



A Discussion Paper

“Communities That Work”

In Search of
the York Region District School Board’s
Role in Community Development

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Preface

The authors of this report hope that as you read this discussion paper, you will keep in mind some questions:

- How do you feel about the research findings?
- Do the findings reflect your reality/experience?
- What did we get right/wrong?
- What is missing?
- Which recommendations are most important?
- Are there other recommendations you would suggest?
- Is there anything you would add or delete from the “Communities That Work” list in Appendix D?

We would be happy to receive any feedback on these questions.

Sometime after the Quest for Communities That Work Conference (November, 2005) we will explore ways that ongoing discussions can occur around the Board’s commitment to community development. The objective will be to foster dialogue at both the system and school level that will help inform the development of the Board’s philosophy on its role in community development.

These ongoing discussions will also:

- Test the findings of this preliminary review.
- Provide further direction to the Board on what next-steps should be taken in the coordination of community development activities and portfolios.
- Provide input into the vision-setting around communities that work as well as the Board’s role in community capacity building.
- Identify the obstacles and perceived needs in training and professional development.
- Identify and share examples of successful school-community relations.

Glossary of Working Definitions

The term 'community' is used in many ways in this discussion paper. Below are definitions that explain understandings underlying the various uses:

Community

In the broadest sense, the term 'community' could refer to any collectivity to which people feel part of or connected to. In this discussion paper the term 'community' refers to the geographic area served by a particular school or by the Board itself.

Community Involvement

Includes any form of participation by either a school or the Board in a process, activity, or event that sees people from a school or the School Board interact directly with members of the community towards the attainment of some mutually beneficial objective(s) which are **not** solely focused on school improvement.

Community Development

Occurs when a school or the School Board provides resources – space, money, personnel, or training - for community-based activities; advocates for increased resourcing of the Region's services; or assists in strengthening local human resources through training or professional development.

Community Capacity Building

Capacity-building occurs when schools or the School Board provide, or arrange for the provision of, training for staff of local service agencies and/or government departments.

Connectivity

There is an unlimited variety of ways in which schools and the School Board come into contact with the community. Any form of contact – from general communications emanating from schools and the School board to formal, long-term partnerships requiring financial resourcing and staffing – are included in the broad term, ‘connectivity.’

Partnership

Partnership is a sub-set of ‘connectivity’ that refers to those community connections requiring a more formalized form of contact. Partnership can be seen when a school or the Board enters into a formal arrangement with a local service agency, government department, business or individual through which programs are run collectively or by a community partner for the benefit of students, parents or YRDSB staff. Partnership can also be seen in the ongoing commitment of Board personnel to committees, processes and organizations that aim to support the community development process.

“... schools must improve education for all children, but schools cannot do this alone. More will be accomplished if schools, families, and communities work together to promote successful students.” (Joyce Epstein)

Introduction

Throughout the 2004-05 school year research was undertaken into the various ways that both YRDSB schools and system are connected to community. The term ‘community’ was to be seen to include the following:

- Parent and family
- Service agencies
- Government departments
- Key individuals
- Other aspects and members of the community

The research was timely for several reasons. First, a major focus is being placed on the community strand of the Board Plan in 2005-06. Second, the YRDSB’s annual Quest Conference in November, 2005 was going to focus on ‘communities that work.’ Third, as an increasing number of YRDSB staff were seeing the theme of community involvement emerge as a significant aspect of their portfolio many felt that a snapshot was needed of the various ways the YRDSB was working with and for the community. Finally, there was an emerging consensus among Board staff working in the community arena that clearer understandings were needed around what ‘communities that work’ look like and what role the Board should play in the community development process.

With this in mind, the research was undertaken with the following objectives:

- Produce a snapshot/inventory of what types of community involvement were operating within the Board.
- Highlight what is working well in the Board, at both the system and school level.
- Identify obstacles to effective Board-community involvement.
- Suggest revision to the Parent and Community Involvement strand of the Board’s plan for continuous improvement.
- Develop a draft policy or discussion paper on Board-community involvement.

- Develop a draft framework for ‘communities that work.’
- Present key findings at the *Quest for Communities That Work Conference* (November, 2005).

“Those who desire improvement in classroom learning must realize and acknowledge that school reform, especially when it focuses on disadvantaged students, cannot easily succeed if it ignores the circumstances of their out-of-school lives. They spend most of their time beyond the schoolhouse walls, and, even inside the school, their learning bears the indelible stamp of outside influences. Improving educational outcomes for students in need requires more than attending to academic content and standards. The conditions of the neighbourhoods that so much affect their ability to prosper as students also must be considered.” (Gene Maeroff)

Methodology/Process

Eleven (11) one-on-one interviews were conducted with Board staff and two focus groups were conducted with seventeen (17) school Principals at both secondary and elementary levels. Several participants also provided written submissions. *(Copies of the interview and focus group protocols are included as Appendices A and B)*

Participants were selected based on the following criteria:

- People working at the system level who worked directly with community-based agencies, businesses and individuals that deliver services to students and/or parents.
- School Principals who had a track record of facilitating linkages between the school and community that went beyond the parent or family.

Other input was gathered during a meeting of a committee of Superintendents charged with reviewing the Parent and Community Strand of the Board Plan.

Data was also reviewed from other community-oriented research being conducted within the Board and in the wider community, including:

- Story of the North (YRDSB)
- Road to Inclusivity Initiative (Region of York)
- Georgina Multisector (Multiple agencies)
- Together for Maple (Multiple agencies)

- Community Vitality Survey Process (Performance-Plus, YRDSB)
- School Council Annual Report (YRDSB)

The researchers would like to thank all participants for engaging in frank and open discussion about the role of the Board and schools in the community development process.

“The ‘out there’ is now in here, in your face. ... it is an essential aspect of achieving success (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998). The time for keeping the outside world at bay has passed. Since the ‘out there’ is going to get you anyway, and since if you withdraw from it will get you on its own terms, we concluded that ‘the best way to deal with what’s “out there” is ‘to move toward danger’ (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998, p. 67). In this argument, schools need the outside to get the job done. The ideas are out there as I have just argued; so are the partnerships required to mobilize technical and political forces for reform.” (Michael Fullan)

Executive Summary

A system review undertaken during the 2004-2005 school year indicates that:

- There is a wide range of community involvement activities occurring at both the Board and school levels.
- While most system staff felt confident that the Board has expanded school involvement activities, Principals were less sure.
- All participants demonstrated a clear understanding of the Board’s commitment to Literacy.
- Concerns were expressed by both system staff and Principals that the Board sends out mixed messages about the purpose of community involvement as it relates to student learning.
- There is a strong feeling that increased coordination of community involvement, as articulated by the various staff who have community as part of their work portfolio, is warranted.
- Generally, Principals felt that the system lacks sufficient flexibility to respond to the needs of school-based partnerships.
- Many definitions of ‘communities that work’ exist, but some common aspects include citizen interdependence, good access to a variety of

services that support community development, and opportunities to meet the needs of people from various backgrounds and with different life goals/pathways.

- Increasing pressure is being placed on school boards and schools to provide a broad range of services to children, families and the community in general.
- The school board's core business should include community capacity building/community involvement.
- The YRDSB's commitment to community involvement looks significantly different at the elementary and secondary levels.
- While the school board and schools may act as one of the 'hubs' of the community, neither should attempt to be the major service provider to children, families or the community. Instead, both should work in partnership with community-based service agencies, government departments, businesses and key individuals to facilitate service access and provision.
- The absence of a clear Board message on, and/or support for, community involvement may decrease consistency and accountability in this area.

Major Conclusions

1. There is a sense of urgency for developing a common philosophy and understanding of community involvement.
2. There is a need for coordination of effort and training to support this philosophy.

“Collaborative schools, like all interactive organizations, learn to make their way in difficult terrain. In fact, because they are collaborative internally, they are actually better at their work, know more, can explain themselves better and consequently have greater confidence in dealing with the outside. ... The research on internally collaborative schools consistently shows that these schools engage the outside in their quest for continuous improvement. They do this in at least two ways: one involves political and moral mobilization; the other pertains to better knowledge and program creation.” (Michael Fullan)

Key Findings

1. Understanding the Need for School-based Community Involvement

A large and increasing amount of community-oriented work is occurring at both the system and school level. Those with community portfolios are passionate about the need for the Board to forge strong links with communities for everyone's benefit. The Board has many strong advocates for the notion that a school plays a pivotal role in the health and vitality of the community.

All of those interviewed felt that the community piece was a key part of the Board's 'core business.' While acknowledging that schools should not try to be all things to all people, Principals spoke passionately about the need to make community involvement a priority. The following comments are typical of the positions taken by those interviewed:

"Is it really our business to build on existing capacities in students, families and communities? Sure it is. I mean, if schools are about lifelong learning and education is about empowerment, then you have to be building on, and expanding into, other areas of a student's life, including what's happening in the community. How could you not be?"

"What is it that we stand for as educators? I think our role is to identify the issue that is facing a child, school or community at any given point. If we want families to support our schools we had better tailor our programs to the interests and needs of the community members."

"I understand we have a literacy focus and I support that, but there are some kids who aren't going to be available to receive the literacy piece. I absolutely agree with Bill when he says we are the educators and it's the academic piece that we bring to the table. But what about those kids who have blocks to academic success, things that go beyond our abilities as educators?"

(For a description of the kinds of community involvement interviewees felt should be part of the 'core business' of school boards and schools see Appendix C)

2. Board Commitment to Community Involvement

Most Board staff feel confident that people working at both the system level and in schools have become more committed to effective community involvement over the past five years. All of those who expressed this view said that the main factor in moving the Board in this direction was excellent leadership at the

highest levels. Many examples of system and school leaders playing leading roles in community partnerships were cited.

The following comments indicate how people working at the system level felt about the progress being made by the Board in its commitment to community involvement:

“I think it was only policy support three years ago, but I see more and more tangible support now. I would say we’re moving from ‘paper support’ into actual ‘resource support.’”

System personnel also felt that the commitment to community involvement needed to filter down throughout the system, specifically among Superintendents of Education.

At the school level, the picture was somewhat different. While school Principals generally felt that schools in high needs communities were aware of the need for effective community involvement, they saw the commitment as varying dramatically from school-to-school. The school Principals interviewed felt that the main reason for the lack of consistency among schools was that messages sent out by system leadership about the importance of community involvement were inconsistent. Indeed, while system staff felt that progress had been made and would continue to be made, school Principals were less sure.

Some of the comments indicating Principals’ concerns are included below:

“At the elementary level there are fewer and fewer (new Principals) who are willing to risk going out there. To me, they’re spending far too much time talking about how to handle Walkmans and gum and operations than they are heading out into the community and forging those relations.”

“I’ve been on the Vice Principal’s Selection Committee for the last three years and I’m concerned with the leadership coming into the secondary panel. I would say that we have fewer and fewer people who are committed to the community piece or even understand what that is.”

“Schools are told to reach out to the community, but they’re not given the resources to do it. To me, there doesn’t seem to be any coordinated effort to do the community piece effectively.”

“There’s a lot of work to be done to improve awareness of what’s happening. We did a survey four years ago of who was doing what ... we thought we knew what was happening, but we were really surprised with

what we got back. It's a real concern that we don't have the system level understanding ..."

While participants felt there was no clear consensus that community involvement was part of the Board's 'core business,' they believed strongly that it needed to be. The following comment encapsulates the dominant position of those interviewed:

"I think we are morally resolved and legislatively mandated to exercise community leadership in the domain of learning. It is the policy of the York Region District School Board to engage with parents and guardians, government departments, community agencies, volunteers, business leaders and other stakeholders to improve, enhance and expand learning."

3. Board Clarity and School Practice

Several participants indicated that the absence of a clear Board message on, and/or support for, community involvement led some principals to act in relative isolation when determining what forms of community involvement a school would take on. The following exchange among a group of administrators highlights this point:

"Some of the people shaping Board policy aren't necessarily the folks that see building relationships with people outside the school as important. It's partly because they're the products of the EQAO age and that scares me a lot."

"It's not a question of training ... it's a question of our Board saying that's what we value. I don't want to diminish the importance of the EQAO results ... they're important ... but my belief is that if that building is a happy building and the teachers want to show up for work, they will teach the kids well. Relationship-building is crucial to creating a positive climate in the school."

"I think the problem is that there are so many superintendents with different portfolios and we're getting pulled in every direction. What it comes down to is that all of us are seasoned educators and we make the decisions as to what are the most important things for our schools ... what the priority issues and actions are going to be in our schools."

"I hear that all the time ... that no one listens to us because it's a large bureaucracy. But I don't think the problem is the size of our Board. I think

you can live with big. But it's very hard to live with big when you don't feel valued or you feel unknown by the people who are issuing the memos ... that they don't really have a sense of what the job is in the schools. I just get very annoyed with directives coming to me that make me feel that my thirty-five years of experience is worth naught."

"Look at the permitting situation. Do we (the Board) really believe that partnerships are important and supporting parents even more so? Some time ago a local group wanted to bring in Barbara Coloroso to talk about anti-bullying and hold some parenting courses. I waived the permit fee for them so that they could come in and give courses that wouldn't cost the parents much. But why would the Board want to make these groups pay permit fees in the first place? How does that encourage people to come in and help us support children and families?"

From the data collected, it was not possible to determine the degree to which principals were acting on their own in the management of their community involvement. What was clear, however, was that some principals were so frustrated with the lack of clear messaging around school-community relations that they were now acting in relative isolation in this area. This trend raises questions about the consistency and replicability of school-community partnerships and the accountability of those involved.

4. Principal Instability

There is a sense that Principal instability undermines the impact of long-term community partnerships and that the level of commitment to community involvement varies widely from Principal to Principal.

"I have seen situations where a Principal who's very welcoming of the community and eager to have both formal partnerships and general connectivity with families leaves a school and then another Principal comes in who's not as comfortable with doing that work ... Where that's particularly problematic is where the community capacity building is just starting and people are just starting to relate to each other and then all of a sudden you have a leader that can't continue to support that. If there's no other leadership at the school the momentum stops."

"There are schools doing the community piece effectively, but it's uneven and being driven by Principals, who change all the time. So how sustainable is any of the community work happening at that level?"

5. Pathways to Community (or Modes of Connectivity)

There are two ways in which the Board establishes and maintains connections with community. The first is through direct relations with a particular aspect of the community, whether that be the family, a parent, a community service agency or some other agent. The second way that community involvement occurs is through multisector institutions through which the Board or a school is able to interact with a number of community actors simultaneously.

The latter form of connectivity – through multilateral channels – has become increasingly popular at the system level, while schools still tend to enter into one-on-one relations with specific community partners. This is a reflection of the fact that virtually all Principals say parental outreach remains a much higher priority than the creation of partnerships with service agencies, businesses or key individuals.

While the bilateral approach may produce stronger one-on-one relations, over the past few years multilateral or multisector initiatives have become increasingly popular. The main reason for this is that both schools and service agencies believe they have the potential to facilitate multiple linkages in the same amount of time required to establish single, bilateral relations. Some of the most established multisector collaboratives in York Region include:

- The Human Services Planning Coalition
- The York Region Advisory Forum on Children, Youth and Families
- The 'Linking Georgina' multisector collaborative
- The 'Together for Maple' multisector collaborative
- The Inclusivity Action Plan of York Region
- The Children's Mental Health Initiative
- The Communities of Character Initiative

As an increasing number of Principals see partnership with community service agencies and YRDSB departments as a way of indirectly connecting with hard-to-reach families, the Board may wish to explore ways that schools could become better connected, even electronically, with some of the multisector institutions in the Region.

6. Supporting High Needs Communities

The schools that are on the leading edge of community involvement are seen to be in communities where resiliencies are harder to identify and tap into. These could be communities undergoing rapid development and population growth, possessing high rates of mobility and ESL, or ranking as 'high risk' on a number of socio-economic indicators.

Not surprisingly, system staff working to facilitate effective partnerships between school and community agencies report that most of their time and energy is spent in these 'high needs' school communities. The disproportionate amount of time system staff spent in such schools was seen to be a logical use of limited resources and was in keeping with the Board's commitment to both 'raise the bar and close the gap.'

One of the best examples of the positive impact that differentiated resourcing could have on schools, students, families and communities was the Performance-Plus Program. Respondents agreed that a considerable amount of expertise in the area of community involvement, including agency partnerships, had developed among P-Plus Principals and staff. Indeed, several instances of P-Plus schools piloting new types of partnerships were identified, including the Families and Schools Together Program (FAST), Summer Institutes and Schools Cool.

7. Focus on Families

To this point, both system and school-based staff report that most of their efforts to enhance 'community connectivity,' whether they are focused on families or community agencies, occur in the following areas:

- Pre-school literacy
- Pre-school socialization/early learning
- Health (widely defined)
- Recreation
- Multicultural inclusivity

Additionally, there is increasing Board activity in the area of technical education. Specifically, efforts in Georgina are underway to establish the town's first ever post-secondary education institution; one that will provide young adults with opportunities to learn trades and participate in apprenticeships.

As described by participants, it would appear that the nature of community involvement differs significantly between elementary and secondary schools. Generally, the community involvement conducted by elementary schools tends to be more focused on establishing links with the child's family and service agencies that support children and families. On the other hand, secondary schools tend to be more focused on establishing links with institutions and organizations that offer programs that prepare students for various post-secondary pathways.

Very few respondents associated the activities of School Councils with the Board's community involvement. While some of those interviewed said that there were Councils that are playing a positive role in fostering school-community

connections, the consensus was that most Councils would need to become more reflective of their respective communities before they could help the school reach historically marginalized parts of the community. Of course, the ability to reach those in at-risk situations is precisely what many Board staff feel is the key to improving student achievement in such communities.

Although community involvement is included in many of the annual reports of School Councils, further research needs to be conducted to explore whether the make-up and roles of School Councils are changing to meet the needs of schools wanting to establish stronger ties with all parts of the community. It appears that there is great untapped potential in this area.

“... the Board believes that school councils play an important role in building school, family and community partnerships by providing input into relevant Board and school-level decisions and by encouraging the involvement of all members of the school community in support of student learning.” (YRDSB Policy # 262)

8. Incorporating Different Notions of Community

Another common theme running through most of the interviews was the complexity of communities, the difficulty in defining just what a community is, and the dangers of employing a narrow or simplistic definition of community in our work. The following comments reflect some of the different perspectives on community that participants shared:

“In our definition of community, I think we need to include the language of shared values and interdependence. Each school is a community of memory, a community of practice, a community of relationships as much as it is a community of place. “

“I think that we need to capture the idea of interdependence, but also that community is not a stagnant thing but rather one whose membership changes as needs change.”

“From my perspective, we need to think of all the "opportunities" we afford our students to be successful from the social/emotional supports along the academic journey to the authentic experiential learning opportunities we provide our students. I think it is important that our community partners encompass all of these opportunities, not just the narrow focus that many educators think of as the traditional parent community. As we prepare all our learners for their post secondary destinations of choice we need to be

mindful of the community partners that support apprenticeship, college, university, workplace and independent living opportunities.”

In an attempt to facilitate discussions around notions of community and the Board’s role in community development – discussions that might assist in making revisions to the Family and Community strand of the Board Plan - the comments of the participants have been synthesized to create a list of key attributes of ‘communities that work.’ *(This list is included as Appendix D)*

9. The Need for an Assets-based Approach

There is an emerging awareness that Board connections to the community should move from a risk-based framework to an assets-based model of intervention. This means that partnerships that help children, their care-givers and the community in general identify and build upon existing strengths and resiliencies. The belief is that schools can then utilize these assets to support student achievement and at the same time help communities build resiliency.

Some Concerns

- At the system level, departments tend to be unaware of the community involvement being conducted in other departments. This means that Board coordination of community involvement is not as high as it could or should be.
- At the school level, lessons learned are not shared widely, even within clusters/families of schools – and certainly not between P-Plus and non-P-Plus schools.
- There is a perception that the Board sends mixed messages about the value of community connections. Specifically, there was a call for the creation of a common Board philosophy of what constitutes effective community involvement.
- Perceptions of inconsistent messaging are creating considerable frustration among both system and school staff involved in community development activities.
- Inexperience with community work and the associated fear prevents many Principals from committing to community involvement.

- There is a need for schools to consider pairing down the breadth of their community involvement and opting for depth of partnership. This was seen to both increase impact of individual connections while at the same time minimizing Principal time in the management of community partnerships.

What Our Partners Said

As Performance-Plus schools exist in high needs communities, most maintain a wide range of community connections in order to better serve students and families. In the first three years of the Performance-Plus Program, focus groups were conducted with a number of service agencies to assess how they felt about their relations with P-Plus schools. The following sub-sections highlight some of the main findings of that research.

YRDSB's Culture of Cooperation

“Our staff feel they have been very positively supported by the school. They feel very confident that they can go into the schools and talk to the secretaries, the custodians, the Principal, or the Community Coordinator (at P-Plus schools).”

“We have had this relationship with the York Region Board for many years. It has been based on mutual respect and a key factor has been stability in the players. This Board has gone over and above to try and maintain partnerships.”

The School as a 'Hub' of Community

“As far as my organization goes, we're just happy to be in that school, because we're getting to parts of the community - rich and poor - that don't have access to services, because there's nothing in that area.”

The Importance of Leadership

“For us, the only issue in getting into the schools is administration. There is nothing else. If the administration isn't supportive of having something in the school, it doesn't matter how hard we work to get in.”

“I think that whatever school you’re talking about, the success of the partnerships, the program delivery and the involvement of the community in the school is completely driven by the Principal.”

The Need for Stability at the Top

“We were in a school where there was a very community-minded Principal. But then that Principal left and our partnership with the school slowly died on the vine. I’m always amazed by how much power there is in that position.”

A Desire to Formalize Partnerships

“Every year we have to call back and hope that we’re going to be allowed back in. It’s very stressful ... never knowing for sure. If our staff contact changes then the program stops, then we have to go and tell the parents who are expecting the program that it won’t be happening.”

“If you mean partnerships in the truest sense of the word then I think it is time to formalize agreements more. That shows commitment on both sides. We have just gone through this issue with the Peel Board of Education ... we’ve drafted an agreement. Sooner or later you have to do that.”

Key Questions

1. How important is the Board’s commitment to valuing the efforts and contributions of our community to its mission of preparing learners for life in the changing world community?
2. How can greater coordination of the Board’s various community involvement initiatives be achieved?

Possible Recommendations

1. Undertake a process to discuss and develop a common philosophy or belief statement around “communities that work.”
2. Acknowledge and communicate that “community involvement” is part of the Board’s core business – and clarify those roles for which the Board must take lead responsibility and those for which the Board plays a supporting role.
3. Clarify the role of the Board, school councils, system level staff, principals and all staff in building and enhancing community partnerships.
4. Designate a senior staff person with responsibility for bringing alignment to community involvement undertaken at the Board and school levels.
5. Establish a “Community Coordinating Committee” for the purposes of sharing information, aligning efforts and setting priorities in the area of community involvement.
6. Provide training to principals, superintendents and relevant system staff on how to build and enhance positive school-community relationships.
7. Share effective practices in community involvement, including the use of lighthouse schools and relevant mentoring for new principals.
8. Clarify communication channels and reporting lines for staff who share responsibility for community involvement.
9. Create a common and visible image among the various community involvement initiatives (e.g., community “banners”).
10. Revise the Parent and Community Involvement section of the Board plan.
11. Prepare a philosophy statement regarding community partnerships and a protocol to support such a philosophy.
12. Conduct a follow-up review of school level parent and community involvement initiatives including the work of school councils – building upon the “community mapping” carried out in Performance Plus schools.

13. Work with community partners to collect data on community perceptions; services available to schools, students and their families and other indicators of success in community involvement.
14. Increase principal stability within school communities.
15. Identify and share successful practices focussing on community involvement that supports student achievement and addresses diverse student, family and community strengths and needs throughout York Region.

Appendix A

YRDSB Community Portfolios Research

System Staff Interview Protocol

1. What role do you and/or your staff play in creating connections between the School Board and/or schools and the community, either through general outreach or formal partnerships?
2. Do all schools need to do the community outreach piece?
3. Does community outreach happen the same way throughout the Region?
4. What should be the main objective of community outreach?
5. Is there a difference between community capacity building and community outreach?
6. How do you feel about the term 'School as Hub'?
7. What is the Board – at both a system and school level - doing well in relationship to community partnerships and community capacity building?
8. Over the past five years has anything changed in the way the Board 'sees' community-outreach?
9. How could the Board better support community out-reach at both the system and school level?
10. What is your vision of a strong/ideal community within the York Region context?
11. Is there anyone else you think we should interview?

Appendix B

YRDSB Community Portfolios Research

Principal Focus Group Protocol

1. Is there a difference between the following concepts?
 - a. Community Outreach
 - b. Community Partnership
 - c. Community Capacity Building
2. As an Principal, what have been the most important community-oriented activities in which you have been involved?

Prompt

Please explain why these have been the most important.

3. What should be the main objective of community outreach?
4. In your opinion, do all schools need to do the community piece?
5. Does the community piece look the same in different parts of the Board?
6. How do you feel about the term 'School as Hub'?
7. Is the Board providing effective support to schools in the area of community outreach?
8. Over the past five years has anything changed in the way either schools or the Board in general 'see' community-outreach?
9. How could the Board better support community out-reach at the school level?
10. What is your vision of a strong/ideal community within the York Region context?
11. Is there anyone else you think we should interview?

Appendix C

Core Business: Public Education's Role in Building and Maintaining "Communities That Work"

Public school boards and schools help build the human potential - social capital - of their communities. In some of these capacity building activities school boards and schools should play a leadership role, while in other activities school boards and schools should participate as equal partners with community-based organizations, government agencies, businesses and key individuals.

Some activities in which public school boards and schools should play a leading role would include:

- Preparing students as literate, numerate and thinking citizens.
- Advocating for resources and services which support student achievement.
- Preparing students to be effective and caring citizens of local, national and international communities.
- Prepare and inspire students to take an active role in a democratic society.
- Maximize private and public resource dollars, persons and services in the delivery of education.
- Allocate resources in a manner that is responsive to diverse needs and resources within the community.
- Model fairness and equity in decision making and actions.
- Take action against any violations of equity or any threats to the well being of students and their families.

Some activities in which public school boards and schools should work in partnership with citizens, legislative bodies, public and private institutions would include:

- Ensure that students and their families are aware of and have access to the broadest range of support services and programs possible.
- Ensure that educational programs are aligned with current and future needs of students and society.
- Advocate for educational services and decisions that are in the best interests of students, their families and their communities.

- Honour and advocate for the rights of all students and their communities.
- Allocate resources in a manner that is responsive to diverse needs and resources within the community.
- Maximize private and public resource dollars, persons and services in community development.
- Serve as a facilitator of integrated service delivery.
- Serve as an exemplary model of public service.
- Model fairness and equity in decision making and actions.
- Take action against any violations of equity or any threats to the well being of students and their families.
- Provide physical communities that are welcoming, safe and both fiscally and environmentally sustainable.
- Support the skill and character development of individual citizens and institutions.
- Advocate for resources and services which support students and their families including new members of the community, new Canadians and the disadvantaged.
- Help build community capacity by supporting the work and professional development of leaders working within the various service sectors; health, recreation, child protection, etc.

Appendix D

Draft Philosophy for “Communities That Work”

“Communities That Work” are communities in which all citizens, including students and their families, are:

- Valued
- Safe
- Housed
- Well nourished
- Physically fit and active
- Inspired and prepared for success in their work, family and recreational lives
- Inspired and prepared to seek new knowledge and skills
- Of good character
- Emotionally and spiritually fulfilled
- Supportive of others
- Supported by others
- Supported by schools in academic, social and emotional learning
- Involved in and supported by public education
- Members of multiple, supportive and interdependent community circles based on such factors as family, locality, municipality, culture, work, recreation and interests
- Inspired and prepared to care for children, the elderly and each other
- Inspired and prepared for citizenship in a democratic society

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