

Re-visioning Inner City and CommunityLINK Resources in Vancouver Schools

Final Report, February 2014

The Context for the Revisioning

In April 2013, the Vancouver Board of School Trustees passed the following motion clearly indicating the need for a comprehensive plan to deliver services to students:

That staff be requested to develop recommendations for an action plan, including staffing, resources, processes, and timelines for re-visioning/reviewing the VSB Inner-city Schools Program and for improving the coordination and integration of the Inner-city Schools Program and CommunityLINK programs and services.

The rationale for conducting this comprehensive examination of current services and programs is partially based on stakeholders' perceptions that the incidence and complexity of poverty has increased. Trustees heard that poverty continues to be concentrated in certain parts of the City, but it is more widespread throughout. Schools also report that they perceive the complexities of the children and families they are supporting have increased. Trustees believed these perceptions needed to be further explored and understood.

Poverty is a growing concern in Vancouver and British Columbia. In its Poverty Report Card, First Call's Annual Report of November 2013 noted that British Columbia has the worst rate of poverty of any province in Canada at 18.6%, or 20.7% if you only consider children under 6 years.

In Vancouver, the perception of those interviewed in the consultation (and supported by data) is that concentration of poverty in some areas is greater than it has been in past years and that poverty is presenting in more complex ways – especially with mental health complications.

In addition, we have been living through an era of cuts to education. There is a perception that to some extent, the added staff provided through Inner City has replaced what had been provided through regular staffing. To further compound the issues, our partner agencies have also been experiencing cuts and schools feel these additional cuts, as do families.

Inner City schools were implemented twenty-five years ago to enhance language and social emotional development and to increase parent and community involvement in schools where there were high populations of students who were disadvantaged by poverty. Each school received an allocation of staffing (a Project Teacher, Youth and Family Worker, Student Support Worker and a Neighbourhood Assistant). In addition, discretionary funds, a breakfast program, all day kindergarten and 3 junior kindergartens were supplied through the Inner City program. Throughout the years the model has essentially stayed the same with the exception of more schools being added to the list of Inner City

schools. The result is that staffing was spread further, but somewhat differentiated by need. The discretionary funding has also declined and the junior kindergarten classes were eliminated. Traditionally the Inner City program has been reviewed every 5 years, which essentially meant reexamining demographic information from around the city to determine where socioeconomic need existed. The funding for the Inner City Program is at the discretion of School Trustees and originates from the VBE's operating budget.

Since the inception of the Inner City Project, a number of new developments have occurred. In 2004, additional resources were allocated to Community School Teams (a new model at that time) which support children and families throughout the district, including those in the Inner City. Literacy funds for early intervention also have been made available to schools as they implement the VSB Early Intervention model that includes Reading Recovery. All Day Kindergarten is now available to all students. Strong Start Centres, drop in centres for preschool children and their care givers, have been opened in every Inner City designated school. New service delivery models for counselling, psychology, behaviour and speech language are being implemented. Programs that promote social-emotional learning are advanced and more readily available for schools to implement. New models for supporting Aboriginal children have been developed. Other businesses and private donors have begun to support schools in programs such as "Adopt a School".

CommunityLINK funding is provided to the Vancouver Board of Education (VBE) on an annual basis in the form of a grant from the Ministry of Education. Funding began in 2004 with a focus on providing the following activities to vulnerable students: nutrition supports, academic supports, behavioural and social emotional learning supports, and community connectedness supports. The two main vehicles through which these activities occur are the lunch program and the Community School Teams (CST). Lunch programs are provided at 43 schools throughout the district. The CST staff (Teacher, Youth and Family Worker and Community Schools Coordinator) are grouped into 12 hubs that are traditionally attached to a secondary school and the local elementary schools. The exception is on the west side of Vancouver where two CST teams serve 19 and 21 schools respectively. The CST model has not been reviewed since its inception. The allocation of resources for the lunch program was reviewed in 2009 with the last Inner City review.

The Process of Revisioning

In September 2013 the Board of Education approved a process for the review of Inner City and CommunityLINK resources. It was agreed the scope of the review would be more comprehensive than in the past and would resemble more of a 're-visioning' of resources. The big questions would be about how best to support students who come to school disadvantaged by poverty, how to work better with our partners who share responsibility for the families, and how to align and make the best use of the resources we currently allocate from both Inner City and CommunityLINK funds.

A Task Force (see Appendix 1) was established with membership from both internal stakeholders (Elementary and Secondary Principals, Elementary and Secondary Teachers, Canadian Union of Public

Employees, Professional and Administrative Staff, District Parents) and external partners (Human Early Learning Partnership, Ministry of Children and Families, Vancouver Coastal Health, Mental Health, Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society, Vancouver Parks and Recreation). The members of the Task Force met several times, providing advice about process and recommendations. More specifically, they developed lists of groups and individuals to be consulted (see Appendix 2), they assisted in creating a consultation package (see Appendix 3), they reviewed and revised a conceptual framework (see Appendix 4), reviewed a summary of what was found in the literature and from speaking to other jurisdictions (see Appendix 5), and developed a working description of what “poverty” is for the purposes of this work.

The consultant, Dr. Valerie Overgaard, and the Supervisor, Learning Services CommunityLINK and Inner City, Jessica Land, conducted many interviews and focus groups, in all close to forty. Questions were posted on the website for additional opportunities for participation. In addition all Task Force representatives consulted with members of the organizations they represent and provided this information as part of the consultation process.

Several hundred people have been involved in providing input to date, including many internal staff groups, external partners and key informants.

Poverty – a Working Description

In consulting with people about what makes a difference for the learning of children who come to school disadvantaged by poverty, the following description of what we mean by poverty was offered. Poverty is not simply low income. Rather, it is a:

Complex, extreme and diverse set of compounding layers, often generational, including:

- *economic pressures*
- *impoverished spirit*
- *food insecurity*
- *lack of adequate housing*
- *mental distress/illness/addictions*
- *physical ill health*
- *social marginalization, isolation, lack of social network*
- *little resiliency, lack of alternatives*

It is of note that this description has a close resemblance to the social determinants of health, a set of indicators in the area of health and development and for identifying issues about poverty and social injustice.

What We Learned from the Literature

Some points about poverty:

Poverty is either absolute (the complete lack of resources to sustain life) or relative (a standard that is defined in terms of the society in which an individual lives). Poverty is usually defined as more than a lack of income, including aspects of life such as social marginalization, poor health, mental stress, etc. This makes the indicators of poverty complicated. For example, on its own, income is not the best indicator.

The “social determinants of health” represent a view of the issues. In this view, education is one of many areas that needs to be strengthened in order to achieve good health and to put it another way, lack of education prevents good health. Other determinants are: income and social status, social support networks, employment/working conditions, physical environments, personal health practices and coping skills, healthy child development, biology and genetic endowment, health services, gender and culture.

What works to support the education of children who come from disadvantaged background?

Collaborative models that involve community partners are central in the literature about education for children who live in poverty. Collaboration is seen on a continuum where minimal partnership is co-location, moving to coordination, collaboration and finally integration. At a minimum partnership involves information sharing and at the most intense, programs are linked together. Models for collaboration have been discussed for decades, but are rarely successful. Some factors that are essential for success are outlined: common agenda, shared measurable results, mutually reinforcing activities, backbone support organizations.

A promising model in the literature is referred to as place-based. This approach focuses on building the capacity of local communities, encouraging local networks of referral and support, targeting benefits to economically disadvantaged families. There is a growing appreciation by governments at all levels – both domestically and internationally – of the importance of locating the capacity to plan and integrate services as close as possible to the individuals and communities that the services are intended to benefit. This tendency is driven by an understanding that services need to be integrated from the bottom up rather than top down; by a realization that integration requires a capacity not only to target individuals but also neighbourhoods; and by an appreciation that effective programming and delivery require tacit knowledge as well as sound analysis.

What works in classrooms and schools to support children who are disadvantaged due to poverty?

The literature focuses on five major areas: literacy, including early learning and early intervention; social emotional growth, including resiliency building; parent involvement; attendance, and culturally appropriate approaches.

For literacy, current effective practices involve a systemic approach that is comprehensive, incorporates early identification of needs, serves as preventative – identifying and assisting students before they fall behind. Early intervention is very effective for children who are disadvantaged by poverty and need one-to-one or small group work focused on their specific needs. Frequent assessment and monitoring are essential. Students need dedicated time for literacy learning and teaching that is culturally and

developmentally appropriate. Early learning experiences for children are an essential part of healthy childhood development.

Social-emotional learning is particularly important for vulnerable children. Teaching needs to be grounded in theory and research-based. Effective strategies include developmentally and culturally appropriate instruction. When selecting programs, a school-wide approach is most effective with coordination and sequential programming. Students need to feel they have at least one adult with whom they can connect. Related to this is a concept called school-connectedness. Creating a welcoming accepting atmosphere where students identify a connection to school provides an important protective factor for them. Out of school time programs in areas of poverty are important.

Family engagement has positive benefits for children's success at school, including higher academic achievement, better attendance, increased graduation rates, higher students' sense of competence, better self-regulatory skills, and beliefs about the importance of education. Successful strategies include outreach (such as the HIPPY Program), Family Literacy initiatives, parent-led sessions, information sharing about resources available, and mentoring (such as Moms to Moms).

Attendance is a critical factor for learning. In fact, just eighteen days of absences creates difficulties not only for the individual, but for the other children in the class, due to the disruptions. There are several strategies for increasing attendance and they involve motivation at the school and relationships with the families.

Students who come to school from impoverished homes have specific needs. They live in stress, which affects their cognition. They are likely to have lower vocabularies. They are often hungry and distracted by events at home. They may have attachment problems. Understanding and addressing their needs is essential for their learning.

Sources for this information came from the websites as well as journals and books. The list of sources is attached as Appendix 6.

What We Heard in the Consultations

A detailed summary of the input provided by groups and individuals has been developed and is being kept as a record for further work with schools. The record includes several very specific and practical strategies that should be further explored. In summary, the following themes were identified:

Basic Needs – need to be addressed. These include food, clothing, shelter, health and mental health support. Who should be providing these supports and how we work with our partners to ensure the families with children in our schools have access remain important questions.

Relationships are critical – both students and their families need to feel trust with staff and feel welcome in schools. This requires having the right staff and having continuity of staffing. It also means deliberately connecting children with caring adults through case management. Parenting workshops make a huge difference.

Focus – there is a need for clear goals and targets and schools need to be held accountable to them. Roles need clarity so that everyone is working together in a collaborative model. This common direction will assist internal relationships and those with our external partners.

Partnerships are essential - we need our partners for their expertise and resources. We need to collaborate more effectively in order to ensure families have access to supports they need, including basic needs, after school programs, medical and social support. The place-based approach is very promising.

Coordination - of supports is essential and much of this can be done centrally. Staff in schools are recreating the wheel. There needs to be clear direction and support from the District. The loss of a position of leadership at the District level has been felt in the Inner City.

Early Learning is critical - we need to consider reinstating Junior Kindergarten or some other means for helping students with school readiness. We should work with partners on childcare programs.

Literacy – good classroom teaching as well as early intervention are essential. There needs to be clear direction about this from the district and ongoing support provided for teachers.

Staffing – it is important to get the best teachers, the best support staff and the best leaders in schools where there is a critical mass of poverty. We then need to have clear expectations for all staff and provide them with the support they require. Differentiated staffing to meet unique needs is an important direction recommended many times.

Funding and Advocacy – the loss of resources throughout the school district and among partners has affected children who come from impoverished backgrounds disproportionately. The Inner City resources do not make up for losses, for example of Resource Team support, District Learning Services support, and support from MCFD, VCH, and others.

What the Data Tell us About the Prevalence of Poverty in our Schools

In past Inner City reviews, several different sources of data have been used to determine where the critical mass of students who live in poverty attend school. In the last two reviews, the District has relied heavily on the Social Services Index (SSI) – a figure provided by the Ministry of Education identifying the numbers of families with children attending the schools who live on Income Assistance, and the numbers of children in the school who are in care. In the current revisioning process, the SSI is being used again for two reasons. First, the index is a source of school-specific data that is tracked over time. Second, there is a very strong correlation between the SSI and other data derived from school enrolment and neighbourhood information.

For example, we considered a number of neighbourhood measures from the Census in 2011 and National Household Survey conducted in 2011. The data from these sources is intended to be representative of neighbourhood populations in the catchment areas, some of which may or may not be

reflected in the local school. We looked at the following neighbourhood data: Aboriginal Population*, Income Assistance*, Unemployment*, Income <\$30,000, Education – no high school completion, Single Female Parents with at least two children, and Recent Immigrant Population. The first six of these indicators have a correlation to the SSI of 0.79546806. Those three with asterisks have an even higher correlation to the SSI of 0.8421155. There was no correlation with Recent Immigrants. The high correlations, in essence, mean that any of these data sets, except Recent Immigrants, show a strong relationship to the SSI (not a cause and effect relationship). When these neighbourhood data are matched to school catchments they identify for the most part the same schools as the SSI.

Similarly we reviewed five school indicators using the BC Student Information System and 1701 Enrolment Data: Student Mobility, Special Needs - students in behavior categories, Attendance – over 18 days missed, ELL students, and Aboriginal students. Once again there were very high correlations on three of these. The correlation of Aboriginal students to SSI is 0.825720108. The correlation of Behaviour designations to SSI is 0.637851552. The correlation of Absenteeism as Classes Missed to SSI is 0.845825896. Again, this means in essence that any of these three data sets identify mostly the same schools as the SSI does.

Mental health data from Vancouver Coastal Health is provided for their five networks. Although the Networks are not matched to catchment areas, the schools within each can be identified. The network with the highest mental health acute care incidence corresponds with the highest needs schools – and these numbers are almost three-fold the amount in other networks.

Results from the Early Development Inventory (EDI) also match the schools with the highest needs. Schools identified as neediest on the SSI are in the neighbourhoods where high numbers of students are identified with several areas of vulnerability from the EDI.

With such high correlations with these other indicators, because the SSI is based on actual students attending the school (rather than the residents that live in the neighbourhood), and because we used these same data five years ago, we are once again using the SSI to identify schools with the highest complexities related to poverty. We are using an adjusted five year SSI average where the average number of SSI students and the average school SSI percentages are added together. This helps 'level the playing field' between small schools who may have smaller SSI populations (but high percentage of students) and large schools that have large numbers of SSI students (but a small percentage of students).

Schools Identified as Having the Highest Concentrations of Poverty

Although it is true that poverty exists throughout the school district, it is very much concentrated in a smaller number of schools. In developing recommendations we attended to the schools with highest concentrations of poverty because the needs in these schools are so great. Yet, we have also attempted through our recommendations to address the fact that students who come to schools where there are smaller numbers of students disadvantaged by poverty also need support.

The attached chart represents a ranking of school needs based on the SSI. The figures for Sir William MacDonald School are “masked” for reasons of confidentiality. The numbers are small enough to be used to identify individuals.

Adjusted 5 year (% + #)

Rank		5 yr average 2008-2012			Adjusted
		Enrol	SSI %	SSI#	% + #
1	Sir William Macdonald Community	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
2	Lord Strathcona Community Elementary	528	27.3%	144	171.5
3	Grandview Elementary	166	43.7%	72	116.1
4	Admiral Seymour Elementary	137	45.4%	62	107.4
5	Britannia Community Elementary	177	38.4%	68	106.2
6	Thunderbird Elementary	297	25.2%	75	100.2
7	Queen Alexandra Elementary	190	27.4%	52	79.6
8	Tillicum Community Annex	105	30.3%	32	62.1
9	Hastings Community Elementary	620	7.6%	47	55.0
10	Florence Nightingale Elementary	247	13.9%	34	48.3
11	Lord Selkirk Elementary	608	6.7%	41	47.3
12	Captain James Cook Elementary	338	10.7%	36	46.9
13	Sir Sandford Fleming Elementary	463	8.2%	38	46.0
14	John Henderson Elementary	511	7.4%	38	45.2
15	Lord Roberts Elementary	435	8.4%	37	45.0
20	Mount Pleasant Elementary	187	13.7%	26	39.3
32	General Brock Elementary	225	7.4%	17	24.0

In this set of numbers, both Mount Pleasant and General Brock dropped significantly in the ranking and would not be considered for additional supports.

Proposed Recommendations - Second Consultation Phase

Based on what we heard and what we read, a set of recommendations was developed and circulated widely for further consultation. Three public meetings were held, the information was provided to schools and was posted on the website, and a specific Task Force Meeting for stakeholder feedback was held. Many people participated by attending the meetings, completing feedback forms, and sending messages via email. In the course of the consultation, a number of additional points were raised.

On the whole, there was substantial support for the direction of the original recommendations, especially the place-based strategy. The notable exceptions were from the school communities of Queen Alexander and Mount Pleasant. In both cases, the many participants from the school communities emphasized that the SSI numbers do not adequately reflect the needs of the schools. Other schools also expressed concerns about changes to resources. There was great support for the longer implementation time and for the consultation that will be undertaken in each school that will allow some of these issues to be addressed.

Another recommendation also came into question and that is the implementation of Junior Kindergarten. While everyone agrees that there is a need for early learning opportunities, both school staff and the community organizations questioned whether the old model of Junior Kindergarten actually would meet those needs.

The question of transition time for schools to gain or lose resources was also a matter for considerable comment. The report was initially silent on these matters.

There were a number of specific concerns, particularly from employee groups, about the clarity around roles, purpose of the new committee, apparent focus on accountability, the direction to have staff become district based, and the waitlists in needy schools for more psycho-educational assessments.

Finally, although as already stated, there was substantial support, there is also concern about taking resources from one area to support other areas, even though the other areas may have greater needs. It was also noted that there continues to be poverty across the district. Problems such as experienced by the working poor and in some new immigrant communities were noted. Partly as a response to these concerns, there was also great support for working together to advocate for adequate educational funding and for a poverty reduction plan. The Board was complimented for the hard work already undertaken to this end.

Revised Recommendations

With revisions based on the latest consultation, we believe that the recommendations when implemented have the potential to make positive differences for those students that come to school disadvantaged due to poverty. In spite of the concern raised about redistributing resources rather than adding resources, the recommendations continue to work within the funding envelope currently allocated. It is recommended:

1. That the schools that are in greatest need receive enhanced support and that it be leveled into three tiers with differentiated support provided to each tier.
 - The terms Inner City and Community School Teams will no longer be used. Rather, enhanced support will be provided to meet the additional needs of schools that have high concentrations of poverty.
 - Annexes will be considered part of the Main school and decisions about whether and how to share resources will be determined based on relative need.
 - Current Inner City and CommunityLINK budgets and staff will be aligned to provide the enhanced support.
 - Positions will be carefully described and aligned to meet goals and targets. Positions will also be aligned with current staffing and programming in Learning Services. Schools will be consulted to determine the staffing most likely to support the needs of the school (though some requirements will not be negotiable - see descriptions below). The positions will become District-based non-enrolling allocated to schools.
 - Although assignment to tiers will be for a five year period, an annual review will allow the District to be more responsive to significant community shifts.
 - The Ministry of Education Social Services Index (SSI) will be used to assign schools to levels.
 - During the 2014-2015 school year, consultation with all schools identified for enhanced support will be conducted. Implementation of the tiered levels of support will begin September 2015. In the interim, some changes will be implemented (see implementation schedule below).
 - For level one schools, there will be:
 - Universal breakfast and lunch programs
 - Junior Kindergarten – or some other early learning opportunity found to most effective after further consultation
 - Special Education Assistant assigned to each kindergarten class
 - Full time Literacy Specialist (Teacher whose role is both to work with students and to initiate collaborative inquiry with school colleagues on effective literacy practices for students who live in poverty)
 - Social Emotional Support (could be Youth and Family Worker or Counselling time)
 - At least two additional CUPE positions (flexible hours will be considered so that attendance and out of school supports can be in place early morning and later in the day)
 - Out of School Programming – either through Kidsafe or an equivalent model working with Community Schools Coordinators and community partners.
 - For level two schools, there will be:
 - Universal breakfast and lunch programs
 - Early learning opportunities designed as summer programs

- Full time Literacy Specialist (Teacher whose role is both to work with students and to initiate collaborative inquiry with school colleagues on effective literacy practices)
 - Two additional CUPE positions (flexible hours will be considered so that attendance and out of school supports can be in place early morning and later in the day)
 - Out of School Programming – either through Kidsafe or an equivalent model working with Community School Coordinators and community partners.
- For level three schools, there will be:
- Breakfast and/or lunch programs provided on an as-needed basis similar to the current “Lunch to Go Program”.
 - Early learning opportunities designed as summer programs
 - Literacy Specialist (teacher whose role is both to work with students and to initiate collaborative inquiry with school colleagues on effective literacy practices)
 - One CUPE position (flexible hours will be considered so that attendance and out of school supports can be in place early morning and later in the day)
 - Out of School Programming – either through Kidsafe or an equivalent model working with Community School Coordinators and community partners community partners.
- *Note: actual numbers of staff and the kinds of programs for each school will be determined by the enrolment of the schools and where applicable associated annex, the number of other district staff assigned, community partnerships already in place and other variables that differentiate need.

Rationale:

- By focusing more resources on schools that are clearly in the highest needs category, there is a greater likelihood of creating the equity envisioned in the original Inner City Project. There has been a dilution of supports over the years and it has been felt most intensely in the six schools in communities where there is the most concentrated poverty. These schools are all located near Social Housing and thus will likely not change their demographics in the next five years.
- While actual staffing in each school will be different based on need, some foundational positions will be required to ensure support for Early Learning, Literacy, Social Emotional support, and attendance.

Further to this recommendation:

It is recommended that further consideration be given to the placement of Queen Alexandra School in Tier I. There was considerable evidence that the school is experiencing greater needs

in the last year and increases in the SSI over the last two years. It was also pointed out that Queen Alexandra is one of the few schools that does not have a nearby Community Centre. Early learning opportunities are therefore harder for families to find. There is transition housing that creates issues of poverty. There is also a growing Aboriginal population.

It is recommended that during the consultation next year, Mount Pleasant School be considered for ongoing support, perhaps through CommunityLINK staffing. Although it is clear the neighbourhood is changing, there continues to be poverty in some parts, and a Safe House in the catchment. There is also a social housing project that may affect the school enrolment. Some of the neighbourhood data, including the EDI confirm this situation. Further discussion with the school about the needs and impact are necessary.

It is recommended that the consultation take into consideration the unique aspects of each school. Size, for example is very critical. The same supports that might be required in a large school like Strathcona are not required in a small one like Macdonald. A large school such as Hastings that also has a very needy Annex may need more support than a smaller school with no Annex. Other features such as the culture of the school and the role of staff in creating that culture are also important to consider.

It is recommended that the role of Literacy Specialist be carefully described and that the positions become district staff. In the initial implementation of this change of staffing it is recommended that Human Resources determine, in accordance with the Collective Agreement, a process to allow current teachers be grand-parented into the roles or organized back into their schools as they choose; and, to allow the grand-parented people be organized back into their schools when they decide to vacate the role in the future.

It is recommended that the District temporarily hire a person with Early Childhood background to work with the Supervisor of Early Learning to conduct a needs/impact assessment of Junior Kindergarten, working with schools, families, and the community. The goal of the assessment is to find the best way to provide early learning supports for Tier 1 schools.

It is recommended that next year be a transition year. With exceptions noted below, schools will maintain the same supports they currently have, including staff and meal programs. The exceptions will be that the District will consult with Sir Sanford Fleming School, Lord Roberts School, and General Brock School to identify their most urgent need for limited staffing for the 2014-2015 school year. Over this school year, with consultation, ongoing staffing needs for all schools will be undertaken.

2. That the VSB take a more active District role in the place-based work underway in the neighbourhood of the Strathcona and Seymour catchments, in order to better support and further develop, with the partner agencies, this model of community development. VSB

resources would be allocated for the model and collaborative planning among the partners would direct those resources based on shared goals and specific outcomes.

- It is proposed that the VSB commit to find financial and in-kind contributions for the work. This could involve funds, space, staff time, and other such resources, as determined in the collaborative planning process.
- The VSB will work with partners who participated on this Task Force to seek commitment to formally join us in a collaborative plan that might include allocation of current resources to support the model in new ways.
- The United Way of the Lower Mainland (UWLM) currently has two projects with place-based approaches being piloted in Surrey and the Tri-Cities. The VSB staff will meet with UWLM personnel to seek their support and to learn from their experience as well.

Rationale:

- Research of place-based models is very promising and there is considerable development in this area in the United States (Harlem Children's Zone, Promise Neighbourhoods, for example) and in the Great Vancouver area. A place-based approach involves shared goals, well-coordinated collective action, building capacity of the local community, bringing services to the clients, and focusing resources in targeted places. It is about going deep into a neighbourhood with significant resources to actually make a difference. The Strathcona area has been involved in this work for several years. The VSB has already partnered with the group on a grant proposal. We will also be working with the group on the Our Place Graduation Strategy which is funded through a grant obtained by the community. We are also working with Pacific Community Resources Society on a community engagement process in the neighbourhood. Strathcona Community Centre and Ray-Cam Community Cooperative Centre are well invested in this approach. The schools in the area are involved at their level. There are resources from Mental Health and British Columbia Children's Hospital working with the neighbourhood. This recommendation would suggest both resources from the VSB and formal support through ongoing involvement at a management level.
 - This model would give us new ideas about focusing our work and partnering effectively that could inform our work in other neighbourhoods.
3. That two positions be created to allow for more centralized coordination, support and supervision of staff allocated for enhanced support.
- One position would be a PASA staff assigned to oversee the implementation and monitoring of the recommendations. This would involve networking with the schools and external agencies to develop and then support the goals and targets, working with school principals to coordinate, supervise, and support the staff, assisting with the review of school meal program, and being a consistent presence in helping to advance the model in the Strathcona and Seymour neighbourhoods. The coordinator would be

responsible for planning professional development with staff and for providing opportunities to share ideas for effective practice.

- A second position would be a CUPE staff assigned to provide coordination and support for schools in areas such as developing inventories of community supports and grants available, assisting with the coordination of donated clothing and other charitable contributions, supporting food programs, and other work currently being replicated in each school.

Rationale:

- A consistent concern expressed especially by internal stakeholders was the lack of coordination from the district. Since the position of District Principal for Inner City was eliminated, schools feel they have been left to their own devices. School staff believe they are each creating their own ways of addressing the needs and feel unsupported in their work. The principals, teachers and support staff who met with us were clear that this is not a reflection on any person currently at the district level, but rather a comment on the consequences of not having a position dedicated to the work.

4. That the school meal programs be reviewed over the 2014-2015 school year in order to align with the tiers and to explore additional service models to support schools not provided the enhanced support.
 - The VSB will continue to make overtures to work with the Adopt-a-School personnel and other charitable partners in order to provide a responsive and coordinated effort to support children's nutritional needs.

Rationale:

- There have been considerable demographic shifts since the last Inner City Review in 2009 and the school meal programs need to realign resources to address the changes. Poverty exists throughout the District and we need new models to address the nutritional needs of students in schools beyond those identified for enhanced support.
5. That clear goals, specific outcomes, and targets with timelines be outlined for schools receiving the enhanced support. These goals would be in the areas of literacy, social emotional growth, parent and community engagement, and attendance.
 - The current goal areas for the Inner City Program will be more specifically developed in goal statements. In the area of literacy, for example, there could be consideration of specific goals for kindergarten entrance, reading at grade level by grade three, successful transitions to grade 8, retention of students through grade 10, and graduation results. In the area of social emotional growth, goals could specifically target the building of resilience factors through research-based programs and practices and provision of out of school time activities. For parent engagement, schools could develop parent engagement plans to include such areas as increasing the numbers of parents

visiting the school, attending report card meetings, and or the numbers of parents involved in parent education sessions.

- A goal for attendance will be added, and again, specific targets and measures will be developed.
- The goals, outcomes and targets will be developed over the following year in consultation with the schools and community.
- School outcomes will be reported as part of an annual report on progress to the new Monitoring and Implementation Committee (see recommendation below) and to the Board of Education. These reports will be integrated with School Growth Plans and CommunityLINK reports already required. Annual reviews may refine or change targets as warranted.

Rationale:

- The goals for the Inner City Program have been consistent with what research tells us about what makes a difference for children who come to school disadvantaged by poverty. However, they are currently not specific and there is no consistent monitoring of outcomes. In the consultation we heard that this lack of clarity contributes to a lack of coherence both internally and externally. We were advised many times that clear and specific goals would assist with collaborative processes with other VSB staff and with partner agencies.
- An attendance goal has been added because research is clear that attendance is critical. Even 18 days lost in a year for one child affects both the learning of that child and the learning of the whole class. We need to focus on this area and will have a goal and targets for schools to work towards.
- Monitoring and refining the work over the years is essential to maintain consistency and integrity of the goals and outcomes. Such monitoring and refining will also allow the district be more responsive to needs identified along the way.

Further to this recommendation:

There was considerable support for the need to focus more specifically and to follow the results of student progress through setting and monitoring targets. However, there is also concern that the process will be burdensome and take away from the direct support of the needs of students. This concern must be taken into consideration in the implementation of this recommendation so that the focus continues to be the needs of the children, not the assessments and the reporting requirements.

6. That a model for tracking students, an internal Case Management system, be developed in consultation with schools. Specifically, in the 2014-2015 school year, that a system be created or adapted to support tracking case management, and technological hardware be purchased for

relevant staff to use. The work currently being undertaken by the Aboriginal Education staff will be reviewed in order to find areas where alignment should occur.

- Over the 2014-2015, as the system is being developed, in consultation with school and district staff, a process will also be developed to match what we know about effective case management practice and efficient use of staff time.
- A process for the identification of students who will be connected through the case management system will also be developed with school and district staff. Current work undertaken by schools to identify vulnerable students for Community School Teams may assist with this.
- Ultimately, it would be ideal to work with our partners using similar tracking. This would involve significant work together regarding privacy laws.

Rationale:

- Both research and the advice provided through consultation indicate a need to be more deliberate about connecting with students in need. The current resources provided through CommunityLINK, Inner City, Aboriginal Education, Special Education and English Language Learning often work with the same children and families and yet we heard a consistent message: there are many overlapping services but many gaps. Several people pointed to the success of the work being done by the Aboriginal staff to be more deliberate and to allow more coordination and collaboration in the support of students. Furthermore, while many students report having a meaningful connection with a caring adult at school, many do not. This process will conscientiously attempt to establish those connections.

Further to this recommendation:

There was some concern raised about the cost, in both time and financial resources, of a system to track students. At the same time, the need to continue to ensure students do not fall through the cracks was acknowledged. In implementing this recommendation, there is a need to find the balance between meeting the needs of students and the human and financial costs of maintain a system and the technology to support it.

7. That the position of Community Schools Coordinator be refocused on establishing, maintaining and evaluating partnerships as opposed to direct program provision in the community in order to bring resources to students and schools.

Rationale:

- The position of Community Schools Coordinator was strongly praised in our consultations. The leadership exhibited and the ability of those in the positions to build relationships and establish links for students and their families, contribute greatly to the support of students who are vulnerable and/or disadvantaged due to poverty. Ensuring

this is the direction of the role is important. We know from research that out of school programming is an extremely effective way to build children's resilience. Many community organizations have the resources to build those programs. We need to focus on ensuring the most vulnerable students access the programs. A model initiated by Kidsafe may be instructive here. Kidlink ensures that identified children in grade eight get involved in at least one relevant after school program. Working with the schools, the Community Schools Coordinator and Youth and Family Worker could identify the children and ensure they access programs that would keep them safe and engaged after school and over holidays. In addition, the revisioning consultations illustrated that partnerships with community agencies are extremely important and that the Community Schools Coordinators role should be more aligned to initiate and support a continuum of partnerships and to evaluate the quality of those partnerships.

8. That the role of Youth and Family Worker be realigned to work directly with other enhanced staffing in the identified schools. And, that flexible schedules for staff be considered to align with school staff and to support the goals of the enhanced support. Should funds be available, additional YFW positions be created to support vulnerable students beyond those identified for enhanced support.

Rationale:

- The support provided by the Youth and Family Workers is highly valued by schools. But, there were several comments from those in the role, and those working with them, suggesting that role clarity was often lacking. They remarked that this sometimes resulted in overlaps and gaps. It will be important to focus the work of the YFWs on the goals of the schools receiving enhanced support and to complement and supplement the work of other staff focusing on the same goals.
9. That there no longer be teacher positions on the Community School Teams. Instead, that three fte District-based roles for Transition Teachers be created and that the work of these teachers be focused on the secondary schools where there are the highest numbers of students who come from impoverished backgrounds and where there is not already transition support.
 - The role of the teachers would be to support transition from grade seven to grade eight. The teachers would work with the elementary schools in the catchment of schools identified for enhanced support. The goal would be to ensure every grade seven student makes a successful transition to secondary school. The work could involve connecting with the grade seven teachers to add skills support for students who require it, following those students to grade eight and providing them access to homework clubs or other support mechanisms, and providing skills support blocks at the secondary schools. The case management system and coordination with Aboriginal Education staff would be critical for this work.

Rationale:

- The Community School Team Teacher position is very difficult to do effectively. The numbers of students, the diverse range of supports required, the sheer number of school staff to work with, and the geographical area to cover mean that it is virtually impossible to form the necessary relationships and effect great change. The resources currently allocated for these roles could be used more effectively in a focused way to provide the support envisioned for the tiers of enhanced support, such as Junior Kindergarten.
- One of the comments we heard many times was that the elementary schools are able to nurture the students, but they often get lost in grade eight due to the size and structure of secondary schools. The three teacher positions proposed here, would focus entirely on the students in the level one and two schools to support their successful transition to secondary.

Further to this recommendation:

It is recommended that in reviewing the needs and supports in place for the successful transition of students to secondary school, the role of the Aboriginal Enhancement staff be considered. Where there is already sufficient support for most students, the resources of the new Transition Teachers would be assigned to other schools according to need.

10. That Britannia Secondary School continue to be resourced with an additional counsellor to work with students who continue to need more intense support.

Rationale:

- The school population at Britannia is currently benefitting from additional counselling time. Although small, the school has considerable needs. Yet, because it is small, the school counselling and other resource staff allocation is limited. Enhanced support will allow the school to continue to address the needs of the most vulnerable students.
11. That the current Inner City Advisory Committee be disbanded and that a new Committee for Implementation and Monitoring of Enhanced Support be created.
 - The Committee would be composed of representatives from the same organizations currently sitting on the Task Force: Vancouver Elementary Principals and Vice Principals, Vancouver Secondary School Administrators, Vancouver Elementary Teachers, Vancouver Secondary Teachers, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Professional and Administrative Staff, District Parent Advisory Council, Human Early Learning Partnership, Ministry of Children and Family Development, Vancouver Coastal Health, Vancouver Coastal Health - Mental Health, Vancouver Parks and Recreation, Ministry of Housing and Social Development and Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society, plus the Vancouver Police Department, and the City.
 - The Committee would be co-chaired by an Associate Superintendent and the new PASA Coordinator Position for Enhanced Support.

- Vancouver School District would request that partner organizations appoint the same people who sit on the current Task Force, or someone at their equivalent level in the organization.
- The major role of the Committee would be to commit to the goals and outcomes, to commit to work together to achieve the goals, and to monitor and report on the outcomes annually. Advice for the ongoing support of students who are disadvantaged due to poverty would be provided by stakeholders through this committee.

Rationale:

- The model of the Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement and its Implementation and Monitoring Committee has been a successful direction for Aboriginal student success. The level of commitment and the ongoing accountability for the work is embedded in the model. The proposal is to use the successful strategies from that model to support the goals in schools with enhanced support.

Further to this recommendation:

During the consultation, students provided important insight into the kinds of things that allow for their success in school. The new Committee should find a way to incorporate meaningful student voice into their work. This could involve focus groups or student forums, or other means whereby students are able to contribute meaningfully.

There was also an important point made about the need for principles for implementing the recommendations – especially that they be culturally sensitive. The new Committee will be tasked with establishing such a set of principles.

12. That the Board continue to advocate for a poverty reduction plan in British Columbia and for adequate funding in education.

- The Board will work with internal stakeholders, other public partners, and agencies whose purpose is aligned with this direction at municipal, provincial and federal levels with a goal of influencing the Province to implement a poverty reduction plan.
- The Board will advocate provincially with all its partners for adequate educational funding in order to provide resources to mitigate the barriers faced by those children who are disadvantaged because they live in poverty.

Rationale:

- This province has the worst record in the country for rates of childhood poverty. This is a concern for everyone in the province. Other provinces who have implemented plans have made progress and are seeing changes. The Board needs to seek out the other

public partners and agencies with whom they can work to advocate for a poverty reduction plan in British Columbia.

- In the meantime, there are children who come to school disadvantaged and we need to provide additional supports to mitigate those effects. Funding cuts have made it ever more difficult just to provide basic support. Additional funds to provide equity are essential if the children who live in poverty are to have a chance at school success.

13. That a district fund be set aside for students, not attending a school that is receiving enhanced services, for support with basic necessities such as eye glasses, orthotics, cold weather clothing, transportation, school fees and others on a case by case basis. This fund would be administered by the new staff positions at the district. Specific criteria would be determined in 2014-15.

Rationale:

- The consultations revealed that poverty does exist elsewhere in the system but in much smaller concentrations. Principals stated that if a fund were available they could help needy students and in turn mitigate some the concerns.

14. That the implementation plan for these changes be phased in over the next two years. The work would be guided by the Implementation and Monitoring Committee. A first task would be to develop a set of principles to guide the work. Specifically, implementation will be phased in as follows:

- Goals, outcomes, and targets will be developed with the identified schools and communities over the 2014-2015 school year for implementation in September 2015.
- Work be undertaken in the 2014-2015 school year to work with identified schools to establish staffing through a consultation process in each school with a goal for full implementation in 2015-2016.
- A needs/impact assessment of Junior Kindergarten be undertake in the fall of 2014.
- Summer programs for pre-kindergarten will be implemented in the summer of 2015.
- School and Student Support Workers will be assigned to kindergarten classes in Tier 1 schools effective September 2014.
- The formal District participation in the Strathcona-Seymour Neighbourhood place-based work will be implemented for September 2014.
- The District Coordinator and Support positions be implemented in spring 2014.
- The school meal program will be reviewed during the 2014-2015 school year for implementation in September 2015.
- The case management system will be designed and technology purchased in the 2014-2015 school year for implementation in September 2015.
- The work of the Community Schools Coordinators will be refocused over the 2014-2015 school year, with agreements reviewed and measures adopted or adapted effective September 2015.

- The work of the Youth and Family Workers will be aligned over the 2014-2015 school year.
- Teachers in the Community School Team positions will be surplus in spring 2014 and the three new Transition positions be implemented for September 2014.
- The new Implementation and Monitoring Committee will be established in the spring of 2014.
- A district fund, with criteria, to support students not attending a school receiving enhanced services will be established in the 2014-15 school year.

Rationale:

- It will be important to work with staff and community to make meaningful and appropriate changes in staffing and programming. Given the timeline, this work would have to be undertaken in the 2014-15 school year. At the same time, there is great need for change, and there are several aspects of the recommendations that can be implemented immediately for the benefit of the children identified. This phasing in will allow both the thoughtful implementation of the tiers and staffing, and the immediate addressing of specific needs like coordination and early learning.

Promising Practices – Service Needs Identified

In addition to these specific directions, we believe we need to develop a list of the promising practices identified by individuals throughout the consultation period. These could be explored with school staff over the course of the next few years. Some examples would include: programs that address student anxiety suggested by parents who work with FORCE – an organization of parents who provide support with issues of mental health; literacy practices noted by staff in our own schools, parent engagement programs, a school based mental health approach used in Burnaby, culturally relevant curriculum developed in Toronto for working with students in their Inner City, early learning programs for pre-kindergarten provided in Surrey, Speech Language support, organizational arrangements for supporting grade eight students, and many more.

An issue arose in the discussions about children who live in the catchment of a school with enhanced resources, but who travel to a program in another school. Learning Services staff will be working on ways to track that issue and find ways to support the children who are affected.

There was a need expressed during the consultation for more timely assessments of students who come to school disadvantaged by poverty. A concern about long waitlists for psycho-educational assessments was noted. Recent conversations with Learning Services staff indicate there are several issues at play here. For example, there is a question about what kind of assessment might be most effective to support the learning of the students? Psycho-educational, pediatric, or other? If the pediatric, how do we work more closely with our partners, especially Health partners? Is this kind of partnership something that might be informed by our place-based work in the Strathcona Community? What is the

role of family counselling to address the issue? How do we best support the needs of the early learners and get support to children before they attend school? Learning Services has agreed to further explore the issues in this light.

Another strong need was also expressed for additional support from Speech Language Pathologists. Students who come to school disadvantaged by poverty often have need additional support for oral language development. Learning Services staff have agreed to explore the issue and see if resources can be located to support this need. Again, early learning may be an entry point for this kind of support.

Conclusion

Although the task set was for a re-visioning of Inner City and CommunityLINK resources, the end result has actually to some extent been to return to the roots of the Inner City Project. Supports lost along the way are proposed to be added to the schools with the greatest need. There continues to be a large number of schools supported, but by differentiating the staffing, it is hoped that things will not result in diluted effects.

Similarly, the role of the Community School Teams, especially that of the Coordinator is more in line with original thinking. The role of that teacher as part of that team has been acknowledged to be a very challenging one since its inception. By focusing the role of a few teachers on a specific task in areas of the greatest needs, there is hope the resources will be seen to be more beneficial.

Finally, the hope of a new approach in working with community and partners is a very promising one that may bear implications across the district and the city in years to come. While a place-based approach is not a new concept in itself, the current commitment is one that bodes well for greater success than has been achieved in the past.

Appendix 1-a

Members of the Task Force

Monica Moberg, Chair, District Parent Advisory Council

Kurt Heinrich, Public Relations Manager, representing PASA

Jenny Chin-Peterson, Principal Elsie Roy Elementary, representing VEPVPA

Geoff Taylor, Principal Britannia Secondary, representing VASSA

Anna Chudnovsky, Teacher Strathcona Elementary, representing VESTA

Sylvia Metzner, 1st Vice President, VSTA

Joey Lau, Peer to Peer School and Student Support, representing CUPE

Carley Romas, Youth and Family Worker, Tupper Young Moms Program, representing CUPE

Monica Stokl, Manager, VCH-Vancouver Public Health

Mike White, Youth Services Manager, MCFD

Sohan Singh, Director of Programs, VACFSS

Gillian Corless, Core Projects Director, HELP

Mary Dowdall, Manager, VCH-Child and out Mental Health

Harvey Eng, Community Recreation Supervisor, Strathcona Community Centre

Appendix 1 – b

Re-visioning Inner City Supports and Services 2013-2014

The Terms of Reference for the Task Force

A membership consisting of internal stakeholders and external agencies involved in supporting families of children who are disadvantaged by the complexities of living in poverty.

The role of the group is to:

- Advise on the Process for the Re-visioning of the Inner City Supports and Services: consultation process, timeline, and activities within the parameters established by the Board
- Consider information provided through reviews of the literature, reports from other jurisdictions, and input from consultation processes.
- Advise on recommendations for supports and services for children who come to school disadvantaged as a result of the complexities of poverty.

Appendix 1-c

Principles for Guiding the Process of the Inner City Re-visioning

The big question is what makes a difference in the education for children who are disadvantaged because of poverty and how can the school district respond?

1. Focus on the purpose
2. Remember – we are an educational institution with educational outcomes as our primary responsibility
3. Seek information from many sources: people in the field , people with key information, research literature, other jurisdictions
4. Address the issue of poverty as a complex one that exists throughout the city
5. Be open in our thinking, focused on the purpose and not on the problem or status quo
6. Examine the resources currently in place across various VSB sources, including Inner City, CommunityLINK, Aboriginal Education, Special Education
7. Consider how to make the best use of the resources we have from the different sources
8. Consider the possible contributions of others and how partnerships can help
9. Look for consensus in developing a course of action

Appendix 2

Inner City/ CommunityLINK Revisioning – November / December 2013

Information Gathering (Interviews, Focus Groups, etc.)

Target Audience	Group	Type (Interview/ Focus Group)	Sample Size	When
PARENTS	The F.O.R.C.E	Focus Group	2	Tues Nov 19, 2013 1:00-2:30pm
	Aboriginal Mother Center	Focus Group	11	Tues Nov 26, 2013 1:30 pm
	DPAC	Organization Consultation		
	PAC	Focus Group		Various
	Immigrant Parents	Through SWIS		Various

Target Audience	Group	Type (Interview/ Focus Group)	Sample Size	When
STUDENTS	Alternative Students	Focus Group	12	Thurs Oct 24, 2013 12:35-1:20
	Elementary Students (IC School)	Focus Group	10	Dec 12 lunch

Target Audience	Group	Type (Interview/ Focus Group)	Sample Size	When
INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS	VEPVPA	Organization Consultation		
	Elementary Principals	Interviews	4	Various
	IC Principals / VP	Focus Group	10	Dec 4 8 - 930 am
	VASSA	Organization Consultation Interviews		
	VESTA	Organization Consultation		
	Elementary Teachers (IC Project Teachers)	Focus Group	10	Nov 26, 2013 830-10 am
	VSTA	Organization Consultation		
	Secondary and Elementary Teachers (CST)	Focus Group	10	Dec 6, 2013 1030 - noon
	CUPE	Organization Consultation		
	YFW / SSB (IC)	Focus Group	5	Nov 28, 2013 830-10 am
	YFW / SSB (CST)	Focus Group	5	Nov 22, 8:30 - 10
	SSA (IC)	Focus Group	6	Dec 5, 2013 830-10 am
	PASA	Association Consultation		
	Community Schools Coordinators (CST)	Focus Group	10	Thurs Oct 24, 2013 9-11 am
	School Staff - General	Lunch room drop-in	20	Nov 26 lunch
	School Staff - General	Lunch room drop-in	14	Dec 4 lunch
	School Staff - General	Lunch room drop-in	12	Dec 9 lunch

School Staff - General	Lunch room drop-in	16	Dec 10 lunch
CST Governance Table	West 1	20	Tues Oct 22, 2013 8:45 – 9:45 am
Templeton CST Hub (General invitation)	Focus Group	7	Nov 21, 2013 3:30-5:30pm
Early Learning Coordinator	Interview	1	Thurs Nov 21 11:30 – 1:00
Learning Services Dept Meeting	Focus Group	35	Fri Nov 15 8:30 – 10:30
District Aboriginal Staff	Focus Group	25	Thurs Dec 5, 2013 1:15-2:00 pm
Alternative Program Staff	Focus Group	17	Nov 26 330-5pm
Area Counsellors	Focus Group	20	Wed Dec 18 130-230pm

Target Audience	Group	Type (Interview/ Focus Group)	Sample Size	When
EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS	UNYA	Focus Group	3	Tues Nov 19, 2013 10 am
	Ray-Cam	Interview	1	Fri Nov 8 9:30-11:00 am
	Network of Inner City Community Services	Interview	1	Fri Nov 8 2-4pm
	VCH	Agency Consultation		
	MCFD	Agency Consultation		
	VACFSS	Agency Consultation		

H.E.L.P	Agency Consultation			
Parks and Recreation	Focus Group	5		Fri Nov 29, 10 am
Moms to Moms/Sunnyhill	Interview	1		Wed Nov 27 10 am
City of Vancouver	Interview	2		Monday Nov 18 1030-noon
VICES / VEPVPA	Interview / Focus Group	19		Wed Nov 27, 2013 2-4 pm
Kidsafe	Interview	1		Tues Dec 3, 2013 5pm
Kidsafe	Interview	1		Nov 28, 2013 3pm
First Call	Request for interview			
United Way	Interview	1		Wed Nov 13 930am
Strathcona Community	Interview	1		Nov 27 noon
Adopt A School	Interview	1		Mon Dec 9 130pm
Neighbourhood Houses	Interview / Focus Group	4		January 16, 2014
BC Children's Hospital	Interview	2		Mon Dec 16, 2013 130pm

Appendix 3

IC / CommunityLINK Re-Visioning Consultation

Process

The Vancouver Board of Education (VBE) is embarking on a process to re-vision the supports and services it provides through Inner City and CommunityLINK. This requires stepping back from the current models of resource allocation and asking the broad questions about poverty and educational success. There are a number of contributing factors or determinants which contribute to a student's chances for success in school and for their long-term life outcomes. Of these, poverty is a key indicator of a student's vulnerability and is made more complex by other factors. In providing additional resources for these children the Board strives to provide for equitable educational outcomes.

Background

Inner City schools were implemented twenty-five years ago to enhance language and social emotional development and to increase parent and community involvement in schools where there were high populations of students who were disadvantaged by poverty. Each school received an allocation of staffing (a Project Teacher, Youth and Family Worker, Student Support Worker and a Neighbourhood Assistant). In addition, discretionary funds, a breakfast program, all day kindergarten and 3 junior kindergartens were supplied through the Inner City program. Throughout the years the model has essentially stayed the same with the exception of more schools being added to the list of Inner City schools and as such staffing was spread further and differentiated. The discretionary funding has also declined and the junior kindergarten classes were eliminated. Traditionally the Inner City program has been reviewed every 5 years, which essentially meant reexamining demographic information from around the city to determine where socioeconomic need existed. The funding for the Inner City Program is at the discretion of School Trustees and originates from the VBE's operating budget.

CommunityLINK funding is provided to the VBE on an annual basis in the form of a grant from the Ministry of Education. Funding began in 2004 with a focus on providing the following activities to vulnerable students: nutrition supports, academic supports, behavioural and social emotional learning supports and community connectedness supports. The two main vehicles through which these activities occur are the lunch program and the Community School Teams (CST). Lunch programs are provided at 43 schools throughout the district whereas the CST staffs (Teacher, Youth and Family Worker and Community Schools Coordinator) are grouped into 12 hubs that are traditionally attached to a secondary school and the local elementary schools. The exception is on the west side of Vancouver where 2 CST teams serve 19 and 21 schools. The CST model has not been reviewed since its inception. The lunch program was reviewed in 2009 with the last Inner City review.

Current Research

There are a number of common themes in the research literature about successful interventions for children disadvantaged by poverty. Among the most common are:

- Collaboration with community partners. Having shared goals and accountability structures that promote ongoing collaboration among the agencies are important factors.
- Focus on literacy. Effective classroom practices for literacy, especially early intervention for students struggling with reading, are essential for school success.
- School readiness. Children who have early pre-school experience and stimulation are more likely to benefit early from their schooling.
- Parent involvement. Finding ways to involve parents in school and to support them as parents is very important for success.
- Resilience. Developmental assets are the positive qualities that children and youth need for resilience and to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. School programs can build assets and support social-emotional learning.

THE CONCEPT



RE-VISIONING INNER CITY / COMMUNITYLINK

SUPPORT AND SERVICES – THE FOCUS

Intensive, Individual

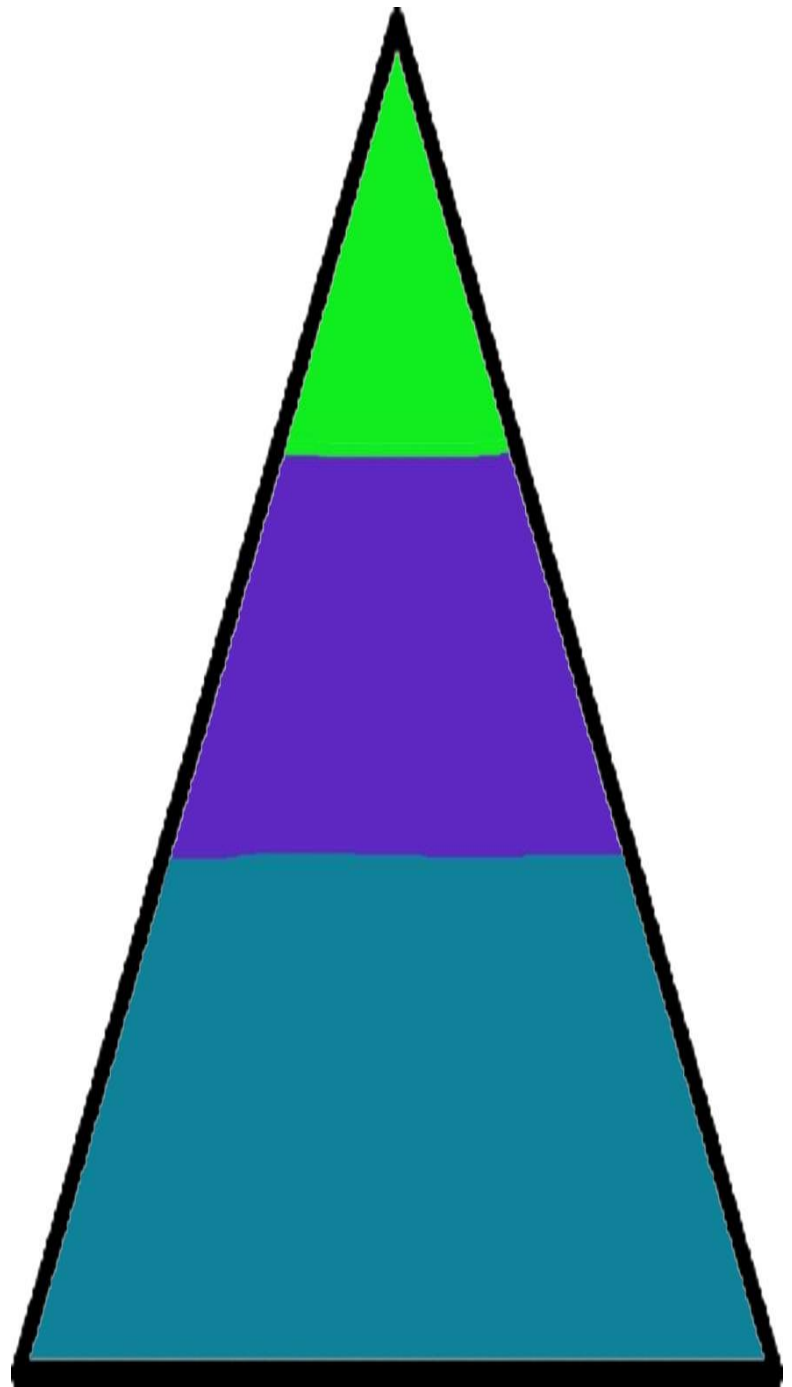
- Individual student support
- Assessment-based
- Wrap around services
- May include special placement
- Consultant and/or support workers involved
- Multiple agency involvement

Targeted, Small Group

- Targeted to specific students
- Learning assistance
- English Language Learner support
- Aboriginal Education services
- Targeted after school programs
- Early Intervention in Literacy

Universal

- All students and settings
- Preventive, proactive
- School-wide behavior systems
- Social Emotional Learning programs
- Conflict resolution
- Classroom management
- Universal after school programs
- Universal design for Learning/Differentiated Instruction



Questions for Focus Groups / Interviews:

1. What do we need to do to support children who come to school disadvantaged by the complexities associated with poverty (e.g. classroom practices, school strategies, district policies, family engagement, partnerships?) Where in the continuum of prevention to crisis intervention should we focus our resources?
2. What aspects of the current Inner City Program (a team of Program Teacher, Youth and Family Worker, Neighbourhood Assistant, School and Students Support Worker) **work well** for children, who come to school disadvantaged by poverty?
3. What aspects of CommunityLINK (Community School Teams –Teacher, Youth and Family Worker and Community Schools Coordinator) **work well** for these vulnerable children?
4. If you work with an agency other than the VSB, what kinds of partnerships with the district do you think **work well** for the children who come to school disadvantaged by poverty?
5. What are the gaps in services and supports for children who come to school disadvantaged by poverty? What might not be working well?
6. If you could make changes to improve services and supports for students coming to school from impoverished backgrounds, what would you change and why?

Appendix 4

The Concept that Guided the Process



Appendix 5 - a

Review of Research and Internet Search – Education and Poverty

Summary and Highlights

Some points about poverty:

Poverty is either absolute (the complete lack of resources to sustain life) or relative (a standard that is defined in terms of the society in which an individual lives).

Poverty is usually defined as more than lack of income, including aspects of life such as social marginalization, poor health, mental stress, etc. This makes the indicators of poverty complicated. For example, on its own, income is not the best indicator.

Some research suggests that this deficit view of people who live in poverty creates its own problem – where we in essence blame the poor and feel the need to fix them. An alternative is to look at the strengths and resiliency factors and see how to build on those.

The “social determinants of health” represent a view of the issues. In this view, education is one of many areas that need to be strengthened in order to achieve good health and is one of the indicators for that prevent good health. Other determinants are: income and social status, social support networks, employment/working conditions, physical environments, personal health practices and coping skills, healthy child development, biology and genetic endowment, health services, gender and culture.

What works to support the education of children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds?

Collaborative models that involve community partners are central in the literature about education for children who live in poverty. Collaboration is seen on a continuum where minimal partnership is co-location, moving to coordination, collaboration and finally integration. At a minimum partnership involves information sharing and at the most intense, programs are linked together. Models for collaboration have been discussed for decades, but are rarely successful. Some factors that are essential for success are outlined: Common agenda, shared measureable results, mutually reinforcing activities, backbone support organizations.

There are several examples of successful collaboration in Canada and abroad. Alignment is one of the terms used to describe the models. One example is Alignment Nashville for successful, healthy children. This is a nonprofit organization created to align community organizations and resources so that their coordinated support of Nashville’s youth has a positive impact on public school success, children’s health, and the success of the community as a whole. The organization suggest that what sets them apart is their integrated principles (focused on those who need support, the whole child, etc.),

structure (a governance Board with working committees), process (committees with people trained on collaboration, create plans, align goals, collect data and when successful, institutionalize), and technology (collaborative tool developed). Long term outcomes are increased high school graduation, increase in college readiness, increase in career readiness, children's health and welfare, and community prosperity.

Community Schools or Community Hubs are models often referred to in the literature. One definition is "a concept, community plan or urban design for a conveniently located public place that is recognized and valued in the local community as a gathering place for people, and an access point for a wide range of community activities, programs and services". There are at least four different models for community schools: sharing on demand, parallel or shared use of schools, co-location, and full service school. One conclusion from the literature is that in the absence of carefully pre-planned desired outcomes or shared expectations; the act of co-location creates a tenancy situation rather than a collaborative setting.

One example is the SUN (schools uniting neighbourhoods) Community Schools in Oregon. They mobilize and strategically organize community resources to provide strong core instructional program; educational support and skill development for youth and adults; enrichment and recreational activities; family involvement and support; social, health and mental health resources; and, family and community events. The schools are school based service delivery sites for the SUN Service System, a broader community-based care and support for children and their families.

Another model in the literature is referred to as Place-based. In this approach, focuses on building on the capacity of local communities, encouraging local networks of referral and support, targeting benefits to economically disadvantaged families. There is a growing appreciation by governments at all levels – both domestically and internationally – of the importance of locating the capacity to plan and integrate services as close as possible to the individuals and communities that the services are intended to benefit. This tendency is driven by an understanding that services need to be integrated from the bottom up rather than top down; by a realization that integration requires a capacity not only to target individuals but also neighbourhoods; and by an appreciation that effective programming and delivery require tacit knowledge as well as sound analysis. Fiscal pressures have also increased interest in promoting efficiency, through better local coordination, as well as in leveraging resources, especially from organizations that offer only universal services.

Strathcona neighbourhood is involved in developing place-based strategies. One model that is referred to as successful is the Harlem Children's Zone Project.

The theory of change underlying the HCZ model requires the coordinated application of its Five core principles. To create change it is necessary to:

- Serve an entire neighborhood comprehensively and at scale. Engaging an entire neighbourhood helps to achieve three goals: It reaches children in numbers significant enough to affect the culture of a community; it transforms the physical and social environments that impact the children's it creates programs at a scale large enough to meet the local need.

- Create a pipeline of support. Develop excellent, accessible programs and schools and link them to one another so that they provide uninterrupted support for children’s healthy growth, starting with pre-natal programs for parents and finishing when young people graduate from college. Surround the pipeline with additional programs that support families and the larger community.
- Build community among residents, institutions, and stakeholders, who help to create the environment necessary for children’s healthy development.
- Evaluate program outcomes and create a feedback loop that cycles data back to management for use in improving and refining program offerings.
- Cultivate a culture of success rooted in passion, accountability, leadership, and teamwork.

What works in classrooms and schools to support children who are disadvantaged due to poverty?

The literature focuses on three major areas: literacy, including early intervention; social emotional growth, including resiliency building; and parent involvement.

For literacy, current effective practices involve a systemic approach that is comprehensive, incorporates early identification of needs, serves as preventative – identifying and assisting students before they fall behind. Early intervention is very effective for children who are disadvantaged by poverty and needs to be one-to-one or small group work focused on specific needs. Frequent assessment and monitoring are essential. Students need dedicated time for literacy learning and teaching that is culturally and developmentally appropriate.

Social-emotional learning is particularly important for vulnerable children. Teaching needs to be grounded in theory and research-based. Effective strategies include developmentally and culturally appropriate instruction. When selecting programs, a school-wide approach is most effective with coordination and sequential programming.

The assets that comprise resiliency are a positive way to focus support. Developmental assets are the positive experiences and personal qualities that children and youth need to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. The more assets a person has, the more likely they are to do better in school, make friends, and make healthier decisions. There are many evidenced based programs that focus on building factors for resilience.

Mentoring, connecting children to a caring adult has been shown to be a successful strategy for working with children at risk. The MDI shows clearly that students who have connections with at least one adult have more factors of resiliency. Those who have relationships with more than one adult do even better. The MDI also shows that children who are involved in after school activities show more signs of resiliency.

Family engagement has positive benefits for children’s success at school, including higher academic achievement, better attendance, increased graduation rates, higher students’ sense of competence, better self-regulatory skills, and beliefs about the importance of education. Successful strategies include

outreach (such as the HIPPY Program), Family Literacy initiatives, parent led sessions, information sharing about resources available, and mentoring (such as Moms to Moms).

The current VSB model for Inner City Schools aligns with these three areas. The schools are designated Inner City using the Ministry of Education Social Services Index, a measure of the numbers of families living on income assistance, and the number of children in care in the school. Additional staff (teacher, youth and family worker, neighbourhood support worker, and school and student support worker) is added to the schools.

The Toronto School District also provides additional resources to schools where there is a concentration of students who come to school disadvantaged by poverty. The Toronto School District calls the schools Model Schools.

The goals of Model Schools are:

Equity: achieving fairness and equity to ensure the lives and realities of our students are reflected.

Community: identifying the school as the heart of the community with education and school resources acting as pillars of the neighbourhood.

Inclusiveness: providing an inclusive culture that respects and reflects all aspects of the school, its community and staff.

High Expectations: encouraging every student to reach their potential regardless of economic or cultural background.

Model Schools are committed to:

- Innovative teaching and learning practices
- Providing support services to meet social, emotional and physical well-being of students
- Establishing schools as the heart of the community
- Researching, reviewing and evaluating students and programs
- An ongoing commitment to share successful practices.

Model Schools are sustained through:

- Alternative schedules and programs to meet local student and community needs
- Participation for all stakeholders
- Purposeful hiring of administrative and teaching staff who want to be in the school
- Assessment and evaluation procedures that inform practice
- The allocation of essential time and resources
- Partnerships with Faculties of Education, other university faculties and community colleges
- Strong local community and agency partnerships

After three years of data collection showing improvement in students success, the Toronto School District concludes that all high needs schools - no matter how challenging – can bring about change, and can close the achievement gap as long as the school has (or is given):

- 1. Solid support and resources to level the playing field (to fill the opportunity gaps)
- 2. Extra efforts (innovative and intensive interventions) to make up the initial achievement gaps
- 3. Relevant research and review information to help monitor progress, to inform programming and planning, and to adjust practices where necessary
- 4. Sufficient time for school and students to demonstrate growth – the more challenging the school the longer the time is needed.
- 5. Sustained leadership which is fair, open, collaborative, forward thinking and visionary
- 6. Staff support and engagement
- 7. Continuous resources and efforts to cope with the changing (often unpredictable or uncontrollable) external and internal challenges.

Model Schools are grouped into eight clusters. Each cluster has lead teachers, a learning classroom teacher and a community support worker who work collaboratively to improve student achievement through focused supports and opportunities.

The Model Schools are selected using the Learning Opportunities Index (LOI). The LOI is composed of variables which are combined into a single index. The variables used are: Median, Percentage of Families whose income is below the Low Income Measure (before tax), Percentage of Families Receiving Social Assistance, Adults with Low Education, Adults with University Degrees, and Lone-Parent Families.

Poverty and Education at the Macro Level

A review of the literature on poverty and education written by Joseph J. Flessa from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in 2007 called “Poverty and Education” was one influence in the development of Toronto’s Model Schools. It is also heavily quoted in “Supporting Education ... Building Canada: Child Poverty and Schools” a paper produced by the Canadian Teachers Federation. Flessa says his review is designed to provide a foundation for educators to assess the relationship between poverty and schooling in order to take effective action. He concludes the results of schooling are determined in large part by preconditions over which schools have no control, like family SES. However, some schools do far better than others in resisting this deterministic relationship, through a combination of curricular and human resources. It is dangerous to advance two false ideas: that school can do nothing and that schools can do everything. So, the challenge is to tell a story consistently about the importance of school initiatives in the context of mutually supportive social policies. He also concludes that deficit frameworks must be consistently identified and rebutted because they make it impossible to envision education as a collective endeavour. Schools and communities have necessary roles in rearing and educating children and they must be seen to be complementary. Educators must articulate a more comprehensive version of what it means to work with communities in poverty so that we do not get involved in a discourse that blames the poor for their poverty and that excuses unacceptable degrees of education inequality.

The Canadian Teacher Federation concludes that government policies on poverty and early childhood are necessary elements for any plan. Similarly in an OECD paper called “Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools”, the authors conclude that countries must invest in students early and through upper secondary education.

They go on to suggest that governments can support schools with higher proportions of disadvantaged students by following five policy recommendations: strengthen and support school leadership, stimulate a supportive schools climate and environment for learning, attract, support and retain high quality teachers, ensure effective classroom strategies, and prioritize linking schools with parents and communities. Another paper from Australia suggests five components, linked and building upon the others: Overarching statewide support services, targeted service delivery, improved management structures, enhanced workforce and supervision, better accountability and performance arrangements.

In a paper for the Response to Intervention Action Network, the authors outline challenges urban schools experience which impede their ability to effectively educate the most vulnerable students. They include structural challenges: low student achievement (negative stereotypes about families often misinform educators and lead to negative views about students); lack of instructional coherence (schools are bombarded with too many instructional initiatives and approaches and the professional development used to launch them is ineffective); inexperienced teaching staff (teachers have a significant impact on students achievement and those with one or two years' experience are generally less effective); and low expectations of students. There are also cultural challenges: perceptions of race and class as limiting predictors of achievement, perceptions of different learning styles versus intellectual deficiencies, and lack of cultural responsiveness in current policies and practices.

Eric Jensen writes in "Teaching with Poverty in Mind" about what being poor does to kids' brains and what schools can do about it. Practically, students who live in poverty come to schools with social, cognitive, health-related, and stress-related challenges. If teachers do not understand this phenomenon, they are not able to make a difference for the children. There are school-wide and classroom strategies that work best with children who are disadvantaged and they start with the mindset of the teacher.

Appendix 5-b

Websites and Articles Summarized

What is Poverty?

<http://www.who.int/topics/poverty/en/>

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/esic/overview/content/what_is_poverty.html

Social Determinants of Health - <http://www.thecanadianfacts.org/>

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ph-sp/determinants/>

Poverty and Education

Joseph Flessa article

[http://cus.oise.utoronto.ca/UserFiles/File/Poverty%20lit%20review%20\(J_%20Flessa%20-%202010_2007\).pdf](http://cus.oise.utoronto.ca/UserFiles/File/Poverty%20lit%20review%20(J_%20Flessa%20-%202010_2007).pdf)

Canadian Teachers Federation article

http://www.ctf-fce.ca/publications/Briefs/FINAL_Hilldayleavebehind_eng.pdf

Eric Jensen, Teaching with Poverty in Mind, ASCD, 2009

Some Collaborative Models

https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/stuman/wellbeing/StudentSupportServices_Directions_Paper.pdf

Pathways to Prosperity: Canada

<http://p2pcanada.ca/research/comparison-of-place-based-community-partnerships-including-local-immigration-partnerships-lips-and-other-community-based-partnerships-designed-to-facilitate-immigrant-settlement-and-integration/>

Center for Mental health in schools - <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

Alignment Nashville - <http://www.alignmentnashville.org/resources>

National Models http://www.communityschools.org/aboutschools/national_models.aspx

Maps of US Community Schools <http://www.communityschools.org/map.aspx>

<http://www.communityschools.org/ScalingUp/>

The Role of Community Schools in Place-Based Initiatives – Collaborating for Student Success

<http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/The%20Role%20of%20Community%20Schools%20in%20Place-Based%20InitiativesFINAL1.pdf>

Multnomah County, Oregon – SUN Community Schools

<http://web.multco.us/sun/sun-community-schools>

<http://www.oecd.org/austria/49603557.pdf>

TRI Action Network – Urban School Challenges

<http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/diversity/urban-school-challenges>

Place-based project in Strathcona

http://www.raycam.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=22&Itemid

Harlem Children’s Zone

http://www.equitycampaign.org/i/a/document/9857_executivesummaryhcz09.pdf

Toronto Model Inner City Schools

<http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Community/ModelSchoolsforInnerCities/Research.aspx>

Strategies for Success

Literacy, Social Emotional Learning, Parent Engagement

Promoting Literacy, Social Emotional Learning and Parent/Community Involvement in Inner City Schools:
Combining Evidence-based Research and Experiential Knowledge

By Jayne Pivik, PhD. Apriori Research

www.aprioriresearch.com

February 2009

Mentoring

http://www.mentoring.org/about_mentor/value_of_mentoring/

<http://friendsofthechildrenboston.org/mentors/articles/Thompson,%20L.A.%20-%20Impact%20of%20Mentoring.pdf>

Developmental Assets

<http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18>

<http://www.ourkidsnetwork.ca/Public/Developmental-A>

Middle Years Development Instrument - <http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/mdi/mdi>