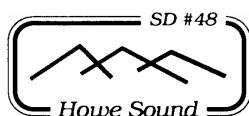


“Dialogues on the Future”



Introduction

In the spring of 2006, the Board of School Trustees passed a resolution to review the Vision and Mission statements for Howe Sound School District. This decision was based on several factors. There had not been a review for a number of years and, in those intervening years, the school district had experienced a number of changes.

The process selected included a series of small focus meetings throughout the school district with as wide a range of participant representation as possible. An additional key element in the process was the intention to develop a set of Core Values which would serve as the foundation for the Vision and Mission statements. Following the meetings, the results would be collated and a DRAFT of the vision, mission statement and core values would be developed. These would then be circulated for comment to a broader audience. Following this step, the vision, mission and core values would be discussed and approved by the Board of Trustees. Following approval, a policy, procedures and programs review will take place in order to ensure that these are true to the vision, mission and values.

Dialogues on the Future

Seven dialogues, or meetings, were held in each of the three communities of Pemberton, Whistler and Squamish between October 16 and 19, 2006. There was good representation from the district's various communities in attendance.

The first step of the dialogues was to consider the school district as a learning organization. After some discussion and agreement on this concept, the participants then moved to sharing their thoughts on the following questions.

- Core Values – What core values provide the most support for the school district to become the best possible learning organization?
- Vision – What few words, based on the core values, best expresses the dream of the perfect learning organization?
- Mission – How can the vision, based on the core values, become reality for the school district?

The Concept of a Learning Organization

If questions are posed about an administrative organization, the values or principles that emerge will probably focus on efficient delivery of services, prudent fiscal management, good labour relations, etc. All of these are important values for the management of the school district. But, these kinds of values are really only a means to an end – to support the learning community in its operations.

There are different values when one focuses on learners. Values such as respecting the diverse needs of learners or equity of access for all learners are more likely to emerge. When one thinks

of the district as a learning organization, then one's thinking moves to a higher level, that of the learner and of supporting learners.

This concept of a LEARNING ORGANIZATION is based on the work of Peter Senge. In his book, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (1990), he states that learning organizations are:

...organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together. (1990:3)

Peter Senge believes that, today and in the future, the organizations that will truly excel will be the ones that discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization. He also believes that everyone associated with the learning organization is a learner.

The Outcomes

As the participants in each of the seven meetings discussed their thoughts on values, vision and mission, notes were kept and later merged into one set of documents. It is noteworthy that there was a high degree of consistency in the results of all the meetings.

Below are drafts of this work. There are three possibilities identified for the vision and mission. Every attempt has been made to capture the spirit and intent of the dialogues for these.

One draft is presented for the core values. Every value expressed by the participants has been included. The challenge was to organize them into coherent groupings.

Draft Vision

The vision for Howe Sound School District unites people towards an ideal purpose and provides a sense of the future. The vision for School District No. 48 (Howe Sound) is:

To create a learning organization where all learners are passionate about learning.

OR

To create a learning organization where all learners have an optimistic vision of the future and where each can be successful in attaining their goals.

OR

To create a learning organization where all learners are empowered to achieve their personal best.

Draft Mission

The mission statement for Howe Sound School District provides a unifying description of the school district's key purposes. The mission for School District No. 48 (Howe Sound) is as follows.

School District No. 48 (Howe Sound) is a dynamic and diverse learning organization whose mission is to challenge all learners in imagining their future and reaching their potential as citizens in a global world.

OR

School District No. 48 (Howe Sound) is a special place where all learners are challenged to live their dreams and reach their potential.

OR

School District No. 48 (Howe Sound) is committed to the development of a learning organization where the needs of all learners are respected and met in their journey to future success.

Draft Core Values

The core values for Howe Sound School District express our beliefs, what we stand for and how we will conduct ourselves. They underpin our policies, objectives, procedures and strategies because they provide an anchor and a reference point for all activities.

In School District #48 (Howe Sound) we believe in:

Successful Performance

Performance takes many forms, but at its heart, it is the desire for all learners to successfully achieve their potential. We believe that all learners should have their own individual vision for the future and be aware of challenging possibilities. To support successful performance, we believe that there must be choices, flexibility, equity of access for all programs and awareness of different learning and developmental needs.

Respect for Diversity

There are as many aspects of diversity as the mind can imagine. This is especially true in this school district with its different communities, its First Nations peoples, its multicultural representation, and its varied geography. We believe that these diversities should be respected through programs and services which value the diversity of our families, communities and cultures.

Engagement and Mentoring

Engagement has two facets: individual and community. We believe that all learners should be actively engaged in their own learning and should take responsibility for their involvement in learning. Learners should also be engaged in the community as learners. Opportunities to support one another through mentoring and personal coaching are integral to this engagement. The foundations of such engagement are trustful relationships and honest dialogue.

Citizenship and Social Responsibility

Learners should be empowered to be active participants in our democratic society. We believe that tolerance and respect for all people and cultures should be fostered through ethical and moral development. All are responsible for developing and supporting a safe environment in schools and the community. When a person acts against the community, programs which help develop responsibility and accountability such as restorative justice and restitution should support the individual's personal growth.

Connections and Cooperation

There are many types of connections in the school district. First is the connection among all the learners within the schools and district. Second is the connection within the larger education system with its transitions from early childhood education to adult programs. Third is the connection to the larger community. We believe that these connections should be enhanced and celebrated through teamwork and cooperation.

Preparation for the Future

The future is from this day forward. In preparing for the future, we believe that all learners should have critical thinking and decision making skills. They should have a commitment to lifelong learning and a capacity to adapt to change. They should be prepared to be citizens of the global world with respect for a sustainable environment and for all cultures.

The Next Steps

The Board of School Trustees invites feedback and comment from members of the district and its communities on these draft visions, missions and core values. From this, a revised document will be presented to the Board of School Trustees for discussion and adoption.

Respectfully submitted by
Dallas Cristofoli
Educational Consultant
October 24, 2006