

SHAPING OUR FUTURE

A Discussion Paper on the Values, Beliefs & Services of Public Education in the Saanich School District

Over the years the Saanich School Board has established a number of core values and beliefs that guide its decisions on programs, services and budget. In October 2006 the Board created a Commission on Public Education to seek input on those values, beliefs and services.

To support the Commission's work, we invite you to read this paper and provide feedback on those values and beliefs and what you think is important for the future of public education. The information received will help the Board set goals and make policy and budget decisions that reflect the public's expectations.

The Commission on Public Education

Who is on the Commission? The Commission is made up of three Trustees, the Superintendent of Schools and a respected member of the community.

What will it do? The Commission will host public forums and meet with community members from November 2006 through January 2007 to get feedback and guidance on the Board's beliefs and the directions the Board should take in the future.

How can I get involved? Forum events and meetings will be open to the public. People are also invited to review this Response Paper and provide feedback via the district website, by email, by phone or by mail. The website response options include an online survey.

Why should I participate? You will have the chance to influence the direction of public education in the Saanich School District.

How will the Board use this feedback? Feedback will be used to shape the directions, policies and budgets of the school district for years to come.

Our Questions

Through meetings, forums and survey feedback, the Board will be looking for answers to the following five questions:

1. To what extent do you share the Board's publicly declared values and beliefs as listed in this paper?
2. How important are the programs and services offered by the Board in support of those values and beliefs?
3. What guidance would you give the Board as it makes plans for maintaining and enhancing programs and services into the future?
4. What guidance would you give the Board as it faces funding shortfalls, which, due to costs that increase more rapidly than funding, range from \$1 million to \$2 million per year on a \$55 million budget?
5. What other advice or feedback can you offer the Board as the trustees continue in their efforts to meet the needs of children and reflect the wishes of the community?

The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy.

- Mandate for the B.C. School System

CORE VALUES The following five core values provide the ethical foundation for the Board and for the school district.

Compassion - being sympathetic and helpful, **Fairness** - being just and impartial,
Honesty - being truthful and sincere, **Responsibility** - being reliable and accountable,
Respect - being considerate and appreciative

Beliefs

Board decisions and the organization of the school district are founded on the following beliefs.

1. We believe that public education is fundamental to our democratic society and is a key institution which provides equal opportunity for all children. Public schools have the responsibility to prepare young people as citizens contributing to a cohesive, socially responsible society.
2. We believe that public education is the responsibility of the whole community, and that policy decisions made locally by elected school boards and provincially by government reflect community values and aspirations.
3. We believe that healthy relationships are the foundation of a successful public education system.

Programs, Services and Strategies

The following programs, services and strategies support our beliefs.

In support of belief #1, that public education is fundamental to our democratic society, we:

- a) Recognize that the learner is at the centre of public education by:
 - Believing that all children are learners.
 - Making decisions based on the Principles of Learning.
 - Making decisions based on the Principles of Inclusive Schools.
 - Investing a larger percentage of our budget on the classroom in comparison to the provincial average in order to keep classes as small as possible.
- b) Offer learners a broad-based education which includes aesthetic, artistic, cultural, emotional, social, intellectual, academic, physical and vocational

development in order that they can find and follow their hopes, dreams and passions. We do this by:

- Offering a full range of programs K-12 in every school to ensure that the needs of all children are met.
- Paying particular attention to children who have the greatest needs and challenges (behavioural, emotional, intellectual, medical, physical, social).
- Focusing on literacy and early success in elementary schools.
- Supporting middle schools and their focus on developmental needs of adolescents.
- Providing learners with a wide range of opportunities in secondary schools to prepare them for life beyond grade 12.

- Supporting the needs of First Nations learners in partnership with families and First Nations communities.
 - Supporting fine arts and physical, social and emotional health for all learners as important components of public education.
- c) Nurture and value critical thinking so that learners are equipped to be reflective and analytical global citizens by:
 - Providing opportunities for learners, from an early age, to evaluate information in order to form opinions and understand the world around them.
 - Teaching learners to be critical consumers of electronic information.
 - Encouraging and supporting learners as active citizens through their participation in school and community events.
 - d) Respect, encourage and foster each learner's role as a full participant, together with others in the educational community, in developing her or his own goals and learning experiences by:
 - Supporting learners in making wise and responsible decisions.
 - Supporting learners in making safe and healthy choices.
 - Supporting learners in developing goals and experiences that suit their learning styles and needs.
 - Providing the option for learners, supported by their parents, to register in flexible programs in neighbourhood schools and through Individual Learning Centres and the South Island Distance Education School.

e) Create an environment in which each learner can reach his or her greatest potential, each learning style is affirmed and the achievements of each learner are measured and assessed accordingly by:

- Respecting and supporting the professional judgment of teachers including in the collaborative development of high quality assessments in the areas of reading, writing, numeracy and social responsibility.
- Celebrating a broad range of achievements for all learners, both in the schools and at the district level through scholarships and other acknowledgements.
- Administering provincial assessments thoroughly and fairly, with high levels of success for our learners.

f) Provide a safe and respectful environment for life-long learning which celebrates diversity, embraces the physical, spiritual, emotional and intellectual integrity of each individual, recognizes and acknowledges differences and prevents discrimination in all of its forms by:

- Ensuring our schools are safe, attractive, clean and healthy places of learning.
- Operating the district and all schools within policies and codes of conduct/citizenship that describe expectations and standards.
- Deeply embedding in our schools supports for positive, socially responsible behaviour by being committed to processes of restitution, restorative justice, student leadership, strong communication with parents and connections with our wider community.
- Providing subsidized, safe bus transportation to and from school for those families that want and need this service.
- Honouring and celebrating diversity through classroom activities, school-wide events and connections with community.

In support of belief #2, that public education is the responsibility of the whole community, we:

- a) Design and provide educational programs that reflect the aspirations of the local community.
- b) Support the involvement of parents in their child's education because parent involvement is a key component of student achievement and success.
- c) Ensure that our communication and consultation strategies engage our communities by:
 - Hosting community consultations on issues of importance to the school district and community.
 - Including participation of partner groups in the Education Directions Committee and Budget Advisory Committee.
 - Hosting an annual meeting of Parent Advisory Councils.
 - Supporting regular meetings of all School Planning Councils to discuss priorities for the district.
 - Supporting school plans, school visits and district reviews.
 - Distributing an information booklet to all households every summer.
 - Providing a district website that includes important and timely information, as well as the means to communicate with the Board of School Trustees.
- d) Advocate for adequate funding and ensure fiscally responsible spending of government funding and revenues generated by the district by:
 - Regularly meeting with local MLAs.
 - Regularly informing government of our challenges, needs and successes, including the submission of a needs budget.
 - Participating in and making presentations to government's standing committees including the Select Standing Committee on the Provincial Budget.

Principles of Learning

Learning requires the active participation of the learner

Learning is an individual and a social process

Learning occurs in varying ways and at different rates

Principles of Inclusive Schools

- Inclusive schools acknowledge the uniqueness and enhance the dignity and self-respect of all students.
- The inclusive environment is flexible, providing for age-appropriate placement in neighbourhood schools.
- In inclusive schools, educators seek to understand and support the diverse learning needs of all students.
- The practice of inclusion transcends the idea of physical location and supports learning in a variety of settings.
- Inclusion requires a flexible learning environment wherein curriculum adaptations and modifications are assumed, thus ensuring curriculum relevance and accessibility for all students.
- Inclusive schools promote collaborative consultation with parents and all educational partners.
- Inclusive schools honour and celebrate the diversity that exists in the school community.

- Cooperating with other districts and other agencies to share services and reduce costs.
- Committing to open, honest and transparent budget processes including 3-year budget planning.

In support of belief #3, that healthy relationships are the foundation of a successful public education system, we:

- a) Demonstrate and model mutual respect and foster positive relationships including respect for the voices of students by:
- Developing and maintaining respectful working relationships with the Saanich Indian School Board and local First Nations communities.
 - Developing and maintaining respectful working relationships with the Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils of Saanich, and each school's Parent Advisory Council,

School Planning Council and staff.

- Encouraging and supporting student voice through student council and student leadership initiatives.
 - Providing programs and strategies that support cooperation among students, including peer counseling and student ambassadors.
- b) Recognize that the Saanich School District is known to have a positive employee culture, one where staff have the skills, knowledge and tools to do their work at the highest possible level by:
- Developing and maintaining a positive working relationship with the Saanich Teachers' Association, the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 441 and the Saanich Administrators' Association.
 - Supporting professional growth opportunities for all staff.
 - Investing in relationships to ensure that every employee feels valued and respected.

"As a community we promise to prepare learners for a socially responsible life in a free and democratic society, to participate in a world which each generation will shape and build. We promise a public education system which provides learners with knowledge and wisdom, protects and nurtures their natural joy of learning, encourages them to become persons of character, strength and integrity, infuses them with hope and with spirit, and guides them to resolute and thoughtful action."

- B.C.'s Charter
for Public Education, 2003



For information or to comment

Attend one of our public forums:

Tuesday, November 14
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
Parkland Secondary School
10640 McDonald Park Road, Sidney

Wednesday, November 15
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
Bayside Middle School
1101 Newton Place, Brentwood Bay

Thursday, November 16
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
Claremont Secondary School
4980 Wesley Road, Saanich

Visit our web site at: www.sd63.bc.ca and complete the on-line survey

Email us at: publiccommission@sd63.bc.ca • Phone: 652-7332

Write to: Commission on Public Education, Saanich School District, 2125 Keating Cross Road, Saanichton, B.C. V8M 2A5

Invite us to make a presentation to your group or organization by calling 652-7332.