first response of many – even those in support of the plan – is to approach any change with a great deal of caution.

Change is desired to happen quickly in the abstract, but as change draws nearer people begin expecting the school board to invest in a significant amount of consultation, production of research and evidence, and distribution of information and public education prior to implementation. This may be interpreted as a constant balance between public expectation to show action, and at the same time to ensure that action does not get too far ahead of public understanding.

- What makes for good education

Parents are protective of their schools, and that can rightly be interpreted as a positive endorsement of schools. Nevertheless, the Board faces many contradictory arguments related to what things need protection.

Repeatedly, the same meetings that argued to retain a school on grounds that changes, closures and busing are negative, also argued that it is acceptable to protect their school by changing other school programs, closing other schools and busing in those students.

- The desire for planning versus skepticism towards any plan

A long-range plan was one of the key expectations identified in previous rounds of consultation, and was frequently cited as a positive development in Phase 4.

Nevertheless, participants at meetings exhaustively questioned the demographic, financial and educational research on which the plan was based.

Again, an observer concludes that these consultations have indicated the importance of the Board establishing and sharing a high standard of research and background knowledge for all of its planning.

- A desire for education quality versus a focus on facilities

In Phase 1, participants focused overwhelmingly on upgrading the quality of the classroom experience. Virtually no reference was made to the number of school buildings as an important goal.

As soon as a closure of any school building becomes part of an education plan, however, public discussion in the affected school area quickly refocuses on protection of the facility.

This is hardly surprising, but it does indicate that a mandate for quality education will often be reduced in public discussion to a focus on buildings and locations. The nature of this puts extreme pressure on the Division to demonstrate that facility changes are not the end in themselves, but only occur when they can contribute to a better quality of education system.

- **The responsiveness of the process to previous recommendations**

Because the Board directed a consultation program that developed through several phases, the Board was able to respond to feedback as it developed. It was clear in Phase 4 that the Board had adjusted many of its approaches as a result of what it had learned from previous phases.

It was also repeatedly made clear in meetings that many parents have recognized the extent the Board has responded to the expressed need for more information, more research and more long-term planning. There were many remarks favourable to the process and, by implication, favourable to a consultative, evidence-based relationship between the Board and parents in the future.

There is a risk of a public focus on closures

Because closure is an important, personal and emotional issue, the topic elevates parent participation in those schools, and therefore increases news coverage and a public focus on that part of the plan. While the 10-year plan is not primarily focused on closure, those schools facing closure see it differently. For them, closure is the dominant, and perhaps only, issue.

In fairness to parents across the city, the Board should also know that participants at several meetings expressed the concern school closures might create a kind of

emotional drama that would lead the news media to focus on that one issue. The resulting media pressure on the Board, many fear, could undermine a plan that parents at most schools endorse.

There is a Need to Remember the Implications of the Status Quo

It was apparent to the analysis team that discussions in many meetings focused on what changes might occur if the plan was adopted, but few questions were raised about the implications of maintaining the status quo. This situation was to be expected, perhaps, because the meetings were not designed to promote the plan, but simply to present it, answer questions and gather feedback.

Nevertheless, it was the observers' opinion that everyone is well served by continuing to be aware that avoiding change is itself a choice fraught with implications.

Conclusions

Summary

Three major findings emerge from the meeting and questionnaire feedback:

- **Support:** Any plan that includes significant changes in the school system and facilities can be expected to be contentious. Nevertheless, there is overall support for the 10-year plan and the process under which it was developed.
- **Expectations:** There is a high expectation that the plan will be implemented in a way that minimizes disruption to the programs, educational quality and positive school cultures that currently exist. This includes identification of many areas in which further information and consultation is anticipated as part of the immediate and long-term implementation.
- **Opposition:** Parents in schools that face closure most often (though not always) demonstrate a very high, determined and deeply felt level of opposition to the closure of their particular school.

These findings are discussed in more detail below.

Overall Endorsement Exists, but Varies Depending on Individual School Impact

The unanimous view of the analyst team – having attended every meeting and reviewed the meeting notes and survey questionnaires – is that the draft Renewing Regina Public Schools plan has the overall endorsement of those consulted. This is not to imply that the plan is accepted without any concerns, or that significant issues don't exist. Nevertheless, looking at the full sweep of meetings and written responses, general support dominates.

Besides the data and information collected, the team also read and heard a recurring theme of appreciation for the greater consultation and increased amount of information provided by the Board during the planning process. Participants frequently expressed appreciation for the fact that a long-range plan had finally been developed.

While opinions vary widely on any specific item in the plan, there is significant public controversy on only one component of the report, and that is the closure of certain schools. Strong disagreement with the closure of one's own school is clearly evident. It is important not to downplay the opposition to closures or the difficulty faced by Trustees in taking leadership decisions in these difficult environments.

Nevertheless, the only fair way to interpret the meetings and questionnaires is that participants across the city generally accept that limiting the number of facilities is a necessary component of achieving a stronger overall education system. It is clear that no one wants closures to affect their own school, but the majority accept that some closures are necessary as long as closures are part of larger plan in which resources are directed into a better education system.

To what extent do these findings reflect City residents outside the school system? This consultation was based on meetings and questionnaires dominated by parents and educators. The Board will be aware that something in the range of 70% of ratepayers they serve are neither educators nor parents of students in the system. Based on the

nature of the 50 meetings, it would be fair to say that the general public would show endorsement of the plan, but this is something the Board may wish to confirm through other research.

Endorsement of the Plan Includes Expectations for Implementation

While the overall direction of opinion is to implement the plan, this endorsement is not given lightly. Participants in the consultation have high expectations for how the implementation should be done. These expectations can be expressed as follows:

- **Make transitions smooth wherever programs or schools are changing.**

One recurring message is to facilitate positive transitions to new schools. For example, parents frequently ask the Board to do all it can to make transportation fast and accessible, to keep teacher-student groups together, and to quickly integrate both students and parents into new school environments.

Consultation involving parents of amalgamating schools or programs will have to be a priority and will have to be tailored to each setting. For example, parents in the Athabasca-Argyle-Lakeview areas indicate a strong interest in ensuring that talks about new facilities involve parents from all three schools consulting jointly as a single group.

- **Protect current programs.**

A repeated message from participants across the city is that special programs of all sorts need to be maintained and enhanced. There is an expectation that the Board will provide more information about how services and quality will be maintained, further consultation where changes may occur, and a clear explanation of how programs will be protected and improved.

- **Continue to pursue research, information and consultation**

An example is the matter of French Immersion and French Centres, where parents are clearly split on which is preferred. While many like the anticipated learning advantages of French Centres, not all agree. And English-stream parents in the Wilfrid Walker and Massey dual-track schools express opposition to losing what they see as many benefits of their current “bi-cultural” schools. More information is required for parents to feel comfortable with the final direction.

Transportation, demographics and other examples of topics where more information is being requested can be drawn from the table of messages in the “Feedback” section.