

Inspiring Hearts and Minds: CRPS Futures Planning Process

Overview of Input for Phase 3

Initial Strategic Directions

CONTENT AREAS OF PHASE 3 DISCUSSIONS

Community Connections	Strategic directions 1 - 4
Program Delivery	Strategic directions 5 - 8
Learning Content and Assessment	Strategic directions 9 - 12
Learning Places	Strategic directions 13 - 16
Role of the Teacher	Strategic directions 17 - 20

1. Community Connections

One of the two strongest over-arching directions identified in the Futures Planning process, this area emphasizes the development of partnership development and linkages between public schools, families, local organizations and the community as a whole. The purpose of these networks and partnerships is to support a wide array of learning experiences for both K-12 students and the wider community, and the sharing of resources, expertise and venues for learning. As expressed in the Phase 3: Banff Community Forum, an overarching theme of CRPS can be described as "community involvement in education for the entire community". Within this area, it is important to assess and allow schools and community partners to each focus on contributing what it is that they do best.

Strategic Direction 1:

Develop 'community schools' that are the physical hub of learning in the community

The concept of a 'community school' views schools as the physical 'hub' of learning in the community, integrating educational delivery with such services as daycare, parent development centres, before/after school care, medical and mental health services, social services/agencies, adult learning etc. This concept maximizes partnerships with community agencies and services, connects learners of all ages, and allows for efficient and effective use of a community learning space at a time when student enrollment is declining. Community groups might utilize the space of schools, allowing opportunities for students to become involved in and learn from their activities (e.g. drama clubs, senior's activities). In other cases, a worker/coordinator from community service agencies could be located in the school building.

Strategic Direction 2:***Structure learning opportunities within the community setting through the support of skilled community resource people***

Create cooperative linkages between public schools and the local community by bringing skilled community resource people into the classroom to share 'real-world' knowledge (arts, music, life-skills, trades, health sciences, journalism, environment, etc), and structuring opportunities for students to apply their new knowledge back in the community setting through a project that they spearhead. Community resource people augment the curriculum in a way that provides connection to the 'real-world' and reflects the values/attributes of the community we live in. Students, in turn, can apply their learning in a 'hands-on' way that develops their passion or area of interest, and encourages them to actively participate in community affairs.

Strategic Direction 3:***Develop local programs that engage students in work experience and work-related skill development***

A need for an expanded set of student learning opportunities that provide relevant work experience and training has been clearly expressed. These programs could span apprenticeship, business skills development, mentorship opportunities, work/study programs, etc. This kind of learning opportunity can be best gained through cooperative community programs (e.g. Partners in Education)

Strategic Direction 4:***Educate and involve parents and businesses about 'whole child education'***

Build a foundation of understanding in the community about the philosophy and main goal of CRPS – whole child education. Clarity and consistency of this message is important, and should form the context for all communications and public engagement.

Community outreach would focus on both the scope of educational content (i.e. not just academic achievement), and the process of public education itself.

2. Program Delivery

This area considers new ways to think about delivering education within CRPS that expands the traditional notion of classroom to include different modes of and venues for learning, and allowing students more choice in identifying what delivery methods work best for their needs. Flexibility is a key concept in future CRPS education planning in relation to schedules, options, use of technology in learning, and pacing education to meet the needs of the children.

Strategic Direction 5:***Broaden the range of program opportunities to meet the needs of all students***

There is a need for creating a stronger balance between academic achievement and other kinds of knowledge and skill development, such as arts, trades, entrepreneurship, personal and social development, etc. To achieve this, CRPS must broaden the variety of programs to enhance engagement of students across the spectrum of personal strengths, interests and life goals. Courses could be interest-based, rather than age-based, or could integrate secondary and post-secondary content and credits.

Strategic Direction 6:***Use student-based methods to focus learning on the needs of the individual and enhance student engagement***

Develop and implement alternate methods of program delivery that are student-based, allow student choice, and encourage student's taking responsibility for and ownership of their learning. Such methods must place the student at the centre of learning and consider the variety of learning needs and styles – the teacher becomes a facilitator of the learning experience. The goal is to engage students in their chosen program of study in a way that promotes love of learning, class enrichment, experiential learning and participation.

Strategic Direction 7:***Flexibility in program scheduling to maximize learning opportunities and support of student needs***

A flexible schedule should consider optimum combinations of the school day, school terms and school year in order to maximize community-based learning opportunities and partnerships, and better meet the needs of students (e.g. work experience and extra-curricular activities for credit, home situation, life balance, energy maintenance, support for participation in the arts and sports).

Strategic Direction 8:***Flexibility in program delivery methods to maximize use of space, technology and resources, and support of student needs***

Flexible program delivery methods includes creative ways of using technology to link students within and between classrooms in the Bow Valley; support for independent and self-directed learning; community-based learning opportunities; enhancing opportunities for language learning; and recognizing and enhancing cross-curricular connections through deeper learning experiences (e.g. project-based learning). Key aspects of flexibility of program delivery are the recognition of credits for non-traditional

approaches, and the recognition of current constraints relating to the provincial curriculum (both content and volume of information).

3. Learning Content and Assessment

The important messages in this area relate to orienting both learning content and ways of assessing learning to achieve the goal of whole child education. This includes learning content that provides a solid foundation of core subjects (math, literacy, science, social, etc), and yet goes beyond to focus on the development of personal and social development, life skills and balance, work-related skills and community involvement. The range of options for assessing learning must reflect the diversity and the strengths of the students, and the range of programs available.

Strategic Direction 9:

Create curriculum (learning content) that is meaningful and relevant for 'whole child education'

This entails a review of the provincial curriculum to determine content gaps, curriculum connections and areas of focus in relation to whole child education. Local curriculum delivery can then be tailored to offer and measure the range of qualities and content required for whole child education.

Strategic Direction 10:

Assess the individual student's strengths, and measure both the content and process of whole child education

There is a need to determine what success looks like on a social, emotional, spiritual, physical and cognitive level. School, family and community partners/agencies can be involved in determining indicators or performance measures that reflect the range of qualities and skills required in developing the whole child. A key aspect of this direction is the assessment of learning based on the needs and strengths of the individual student, rather than assessing strictly on academic marks and achievement test results.

Strategic Direction 11:

Focus learning content and assessment on applied learning

Through programs such as work experience, apprenticeship and experiential learning, students can apply the curriculum content to real-world situations. This approach then demands creative ways of assessing both learning content and process that can measure the range of qualities and skills required. Key to this is the involvement of both schools and community partners in evaluating educational delivery and learning.

Strategic Direction 12:***Reduce the amount and scope of learning content to achieve more depth of learning***

The amount of material in the curriculum at present, and the pace at which it must be taught, is highly challenging for both students and teachers. The intent is to focus or reduce the amount of content, and slow learning down to allow for adequate reflection and deeper learning. In each grade, students and teachers can work together to determine a plan for learning that reflect the individual needs. Self-paced learning, inquiry-based learning, experiential learning and creative/strategic use of technology can all help to engage students in the curriculum in a more relevant way and deepen learning.

4. Learning Places

Learning places need to move beyond the traditional physical classroom to encompass the larger community and environment in which we live in the Bow Valley. The content and processes for whole child development can be supported by a diversity of learning spaces and modes, which include community venues, remote learning, field trips and outdoor excursions, learning from home, etc. Technology is a key tool for students and teachers in expanding access to information, learning networks and virtual classrooms.

Strategic Direction 13:***Move students out into the community for real-world learning experiences***

Through school-community partnerships, students can engage in learning programs that take place in the community setting, including local businesses, studios, camps, etc. This approach views the whole community as a learning place, which opens up many opportunities beyond the traditional school classroom and promotes community involvement by students.

Strategic Direction 14:***Deliver educational programs within and about the natural environment of the Bow Valley***

Utilize the landscape of the Bow Valley as an outdoor classroom to increase understanding and appreciation of the natural environment, and to build a sense of place and an ethic of stewardship in students. Outdoor learning spaces are ideal for outdoor and environmental education program delivery, and can also be used as a stimulating setting for any subject matter. Outdoor excursions should be progressively longer and more involved in the Bow Valley schools throughout grades K through 12.

Strategic Direction 15:***Use technology to bring the world into the classroom and the classroom to the world***

Technology can connect students within the Bow Valley schools and to outside sources through video conferencing and remote learning, providing opportunities for both community connections and independent learning. Use of technology needs to be managed in a way that promotes social interaction, rather than detracting from it. Through technology, content can be brought to the classroom and accessed for teacher-led or self-directed learning.

Strategic Direction 16:***Use of school facilities to bring types of education together***

Community-based education services can become more integrated when housed in the same physical building(s). School buildings and infrastructure can be used by both students and others in the community as a venue for learning and meeting. Integration of education services allows students access to diverse learning opportunities and age blending. Examples: Bow Valley College, Day Care and Preschool

5. Role of Teachers

To support whole child development, the role of the teacher needs to shift further to one of facilitator and provider of learning opportunities. This has implications for both the student-teacher relationship and the role of family/community in educating the child – as both require evolving toward a collaborative partnership model. Teachers need ongoing support in their own learning community, based on an approach of 'whole teacher development', in order to develop the skills required for applying new approaches to teaching.

Strategic Direction 17:***Support and develop teachers as facilitators of learning***

The role of teachers is shifting to one of facilitator of self-directed learning rather than content-expert and 'dispenser' of knowledge. This new approach is compatible with whole child development as it shifts the responsibility for learning to the student, and allows for more freedom to integrate the curriculum with individual needs. Teachers are expected to provide leadership for students in developing personal learning strategies, use of technology for learning, access to community-based sources and venues for learning, facilitating peer-to-peer learning between students, etc.

Strategic Direction 18:***Foster parents and community members as co-teachers***

In moving to a community-based model for public education, parents and community members become instrumental in their own role as 'teachers'. To function effectively in this role, parents and community members require the necessary skills and support, and need to be integrated into the educational delivery process. An important challenge is to determine clear boundaries between the responsibilities of teachers and the responsibilities of family and community in educating children about important life skills, social interactions, discipline, work ethic, etc.

Strategic Direction 19:***Support the ongoing personal and professional development of teachers in their own learning community***

To parallel the concept of whole child development, whole teacher development requires full support for the personal and professional growth of teachers. This involves identifying the key qualities and skills necessary, role shifts, and different considerations for teaching of the whole child. Teachers need to be supported as mastery learners in community with other teachers (open to feedback, reflect on own teaching, have mentors, collaboration, sharing best practice). Teacher support and development is reflected in such things as: performance management, honoring new ideas and creativity, engaging teachers in program and policy development, and effective communications.

Strategic Direction 20:***Focus on enhancing and strengthening the student-teacher relationship***

The student-teacher relationship is a critical dynamic in successful teaching and learning. Allowing time for teachers to spend one-on-one with students is a prime ingredient in relationship building. To build and strengthen this relationship, teachers could stay with students for a longer time period (e.g. 2-3 years), or focus their interaction with students only in certain subjects, in a way that draws upon the teachers specific interests, skills and passion. In this way, teachers and students form a solid working relationship based on the individual needs and strengths of each.