

Acting in the Present to Create Bright Futures for All

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Mahatma Gandhi said, “The future depends on what we do in the present.” With that in mind, during our recent trustee review of schools plans and budgets at Edmonton Public Schools, I asked many principals the following question: *What part of your plan will have the biggest impact on student success 20 years from now?*

Here are some of their answers, which reveal a tiny slice of the excellent work underway in the schools you live near, send your children to, drive by, or perhaps, even remember attending as a child:

- Creating a welcoming atmosphere so that kids will stay in school and experience good things
- Practicing inclusion of children with special needs in the regular classroom
- Helping students develop strong literacy skills so they can direct their future education when they leave school
- Embracing technology to show students that life is always changing and we continually need to adapt and evolve
- Fostering a student’s ability to goal set, assess their own work, and ask good, meaningful questions
- Working with students on leadership and character so they gain the fundamental skills they need for living
- Videoconferencing to other countries, which builds understanding and respect.
- Enabling citizenship activities, so that we turn out human beings who care for one another and support each other and so that students can develop the ability to participate in a democratic society

As a trustee, I think it is only fair to ask myself this question: What is the Board doing that will have the biggest impact on student success (and thus, on community success) in 20 years? It is hard to pick one out of the five areas of emphasis in the Board’s strategic plan:

- Advocating for rich learning experiences for all children in their early years (0 - 5),
- Continuing to improving our high school completion rates,
- Being responsive to the changing classroom and valuing diversity (most recently seen in the approval of a new Multicultural Education policy on June 9),

- Being an “Employer of Choice” so as to welcome and treasure the best staff possible, and
- Being fiscally responsible and wise with the funding we receive from the provincial government in light of many needs and high expectations.

I also challenged the 35 people who attended my Community Conversation (titled “Let’s Talk Schools! Let’s Talk the Future! Let’s Talk Community!”) in late May to look to the future. I am just now beginning to assemble their thoughts, and I will share more on this in a future newsletter. In the interim, what do you think? What should we be doing now to ensure bright futures for all of us? I’d love to hear from you! Please email me at Catherine.Ripley@epsb.ca or phone at 780-887-1002.