

# Let's Dig Deeper!

Pre-Reading for January 14, 2010

On May 20, 2009 a group of 35 people in SW Edmonton participated in a conversation titled "Let's Talk Schools! Let's Talk the Future! Let's Talk Community!" Working in table groups, people brainstormed how we (aka "the village it takes to raise a child") might achieve a bright future for our community and schools in 2030. These ideas are listed below on the left. On January 14, 2010, we will dig deeper into these ideas and explore your thoughts as related to the unfinished statements listed on the right.

## What We Said in May...

### *Strengthening Families*

**We need to build strong families.  
Strong Families = Strong Communities**

**Examples of Good Things Already Happening to Strengthen Families ... page 2  
Food for Thought on Strengthening Families ... page 2**

### *Enhancing Innovative Citizenship Education*

**We need innovative methods to engage students  
about citizenship and the importance of  
community involvement.**

**Examples of Good Things Already Happening to Enhance Innovative Citizenship  
Education ... page 5  
Food for Thought on Citizenship & Citizenship Education ... page 6**

### *Improving Communication*

**Communities must educate the people who make decisions.  
Communicate better.  
We need to provide more opportunities for people to share the  
success stories that are already happening.**

**Examples of Good Things Already Happening to Improve Communication ... page 8  
Food for Thought on Improving Communication ... page 8**

## **Please think about..**

A strong family is...

The best way to build a strong family is....

To help build strong families, Edmonton Public Schools needs to.... City Council needs to.... the provincial government needs to.... the federal government needs to.... our community needs to.... our local school needs to.... I need to....

An engaged citizen is ...

The best way to educate an engaged citizen is ...

To educate engaged citizens, Edmonton Public Schools needs to.... City Council needs to.... the provincial government needs to.... the federal government needs to.... our community needs to.... our local school needs to.... I need to....

To achieve the schools and communities we want in 2030, we need better communication about ....

To achieve the schools and communities we want in 2030, we need better communication between ....

To improve communication , Edmonton Public Schools needs to.... City Council needs to.... the provincial government needs to.... the federal government needs to.... our community needs to.... our local school needs to.... I need to....

*Thank you for your interest!*  
Catherine Ripley, Edmonton Public Schools, Ward # Trustee  
Catherine.Ripley@epsb.ca; 780-887-1002

## Food for Thought on Strengthening Families

### Building on Strengths in Families and Communities

Research by The Search Institute (an independent, nonprofit, nonsectarian organization whose mission is to provide leadership, knowledge, and resources to promote healthy children, youth, and communities) has identified 40 strengths or assets that contribute to the healthy development of youth. Kids who have many of these strengths in their lives are more likely to do well in school, volunteer in the community, and care about others. They are also less likely to use tobacco or drugs or be sexually active.

Here are some of the cited strengths particularly relevant to families:

- Family Support — Family life provides high levels of love and support.
- Positive family communication — Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek parent(s) advice and counsel.
- Family boundaries — Family has clear rules and consequences, and monitors the young person's whereabouts.

For the full list see <http://www.children-first.org/about/40assets.html>

### The Importance of Recreation

- Recreation builds strong families and healthy communities
- Families that play together, stay together
- Recreation provides safe developmental opportunities for the latch-key child
- Recreation, sports and arts/culture produce leaders who serve their communities in many ways
- Recreation, sports and arts/culture build social skills and stimulate participation in community life
- Recreation is often the catalyst that builds strong, self-sufficient communities (ie sport groups, arts guilds)
- Art/culture helps people understand their neighbours, their history and their environment
- Recreation and arts/culture build pride in a community

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## Strengthening Families

From one table at the May 2009 "Let's Talk the Future" conversation in SW Edmonton came the following idea as a key way to achieve a bright future for our community and schools in 2030.

### We need to build strong families. Strong Families = Strong Communities

Specifically, we might .... find ways to bring families and communities together within school space.... involve communities and schools in joint after-school programs.... keep families intact through support, put more focus on the value of family, and support a family whatever situation they are in.... create a Focus on Parents: teach skills on how to be successful parents ... involve communities and schools in joint after-school programs.

## Examples of Things Already Happening to Strengthen Families

### SW Edmonton Community Mapping Project

This project involves an inter-agency group that has been working together to create demographic and social maps of the SW area of Edmonton. One of the discoveries from this mapping is that there are higher than average numbers of immigrant citizens and newcomers living in the area. Based on the maps and the feedback from a community forum, held on June 4, 2009, the group has developed two areas of focus for the project: "Enhancing services required to support *Families* and *Newcomers* in South West Edmonton." The major strategies will include collaboration with existing service providers within the area and the City, and the maps can be viewed at <http://www.mapsalbertacapitalregion.ca/L-SWEdmonton.html>

### Building an Extended Family

Multicultural brokers support newcomer families in integrating into Edmonton as well as Canadian society. One of their partners is Edmonton Public Schools. You can learn more

about this partnership at <http://epsb.ca/community/bridges.shtml>

### Speaking up about the Danger of Violent Video Games

The Alberta Council of Women submitted a Brief to the Provincial Government about the danger of Violent Video Games and the need to regulate their sale and availability for those under age 18. Pornography is also a threat to families.

### Domestic Violence Initiatives

United Cultures of Canada Association is working on many initiatives to prevent and end domestic violence. We are developing a self-help manual to strengthen victims' response to domestic violence. The manual includes chapters on different aspects of intimate partner abuse, explores the response of different systems to it, and discusses cultural perspectives. It explains criminal and civil justice systems in Canada and prepares victims to get required support from these. It provides information about Canadian immigration rules and laws. In separate chapters, it also discusses housing and

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economic issues, health impact of intimate partner abuse on the victims, and its impact on children who have witnessed it. This work is being supported by many Canadian and international writers.

Under a different project, a delegation of UCCA met the High Commissioner of India in Ottawa and Consular General in Vancouver and discussed issues and concerns about fraudulently arranged international marriages. Last year, UCCA also started an initiative to honour family violence workers who have provided exceptional services to end domestic violence. On November 17, 2009, as part of the Diverse Voices conference, three Edmonton domestic violence workers were presented recognition awards as well as cash awards made available by the Edmonton Police Service.

### Enhancing Effective Teen Parenting

Between 2004 - 2009 a series of "Parenting Our Teens" articles was published in the *Harry Ainlay Parent Newsletter*. The genesis of the articles was twofold: 1) questions posed by parents at School Council meetings and 2) issues identified by Student Services and the Ainlay senior administration. Each article focuses on a different aspect of normal adolescent development and is evidence-based on current research. Written by a parent, Deb Olmstead, the easy-to-read articles are intended to meet the information needs of parents on how to parent their teenager in the best way possible.

<http://ainlay.ca/home/parent-articles/>

### Providing Places to Play and Opportunities for Family Fun

Community leagues, funded by membership dollars and the City of Edmonton, provide many community amenities, programs, and activities that support inexpensive and safe opportunities for family fun. The City of Edmonton also supports leagues through the provision of Community Recreation Coordinators' time, assistance, and expertise.

Some examples include (but not limited to) weekly Community League Swims, Green Shack Summer programs, playground builds, Saturday fun (Blue Quill Olympics program, Winter 2010), Babysitting courses (Riverbend), Family-oriented Parties to Celebrate Winter (Ridge, Terwillegar, Riverbend, Twin Brooks), Halloween (Blackmud Creek), Meet Santa (Duggan), and New Year's Eve (Greenfield, The Ridge), Astronomy Night (Aspen Gardens), Movie nights (Yellowbird, Blue Quill), Board Game Night (Ermineskin)....

### Supporting Families through Difficult Times

A number of families today face difficulties that threaten family unity and love: eg. a family member with a gambling problem, debilitating grief over the loss of a loved one, marital problems, a child with an eating disorder, and the list goes on. The River Community Church, located in the Riverbend Terwillegar area, is striving to be a "life-restoring" community by caring for hurting people and hurting families through its RESTORE ministries and support groups, such as Griefshare, Divorce Care, Boundaries (which helps people with the creation of healthy boundaries in their lives), Celebrate Recovery (helping people dealing with addictions), Prayer Ministry team (open to prayer requests at any time) and the new Hope Keepers group for those dealing with chronic pain or chronic illness.

<http://www.rivercommunitychurch.com/oa-sis.php>

### One Key to Strong Families - LITERACY

"With both our traditional programming and our new community-led approach, the Edmonton Public Library (EPL) contributes to each of the three major themes that evolved from the 'Let's Talk the Future!' community conversation. The Library is particularly known for

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From Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and suggested by Councillor Bryan Anderson  
<http://www.cpra.ca/EN/main.php?action=cms.initBeneParksRec&PHPSESSID=ab897fc2ef54882ec147ba70fb85bc21>

### The Importance of Ensuring Access to Recreation and Leisure for ALL Families

The Leisure Access Program allows eligible low-income Edmontonians to access participating City of Edmonton recreation facilities and programs at a much reduced rate.

[http://www.edmonton.ca/for\\_residents/resident\\_services\\_programs/leisure-access-program.aspx](http://www.edmonton.ca/for_residents/resident_services_programs/leisure-access-program.aspx)

### The Importance of Modeling Lifelong Learning

"Early experiences have a major bearing on success in school, in the workplace and on many other aspects of a healthy, fulfilling life. An individual's readiness to learn begins to take shape early in life and progresses throughout the school years and into working life. Positive initial experiences strongly influence a child's attitude toward future participation in learning activities.

"As their children's first teachers, parents can be models of lifelong learning. By upgrading their skills and acquiring new knowledge, adults demonstrate their own ability to make informed decisions and lead successful lives. Their example also makes it more likely that their children will become successful lifelong learners. As early role models, parents transmit attitudes, values and cultural traditions that will influence how well their children perform at school, in the community and in the workplace. This can have substantial implications across the life course—affecting decisions regarding post-secondary education, career choices and even work habits.

"There is a strong link between an individual's literacy skills and the literacy culture of the family in which he or she has grown up. A foundation for literacy is established in the home and further fostered in the formal school system."

From the Canadian Council on Learning;  
[http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/SOLR/2008/SOLR\\_08\\_English\\_final.pdf](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/SOLR/2008/SOLR_08_English_final.pdf)

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## The Importance of Shared Values

The Circle of Courage is a model of youth empowerment supported by contemporary research, the heritage of early youth work pioneers and Native philosophies of child care. The model is encompassed in four core values: belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. The central theme of this model is that a set of shared values must exist in any community to create environments that ultimately benefit all.

<http://www.reclaiming.com/content/about-circle-of-courage>

## Idea from Blue Quill Community League

Community leagues need to focus on providing more family-oriented events. Some leagues are doing well at this. Others need to improve. Also, there needs to be more community-organized sports besides soccer and hockey. In order to succeed at this, leagues need more member involvement.

## The Importance of Education About Child Development & Parenting

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an American parent education and family support program serving families throughout pregnancy until their child enters kindergarten, usually age 5. Parents are supported by PAT-certified parent educators trained to translate scientific information on early brain development into specific when, what, how and why advice for families. By understanding what to expect during each stage of development, parents can easily capture the teachable moments in everyday life to enhance their child's language development, intellectual growth, social development and motor skills.

<http://www.parentsasteachers.org/site/pp.asp?c=eKIRLcMZJxE&b=272091>

## U of A Research on Families

These websites are full of interesting information related to children, youth, and families.

Community - University Partnership (CUP)  
<http://www.cup.ualberta.ca/index.php>

Women & Children's Health Research Institute  
<http://wchri.srv.ualberta.ca/>

Families First project  
<http://www.familiesfirstedmonton.ualberta.ca/>

its work in strengthening families and improving communication. An example of how the library contributes to all three of these themes is by promoting the six early literacy skills that lead to lifelong reading success. Our programs for preschoolers teach parents and their children how to lay the foundation for learning how to read.

Coming this spring, EPL will also be offering information sessions to parents regarding early literacy skills and book selection for preschoolers. Another example is materials, such as our Family Language Kits, that provide families with the opportunity to practice English along with their heritage language through bilingual story books and resources. This contributes to both stronger families and improved communication. Community Librarians and library staff are actively working with agencies and community groups to help connect families and individuals with recourses they need, adding to the already rich networks that exist in Edmonton's communities.

Although incorporated into our existing services, innovative citizenship education is becoming increasingly important as the Edmonton Public Library adopts this new community-led service model. Each branch is involved in its community in new and innovative ways and it will be exciting to see how these three themes are incorporated into this new model." The Community Librarians working in the Southwest are Katie Turzansky (Riverbend) and Ariel Zola (Whitemud Crossing). [www.epl.ca](http://www.epl.ca)

## Implementing the REACH Report- Edmonton's Taskforce on Community Safety

On September 16, 2009, Edmonton City Council unanimously endorsed the REACH Report, presented by the Taskforce on Community Safety. Entitled "REACH: "Building a Culture of Community Safety in Edmonton in One Generation," this report reflects a truly made-in-Edmonton blueprint for a new

approach to community safety, one that focuses on investing in prevention in order to effect change in one generation.

The nine REACH report recommendations share three key characteristics. They are prevention focused, innovative, and evidence based or measurable. Several recommendations addressed the need to support and strengthen families. One focused on building a more integrated model of family and community safety focusing on schools as neighbourhood hubs. Another proposed a new approach to neighbourhood organizing to develop and support grassroots community leadership around prevention. Several recommendations suggested actions to focus on our vulnerable youth, on offering positive alternatives to build resiliency and to engaging newcomers to our city within their cultural contexts.

A Transitional Board is working to launch a new community-driven council to implement REACH by early summer 2010.

[www.reachreport.ca](http://www.reachreport.ca)

## Supporting Children, Families, and Communities through Early Years Programming

For the last 25 years ABC Head Start has been supporting children, families, and communities in Edmonton. We are a registered not-for-profit society that provides early learning, family support, and community engagement opportunities for families with limited means and their preschool children. We offer programming across the city in 13 sites which includes one francophone site. In partnership with families and community, our goal is to provide a comprehensive program that prepares young children for success in learning and life. Currently we have a site located in the McKee Elementary School on 51st Avenue. This is a busy site that fills quickly, with a significant waitlist, and we are working to respond to community needs, reducing waitlists and offering families choices.

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ABC Head Start is an active member of the Interagency Head Start Network (IHSN).

[www.abcheadstart.org](http://www.abcheadstart.org)

## Supporting Families through Policy Development & Resulting Action

Edmonton Public Schools is involved in the early years as a partner and as a provider of services. The Board of Trustees supports and encourages this work based on research that underscores the importance of the early years, the sensitive years for brain development, which is crucial to the child's human development generally. The District's role is two fold. In the early years, the District complements the work of health and social services organizations and agencies that support families. Once children enter public schooling, the District takes a lead role and is supported by the community partners. You can see the specifics in the report referenced below.

In December the Board voted unanimously to adopt a new Early Years Policy to guide the district's future actions in the area of Early Years Education. The next step is the District will develop an early years website anchored by the Board policy. The website (not yet launched) will contain key information about early years services available from partners and the District in an accessible format to provide parents the tools to make informed choices.

[http://www.epsb.ca/board/nov10\\_09/item07.pdf](http://www.epsb.ca/board/nov10_09/item07.pdf)

## Literacy & Learning Day

Since 2003 a group of dedicated parents has been organizing and offering Literacy and Learning Day as a free public conference. The aim is to provide the community (particularly parents) with information and educational tools to enhance and support the literacy and learning of the children in their lives. This year's conference will take place on April 17, 2010. Although free, registration is required.

[www.literacyday.ca](http://www.literacyday.ca)

## Enhancing Innovative Citizenship Education

From one table at the May 2009 "Let's Talk the Future" conversation in SW Edmonton came the following idea as a key way to achieve a bright future for our community and schools in 2030.

### We need innovative methods to engage students about citizenship and the importance of community involvement.

Specifically, we might make kids realize the importance of education and voicing opinions... ensure they learn about citizenship as a child....create awareness that people can make a difference, get involved, and make your community better.... work together/develop partnerships where we are all working collaboratively to raise a child to be an educated child/a better community.

## Examples of Good Things Already Happening to Enhance Innovative Citizenship Education

### The Leader in Me

Greenfield School is working on "The Leader in Me" process with its students. This process helps develop the essential life skills and characteristics students need in order to thrive in the 21st century. It creates a common language within a school and is built on proven principle-based leadership skills found in Dr. Stephen R. Covey's, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*:

- Habit 1: *Be Proactive* – You're in charge
- Habit 2: *Begin with the End in Mind* – Have a plan
- Habit 3: *Put First Things First* – Work first, then play
- Habit 4: *Think Win-Win* – Everyone can win
- Habit 5: *Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood* – Listen before you talk
- Habit 6: *Synergize* – Together is better
- Habit 7: *Sharpen the Saw* – Balance feels best

### Backpacks of Luck

December 2009 marked the third year George H. Luck students have chosen to make a difference in the lives of people who are marginalized and impoverished by filling 425 Backpacks for visitors to the Boyle Street Cooperative. Each backpack was filled with personal care items, warm clothing (toques, mitts and socks), a homemade Christmas card with a special message from a student, and a coffee card. Boyle Street Community Services Executive Director Julian Daly says, "Young people are looking for ways to make a difference. Backpacks of Luck is a tangible and meaningful way to signal the desire of young people to help others who do not have a home. The joint work of students, parents, and staff at George H. Luck School is a powerful sign that they are thinking about the needs of the community."

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## Food for Thought on Citizenship & Citizenship Education

### The Importance of Empowering Children and Youth

Here are some strengths cited by the Search Institute that are directly relevant to developing citizenship skills in youth. (For more on the Search Institute, see page 2, first column.)

- Community values youth — Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
- Youth as resources — Young people are given useful roles in the community.
- Service to others — Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
- Safety — Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.

For the full list see <http://www.children-first.org/about/40assets.html>

### The Importance of Interest & Information in Being Politically Engaged

"[Out of] socio-demographic factors, education and origin (i.e. being born in Canada) are the most powerful predictors of voting. But the most crucial determinants are interest in politics and information about politics...."

But what is the relationship between engagement in other social or political activities and the decision to vote in elections? For example, what is the relationship between engaging in protest or other unconventional political action and the decision to vote? It is sometimes suggested that youth are not voting because they have found more meaningful political activities such as these in which to engage. If this is the case, we should find that turnout is at least slightly lower among those citizens who engage in other political activi-

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### Developing Global Citizens

Last year (2008-09) during a planning meeting, the Executive of the George P. Nicholson School Council was brainstorming about possible speakers who could further build on the school focus of inquiry and the development of global critical thinkers. Lt. General Romeo Dallaire was suggested - a name known immediately by some, but others needed the reference of the movie *Hotel Rwanda*. Immediately we realized that such an undertaking would be financially out of our realm as a School Council, but also his appeal, we felt, would be city-wide.

We decided to partner with Edmonton Public Schools' "Parents as Partners" program to secure the engagement and advertise city-wide. We also partnered with the School Councils of Crestwood and Elmwood schools, which share a similar inquiry focus, to supply all the volunteers for the evening. The principals of the three schools partnered together with the district to provide district teachers with an additional professional development opportunity with Lt. General Dallaire the following morning. Fantasyland Hotel donated the venue and the refreshments. Lt. General Dallaire waived his fee to speak at the parent evening. GPN School Council donated \$500.00 to the Lt. General Romeo Dallaire Foundation in support of children in Rwanda. The four Grade 3 classes at GPN participated in a Global Compassion Lunch and raised \$522.00. The students decided to donate this money to Lt. General Dallaire's Foundation.

### Publishing Multicultural Folktales as a Resource for Understanding

Multiculturalism in Canadian society brings about its riches and challenges especially for children who struggle to find a connection that may help them relate to various cultures in our society. To that end, the United Cultures of Canada Association is developing a reading resource — a collection of folktales gathered from different ethno-cultural communities. This project aims to promote

the true spirit of multiculturalism, and to educate Canadian children in the principles of diversity, equality, and respect for different cultures. The collection of folktales (which will also include parables, aphorisms, sayings and inspiring quotes from diverse cultures) is scheduled to be published in early 2011.

### Serve the School, Serve the Community, or Serve the World!

At Rideau Park Elementary School, each classroom has been asked to come up with a plan that will see students serving the school, the community, or the world. Through completion of their class projects, students will learn about responsibility, respect, compassion, empathy, kindness, and all of the other character virtues.

While collecting money for charities is one way of support that comes to mind, it is not the only way. Students in the Grade 3/4 class will plant a garden in the spring, for example, which will beautify the school and community. A Grade 1 class read 100 books, and in turn, Scholastic is donating books to less fortunate schools in Canada. Other projects include a class selling popcorn and lemonade for the Kids with Cancer Society, another having bake sales and craft bees and securing donations to raise over \$1000 for a well in Africa, and another collecting over \$500 in the silver collection at the door of the Christmas concert for the Mustard Seed Mission as well as four big bags of blankets, hats, socks, scarves and mitts. The principal comments, "While we may simply pat ourselves on the back for 'good work,' the more important message the children are learning is that even though they are children, they can make a difference in the world. They have a voice."

### Promoting the Concept of "Service Above Self"

In Edmonton, 14 Rotary Clubs, consisting of approximately 750 business and professional men and women, meet

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weekly to undertake service projects and programs, at home and abroad. The Rotary motto is "Service Above Self."

Many Rotary Clubs have long-term relationships with schools. In 2005 the Edmonton Clubs began the introduction of Rotary-sponsored youth clubs in association with schools to develop personal and leadership development skills through service to others. From elementary to post-secondary and early career, the clubs are named; EarlyAct, YouthAct, InterAct, and RotarAct Clubs. These Clubs meet twice a month with a Rotarian Advisor from a sponsoring Rotary Club and a Faculty Advisor to undertake at least two service projects, one local and one international per year.

In the Edmonton Region, since January 2009, one Interact Club (high school) and Rotaract (18-29 yrs) Clubs have hosted a presentation by Lt. Gen. Romeo Dallaire for 1,700 high school students and organized a leadership conference that placed 80 high school students in social service agencies for a half-day. Some Club members traveled to and built a playground in Belize and others built a part of a school in Africa.

The vision of the Capital Region Rotary Clubs is to link "Abundant schools" with "High Needs schools" in Edmonton, which in turn, are working with "higher need schools and youth" internationally. The principal concepts are proven: By creating positive inclusive peer groups, which do important work with "real world results" chosen by the students and with the support of local business and professionals involved in Rotary, Rotary can contribute to Strengthening Today's Communities and Growing Tomorrow's Leaders.

*For further information please contact either Mike Hanna (Mike.Hanna@Synergy-Canada.ca) or Carl Simonson (cjsimonson@shaw.ca), both of the Riverview Rotary Club.*

## Inspiring Environmental Citizenship

On January 29, 2010, Edmonton Public Schools will host its first Environmental

Student Forum -- Students for Sustainable Schools. Inspired by students, this day-long event is being led by Facilities Services and will provide high school students a chance to discuss all things environmental as well as potential school and individual actions.

Last April a number of schools also participated in the Earth Day "Turn off Your Lights for an Hour" Challenge from Westglen School. Greenfield and Riverbend were two Ward H schools that took on the challenge. You can see the results here: <http://enviromatters.epsb.ca/datafiles/earth%20day%20challenge%20totals3.pdf>.

Edmonton Public Schools' EnviroMatters initiative has also developed a classroom energy monitoring program that involves students in daily actions to help the environment by conserving energy.

<http://enviromatters.epsb.ca/initiatives>

## LIVE from Copenhagen: Using Technology to Foster Citizenship

On Wednesday, December 16 Queen Elizabeth School hosted an international conference on climate change involving schools from eleven different nations and representing the largest virtual networking of youth for environmental change in the world. TakingITGlobal and The Centre for Global Education united to bring the world's youth face-to-face with global environmental leaders LIVE from Copenhagen during the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15).

Some topics of discussion included:

- Addressing local contributors (Edmonton has been asked to address the oil sands by their partner countries around the world).
- Comparing the impacts of climate change in their local/national areas.
- Making personal changes to reduce their ecological footprint.

[http://epsb.ca/mediareleases/091215\\_2.shtml](http://epsb.ca/mediareleases/091215_2.shtml)

vote in federal elections than those who do not participate in other activities.

Taking all of this information together, we can draw a profile of the typical average youth voter and non-voter. The average youth voter is both interested in and informed about politics. The average non-voter is not. Likewise, the average youth voter engages in the campaign by watching the debates (and, we would speculate, participating in other campaign events). The average non-voter does not. Demographically, the average voter is likely to be older than the non-voter, likely lives in a wealthier household, and is more likely to be born in Canada."

From Elections Canada  
[http://www.elections.ca/loi/res/youeng/youth\\_electoral\\_engagement\\_e.pdf](http://www.elections.ca/loi/res/youeng/youth_electoral_engagement_e.pdf)

## Community and Civic Engagement

Preparing young Canadians for the world of work is only one aspect of life and one point of transition along the lifelong learning continuum. Young people also need to be prepared for responsible community living. Adults who participate in community life serve as role models of good citizenry and help build the social networks, high levels of trust, and cooperation that contribute to social capital and provide the foundation for young people to become responsible adults.

Participation in community organizations, sense of belonging and volunteering in the community are recognized as measures of community and civic engagement, and are important to our understanding of learning in the school years. Rates of volunteering among those aged 15 to 24 increased from 29% in 2000 to 55% in 2004, and many young people now give mandatory community service as their reason for volunteering. Some provinces, such as Ontario, have required a minimum number of volunteer hours as criteria for graduation from secondary school. Research shows that young people who are active in organizations and communities have stronger skills and are more likely to be lifelong active citizens.

From the Canadian Council on Learning  
[http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/SOLR/2008/SOLR\\_08\\_English\\_final.pdf](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/SOLR/2008/SOLR_08_English_final.pdf)

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## Thought from Blue Quill Community League

Community leagues could host seminars on "citizenship" put on by various speakers and professionals to educate and inform residents.

## Food for Thought on Improving Communication

### Sharing Data in Accessible Formats

Check out Vancouver's Open Data portal. "By freely sharing its data in accessible formats — while respecting privacy and security concerns — Vancouver is joining many government agencies in moving to harness the energy and involvement of citizens, community-based organizations and private businesses in everything from creative community problem-solving to the development of new service delivery ideas and solutions."

<http://data.vancouver.ca/>

## Thought from Blue Quill Community League

There needs to be regular (i.e. monthly) communication from a community league to its members. This will ensure families and residents are kept informed of what's going on in the community.

### Thought From Edward R. Murrow

Edward R. Murrow was "a seminal force in the creation and development of electronic newsgathering as both a craft and a profession." He stated, "The newest computer can merely compound, at speed, the oldest problem in the relations between human beings, and in the end the communicator will be confronted with the old problem, of what to say and how to say it."

## Improving Communication

From three tables at the May 2009 "Let's Talk the Future" conversation in SW Edmonton came communication-related ideas as a key way to achieve a bright future for our community and schools in 2030.

**Communities must educate the people who make decisions.  
Communicate better.**

**We need to provide more opportunities for people to share the  
success stories that are already happening.**

More specifically, we might .... become informed and more conscientious about the issues...share ideas more... have more involvement in government meetings to deliver knowledge to the citizens... provide more opportunities for groups of people to get together for talking, sharing... expand who is invited to these meetings/discussions... survey families in the community (i.e. what would it take to get them engaged)... share and highlight success stories.... start with public/community, educate them, invite them to bring their concerns ... better educate the decision makers so they can make informed decisions.... work to have better communication through all the parts of the education system... ask our school trustees to find ways to improve communication.... ask parents what they can do for the school more effectively... build communication and trust and good relationships with parents and community... break down the walls/barriers... work on communication between parents, teachers, students.

## Examples of Good Things Already Happening to Improve Communication

### Considering the Concept of OPEN DATA... Listen to Council's Deliberations Live on January 13, 2010!

In October Councillor Don Iveson asked for a report on Open Data, stating "In local, national, and sub-national governments around the world, there is a trend toward making up-to-date government information freely available on-line in generically accessible data formats as so-called 'Open Data.'"

The report, now available under Section 6 of the Executive Committee Agenda found at <http://sirepub.edmonton.ca/sirepub/mtgviewer.aspx?meetid=306&dctype=AGENDA>, will be discussed on January 13 at 1:30. Is this something Edmonton City Council should pursue

further or not? You can hear the Council discussion live by logging into <http://councilontbweb.edmonton.ca/>.

Or if you miss the discussion, after the meeting minutes are finalized (usually about a week after the meeting), the minutes will have links to the video feed of the meeting.

### Knowing Where Crime is Happening in Your Neighbourhood

Neighbourhood crime is more than just numbers; it's about knowing where reported crime is happening in the area where people live. Knowing the real picture of neighbourhood crime reported to Edmonton Police Service is now

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possible through the daily updates to a public "crime mapping" website. By accessing this timely and relevant information on reported crime, residents are able to know 'what's really going on' in their neighbourhoods. By knowing what's really going on, residents should be better informed in relation to crime prevention decision-making.

<http://crimemapping.edmontonpolice.ca/>

### **Sharing Experiences on a Common Subject Via the Internet**

*LDExperience.ca* is a site to help people affected by learning disabilities (LD) share their experiences; it accommodates stories from any family that wishes to contribute the story of their LD journey. By sharing stories and reading about the journeys and opinions of others, the creator (Kathryn Burke) hopes visitors and participants will gain personal insight.

Another example of sharing stories and experiences can be found at [www.edmontonstories.ca](http://www.edmontonstories.ca). This website, sponsored by the City of Edmonton, is a place where Edmontonians and visitors can tell their stories to the world. A typical story describes a particular moment or event when it all came together for a person – she or he realized something special, unique or valuable about Edmonton. Content areas are linked to provide visitors with more information in the key areas of tourism, business, and moving to or living in Edmonton.

### **Sharing News & Information Via the Internet**

Most community leagues have websites that contain information on their current programs and initiatives as well as their history, and a few community leagues in the southwest have been experimenting with Facebook. Register at Facebook and check out how Ermineskin, Yellowbird, Terwillegar, and The Ridge are using this form of social media to connect with members.

Also, for the past several years

SWAC (the Southwest Area Council of Community Leagues) has been using Google Groups to share information, minutes of meetings, and announcements.

### **SCHOOL ZONE**

SchoolZone is an Edmonton Public Schools site that provides parents, students, and teachers with secure access to school and student information. It allows them to interact on a regular basis by sharing school news, assignments, attendance and homework via the Internet whenever it is most convenient for them. Except for system malfunctions (rare), information can be accessed 24-7!

### **Insights E-letter**

Since the Winter of 2007 (just before I was elected), I have been inviting any interested people (and especially those who live in southwest Edmonton in Ward H) to join my Insights Email List. To this list of people, I email an e-letter about once every two – three weeks both to inform readers about what decisions are upcoming at the Board table and to seek feedback on those decisions proactively. The e-letter also includes information about upcoming activities and opportunities for involvement at Edmonton Public Schools and sometimes, those in the broader community as relevant to public education and supporting students to be successful at school.

I also post my e-letter as the introductory page on my website ([catherineripley.ca](http://catherineripley.ca)) and I link to this posting from Facebook. If you would like to receive the e-letter directly, please contact me at [Catherine.Ripley@epsb.ca](mailto:Catherine.Ripley@epsb.ca).

### **When English is not Your First Language**

Within Edmonton Public Schools, newcomers who have English Language learning needs are often referred to the district's English Language Support Services Center to receive a general welcome and orientation both to the Alberta

Education system and Edmonton Public Schools. Interpreter support is provided if needed. A preliminary needs assessment is undertaken, and the family is provided information about recommended school programs. Information is also provided regarding settlement support and other supports that the student and family may need. Please feel free to call the Centre directly at 780-441-2200 or 780-441-2201.

In the last several years the City of Edmonton has created a new Citizen and New Arrival Information Centre. Centrally located on the main floor of City Hall, the Centre offers assistance in over 150 languages. New arrivals can talk with an agent and pick up information. In addition, new (and old) Edmontonians can get information on services by calling the city's new 7 day a week/24 hour 311 telephone services.

### **The Living Library**

One of the projects that the SW Edmonton Community Mapping Project's Newcomers Sub-committee will be exploring is the Living Library as a way of sharing cultural and experiential information.

"The Human Library is an innovative method designed to promote dialogue, reduce prejudices, and encourage understanding. The main characteristics of the project are to be found in its simplicity and positive approach.

In its initial form the Human Library is a mobile library set up as a space for dialogue and interaction. Visitors to the Human Library are given the opportunity to speak informally with 'people on loan'; this latter group being extremely varied in age, sex and cultural background."

<http://living-library.org/what-is-the-living-library.html>