



British Columbia
School Trustees Association

COMMUNITY SCHOOL RESEARCH PROJECT: PHASE TWO DIRECTIONAL REPORT

Prepared for:
The Association for Community Education
in British Columbia
and
The British Columbia
School Trustees Association

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Executive Summary:

This report provides direction to expand and enhance the community school movement in British Columbia. It builds on earlier research which identified the major opportunities for and challenges facing community schools and recognizes the many benefits derived from community schools, including enhancing learning outcomes, facilitating community capacity building, fostering economic development, improving utilization of school facilities and increasing coordination of services. It also recognizes the importance of community schools in remote and rural communities, in which the school is the focal point for the community.

This report recognizes that community schools are at crossroads in British Columbia, with a number of community schools closing and others struggling to remain operational. As such, it proposes short and longer term recommendations to build awareness and support for community schools; to improve funding policies and guidelines related to community schools; to develop competencies and build capacity within community schools and communities; and to enhance evaluation techniques and reporting, thus facilitating continuous improvement and greater accountability.

The short term recommendations include but are not limited to:

- accessing short term project funding and longer term operational and start-up funding for community schools. The former would be to follow-up on the priority areas as identified in phase 2, while the latter would be to assist existing and to establish new community schools.
- making a presentation to all Members of the Legislative Assembly and to senior ministry officials which highlights the basic concept of a community school and emphasizes the cross-ministry implications and the educational, community, economic and social benefits of community schools.
- hosting a high profile forum on community schools, which will provide an opportunity to discuss the findings from phases 1 and 2; to highlight the government's commitment to community schools; and to prepare the foundation for a comprehensive plan which will position the community school movement for the future.

The recommendations, if embraced and implemented, will ensure that community schools continue to play an important role in the lives of British Columbians, enabling learners to achieve their aspirations and enabling community members and organizations to come together to build caring, inclusive and strong communities. It will also assist the Provincial Government in its efforts to make schools centres for their communities, while improving facility utilization and service integration. These efforts will ensure more effective and efficient service delivery.

As one respondent stated during the consultation process in support of this report: "We need to ensure the continuation of community schools, as this is one model that is both preventative and proactive." "It is also an effective model given that it relies on partnerships and volunteerism."

Introduction:

The community school movement is at a crossroads in British Columbia. While there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that community schools are making a significant difference (e.g., enhancing learning outcomes, facilitating community capacity building, fostering economic development, improving utilization of school facilities and increasing coordination of services), a number of community schools have ceased operation in British Columbia, while others are struggling to remain operational.

To position the community school movement for the future and to address concerns about funding, staffing and other issues, the Association for Community Education in British Columbia (ACEbc) and the British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA), with support from the Ministry of Children and Family Development, engaged John Talbot and Associates Inc. to conduct a two-phase research project involving community schools in British Columbia. After the responsibility for community schools was transferred to the Ministry of Education, both organizations have consulted with this ministry.

Steering Committee:

To oversee the project and to provide guidance to the consultant, a steering committee was established with representation from both ACEbc and BCSTA. This steering committee included the following members: Enzo Guerriero, Jesse Hyder, Barb Peabody, Bill Preston, Elizabeth Shannon, Lee Southern and Jim Taylor.

Phase 1:

The first phase:

- compiled baseline information about designated community schools in British Columbia;
- identified the key elements of successful community schools;
- identified the major opportunities for and challenges facing community schools;
- described strategies which have been developed to address the identified challenges;
- described some of the best practices in the areas of community capacity building and partnerships.

Based on the research, a report was prepared and finalized in September 2004. This report can be found on both the ACEbc (www.acebc.org) and BCSTA (www.bcsta.org) websites. Additionally, a backgrounder was prepared, which highlighted the major findings from the report. Again, this document can be found on both websites.

Phase 2:

Based on the findings from phase 1, four key issue areas emerged: awareness, funding, competency and continuous improvement. The steering committee advised the consultant to prepare this directional document in response to these four areas.

More specifically, the consultant prepared background documentation and recommendations to:

- enhance awareness and education about community schools and their benefits;
- improve funding policies and guidelines related to community schools;
- develop a competency framework for community school personnel to enhance their knowledge, skills and abilities;
- develop a continuous improvement framework to enable community schools to assess and improve their effectiveness, while documenting their success.

While the report contains a large number of recommendations to expand and enhance the community school movement in British Columbia, it also recognizes that priorities will have to be established and that a staged approach to implementation will be needed.

Companion Document:

While the consultant was contracted to prepare a directional document on the four issue areas in question, it was also asked to respond to a number of opportunities and issues which arose during the course of the preparation of this document. Most significantly, the steering committee and the consultant prepared and made a presentation to the Minister of Education on September 30, 2004. The steering committee and the consultant also prepared a major funding proposal for the Minister entitled: "Making A Difference." This proposal outlined both short and longer term actions to support and expand the community school movement in British Columbia, as well as a funding request. These documents and others are contained in a separate companion document which is available through ACEbc. To receive a copy, please contact Jim Taylor at (250) 381-9074 or e-mail him at taylorj@spectrumjobsearch.com.

Section 1: Awareness and Education

Goal #1:

To raise awareness about community schools and their many benefits. The target audience will comprise elected representatives, ministries impacted by community schools, School Trustees, School District administrators, school principals, teachers, parent advisory councils and the general public.

Current Situation:

In phase 1 of the community school research project, the issue of awareness and education was a strong underlying theme that permeated much of the feedback that the consultant received – whether through the interviews with key informants, the questionnaire or the site visits to community schools. It was also clear from the research, that despite community schools being around for over 30 years, many people do not know what they are about, or at best, have a superficial understanding of the concept.

The issue of awareness and education was at the heart of many of the issues facing community schools. For example, one questionnaire respondent noted that “the more parents know about community schools and what they are trying to achieve, the more likely they are to become involved in their child’s school and in the larger community.” Based on the questionnaire, trying to raise community awareness to increase involvement was a goal of almost every community school.

Opportunities:

Greater awareness and education:

- contributes to a sense of shared ownership of the community school, which translates into increased buy-in, involvement and support;
- enhances support for the concepts of community capacity building and service integration;
- expands the base of support beyond the education community to other social policy areas such as health, recreation and social services;
- influences policy and decision makers, whether at the government or School District level, as to the benefits and resource requirements of and challenges facing community schools;
- leads to increased utilization of school facilities and grounds.

Challenges:

Some of the challenges include:

- the very name “community school” implies different things to different people – i.e., the public often feel that if a school is open for an evening activity, then it must be a community school;
- the concept of a community school, particularly around the issues of community capacity building and service integration, is not an easy one to grasp, particularly if one has not done work in this area;

- the benefits of community schools are often difficult to quantify and the lack of “hard” data inhibits efforts to raise awareness and support;
- the people who benefit most from the services provided by community schools are often the most difficult to reach – i.e., there may be issues of language, poverty, social isolation and/or transience which prevent them from being aware of and involved in the community school.

Potential Audiences:

Based on the research, the following six audiences became apparent:

- the general public;
- parents and other members of communities served by community schools;
- community school personnel;
- School Trustees and School District administrators;
- senior managers within ministries impacted by community schools;
- elected representatives.

It is clear when examining the above audiences, that each will have a different level of awareness of the concept of a community school.

Possible Framework:

A possible framework for assessing the level of awareness about community schools might consist of the following:

- Level 0:

One has virtually no knowledge about or understanding of the concept of a community school. This individual would ask: “what is a community school?”

- Level 1:

One has a very basic understanding of the concept of a community school – e.g., that it is open to the public.

- Level 2:

One has a basic understanding of the array of programs available at a community school and how to access them. This individual may also know that the community school component may have a separate structure or organization from that of the larger school.

- Level 3:

One has a clear understanding of the programs offered by and the structure or organization of a community school, as well as a basic understanding of the concepts of community capacity building and service integration. This individual may also appreciate the positive impact that a community school can have on student academic achievement and community, economic and social development.

- Level 4:

One has a full understanding of the primary goals of a community school and the importance of community capacity building and service integration, as well as the benefits of and challenges facing community schools.

Based on the feedback from the interviews with key informants, the questionnaire and the site visits to community schools, it would appear that the current state of awareness and education might approximate the following:

- General Public:

The vast majority of the general public would be at level 0 or 1.

- Parents and Other Community Members Served by Community Schools:

The vast majority of parents and other community members would be at level 1 or 2, with a small number being at level 3.

- Community School Personnel:

The vast majority of community school personnel would be at level 2 or 3, with a small number being at level 4. By comparison, the vast majority of non-community school personnel would be at level 1 or 2.

- School Trustees and School District Administrators:

The vast majority of School Trustees and School District administrators would be at level 1 or 2, with a small number being at level 3 or 4.

- Senior Managers within Ministries Impacted by Community Schools:

The vast majority of senior managers within ministries impacted by community schools would be at level 1 or 2.

- Elected Representatives:

The vast majority of elected representatives would be at level 0 or 1.

While this is a simplistic way of describing the current state of awareness and education, it does allow one to put more definition on the issue of raising awareness and education.

Long Term Objectives:

Using the framework, the long term objectives could be:

- having the majority of the general public at level 1 or 2;
- having all parents and other community members served by community schools at a minimum of level 1 or 2 and preferably at level 3;
- having all community school personnel at a minimum of level 3 or 4, with the principal at level 4, and all non-community school personnel at a minimum of level 2 or 3;
- having School Trustees and School District administrators at level 3 and those with direct responsibility for community schools at level 4;
- having senior managers within ministries impacted by community schools at level 2 or 3 and those in decision-making roles around community schools at level 4;
- having elected representatives at level 2 and preferably at level 3.

Actions to Date:

The steering committee, with the assistance of the consultant, has:

- prepared and widely distributed a "backgrounder" document which highlighted results from Phase 1;
- posted the above document and other information on the ACEbc and BCSTA websites;
- prepared a phase 1 report, which included detailed information on community schools, including opportunities and challenges, and circulated it to community schools coordinators and others;
- prepared a Powerpoint presentation which could be used or adapted as needed;
- presented to the Minister of Education in September 2004, to attendees at the ACEbc annual general meeting in December 2004 and to members of the BCSTA academy.

Recommendations:

To undertake an independent review and evaluation of selected community and non-community schools in order to ascertain and quantify the educational, community, economic and social benefits from operating from a community school perspective. The resultant information would inform the public awareness and education strategy, while assisting in the development of the continuous improvement framework.

To increase awareness and education for the following audiences, it is recommended that a comprehensive public awareness and education strategy be developed. This strategy should include but not be limited to the following specific actions:

General Public:

- That educational materials related to community schools be included on the Ministry of Education website and that it include links to both the ACEbc and BCSTA websites.
- That a campaign be developed regarding community schools. This campaign could include the catchphrase: "schools are the heart of our communities."
- That documentation be prepared regarding how to establish a community school. This could include steps as to how to achieve community support; how to approach the School District; how to develop an appropriate structure and organization; and how to engage other partners.

Parents and Other Community Members Served by Community Schools:

- That documentation be prepared as to how parents and other community members can get more involved in their community school – i.e., the identification of opportunities.
- That documentation be prepared as to how parents and community members can take their community school to the next level – i.e., working toward a true community capacity building model.

Community and Non-Community School Personnel:

- That documentation be prepared which highlights the educational, community, economic and social benefits which can be derived from operating from a community school perspective.
- That documentation be prepared which assists community school personnel to enhance the curriculum through the use of community resources.
- That new community school personnel be informed of the importance of operating from a community school perspective and that they receive information to assist them in this area.

School Trustees and School District Administrators:

- That a presentation be prepared and made to School Trustees and School District administrators which promotes the concept of a community school. This presentation could include information on innovative and lower cost models for community schools.

Senior Managers Within Ministries Impacted by Community Schools and Elected Representatives:

- That a customized presentation be prepared and made to all Members of the Legislative Assembly. This presentation would describe the basic concept of a community school and emphasize the cross-ministry implications and educational, community, economic and social benefits of community schools.
- That a high profile forum be held on community schools, which would provide an opportunity to discuss the research; to highlight the government's commitment; and to prepare the foundation for a comprehensive plan which would position the community school movement for the future.

It should be emphasized that raising awareness and education about community schools is an ongoing process. It should also be emphasized that an individual's understanding about community schools and their benefits deepens with increasing and ongoing exposure to them.

Section 2: Funding and Resource Allocation

Goal #2:

To examine the current funding policies and guidelines for community schools and, where appropriate, to make recommendations to improve them.

Current Situation:

Funding for community schools has undergone many changes over the years. It has been based in both the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Ministry of Education; it has been allocated on the basis of application; it has been dedicated; and it has been increased and decreased in response to political shifts.

Under the current system, the Ministry of Education receives an allocation of money from the Provincial Government and an amount is established for CommunityLINK funding, which includes funding for a number of programs aimed at improving the academic performance and social functioning of students (with a focus on those most vulnerable). The School Districts have considerable latitude on directing the funds to a variety of programs, including community schools, counseling services, meals programs, etc. The monies cannot be used to reduce the basic teacher/student ratio and innovation and partnerships with the community and the private sector are encouraged.

In phase 1 of the community school research project, it was found that the monies spent on community schools in the past year appear to be down considerably from that received in the mid to late 1990s. In fact, many respondents to the questionnaire stated that their community school had received cuts in its funding and many felt vulnerable that their school may not be able to continue. Overall, there was a climate of uncertainty. (Of note, CommunityLINK funding was recently restored to previous levels; however, there are no assurances that the money will flow back into community schools.)

The current funding system appears to work well both from the perspective of the Provincial Government and the Schools Districts. The government allocates monies for CommunityLINK, while providing the School Districts with considerable latitude in how these funds are allocated. As such, this mechanism is seen as respecting and reinforcing local autonomy.

While the current system appears to be an efficient way of distributing these monies, it does not appear to be in the best interests of community schools. Currently, there are wide discrepancies in funding among School Districts and among community schools themselves. Some community schools are well funded, while others have little or no funding.

Furthermore, under the current system, it would be difficult to increase the levels of funding for community schools or their number, as there are just too many competing demands in the CommunityLINK portfolio to enable School Districts to allocate more monies for community schools. Additionally, there are no incentives to increase the number of community schools, as the only way to increase their number would be to spread the monies more thinly, which would make it very difficult for them to perform their current roles.

In fact, the questionnaire results from phase 1 found that many community school coordinators allocated much of their time trying to address the funding issue to the detriment of other important tasks, including community capacity building, economic development, facility utilization, program delivery and service integration.

The questionnaire results from phase 1 also found that there is little consistency with regard to what constitutes a community school. In fact, community schools range from models where many schools are served by one coordinator and largely focus on program delivery to those with a designated, full-time coordinator which provide a wide range of programs; facilitate community capacity building; foster economic development; practice service integration; and support community education. The level of funding is the major factor in determining the model and the degree of community involvement.

Important Questions:

The funding system raises a number of important questions:

- Should community schools be funded as part of CommunityLINK or should another model or models be examined which might better support existing and new community schools?
- What do the Provincial Government and School Districts want to achieve with regard to community schools? Is it improved academic outcomes? Is it better facility utilization? Is it service integration? Is community capacity building?
- What is the overall objective? To expand the number of community schools? To facilitate community access to existing schools?
- Should the Ministry of Education be the sole funder of community schools or should other ministries impacted by community schools be encouraged to share the costs (since they share in the benefits)?
- How can the funding system help diminish differences between affluent and poorer communities? In many poorer communities it is very difficult to generate financial support from partners or to ask for program fees from parents.

Based on phase 1, and reinforced by the work conducted in phase 2, it would appear that the current funding system needs serious reexamination.

Actions to Date:

The steering committee has:

- met with the Minister of Education and his staff;
- prepared a funding proposal for the Minister of Education entitled "Making A Difference;"
- worked with BCSTA to confirm its support for the proposal.

Recommendations:

- That ACEbc and BCSTA work with the Ministry of Education and other ministries impacted by community schools to examine funding alternatives which support existing and new community schools and which are consistent with the goals of the Provincial Government and the School Districts.

If a new funding system for community schools is developed, then consideration should be given to the following features:

- That all ministries impacted by community schools should contribute to their funding. A cross ministry council or steering committee could be developed to oversee the funds and the funding system. The Ministry of Education should continue to take the lead role.
 - That funding should be directed specifically for community schools, especially new ones. Guidelines and criteria should also be established for developing new schools, drawing a balance between having some consistent use of effective practices and yet encouraging creative and innovation solutions.
 - That monies should be directed to support costs related to community schools – e.g., having a central database of best practices, offering training to coordinators, providing management support to new community schools, etc. Some of these will be one time costs but others will be ongoing.
 - That the funding system should strongly support partnerships and perhaps even have built in incentives for engaging in mutually beneficial arrangements.
- That an overall strategy be developed which supports schools in their efforts to enhance facility utilization, promote service integration and facilitate community capacity building. Community schools would be seen as being central to this strategy.
 - That the Provincial Government set aside monies for start-up and support costs around community schools. The funding available through Legacies 2010 may be suited for this purpose, at least for the one time costs.

Section 3: Competency Development for Community School Personnel

Goal #3:

To develop a competency framework for community school personnel to enhance their knowledge, skills and abilities.

Current Situation:

Most community school coordinators (63%) who responded to the questionnaire in phase 1 stated that they had not received training in the area of community capacity building. Of those who stated they had received training, in most cases, it was limited to attending a conference or workshop.

Currently, there is no formal training designed for community school personnel. In fact, from the feedback received, training appeared to be primarily limited to ACEbc conferences or coordinator retreats.

Advisory Committee:

To develop a competency leadership model for community school personnel, an advisory committee was established and it met on two occasions. This committee included representation from four community schools (i.e., French Creek Community School in Coombs, James Bay Community School in Victoria, John Maclure Community School in Abbotsford and Maywood Community School in Burnaby).

Competency Modeling:

Competency modeling is an effort to identify the knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviours required of individuals to maximize organizational effectiveness and success.

Competencies include:

- Knowledge:

An individual is aware of and understands the subject matter.

- Skills:

An individual has the proficiency to act based on his or her knowledge.

- Abilities:

An individual is able to respond and adapt to situations using his or her knowledge and skills.

- Behaviours:

An individual continuously reinforces the knowledge and skills learned in his or her behaviours.

Competency Goals:

The competency goals are:

- to promote personal training and professional development;
- to establish criteria to assess one's knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviours;
- to establish criteria to assess, improve and recognize performance;
- to establish documentation to orient new community school personnel.

Proposed Competency Leadership Model:

The advisory committee examined the current situation, as well as the emerging trends, and recommended seven competency areas:

- Area #1: Student Learning and Growth
- Area #2: Personal Mastery
- Area #3: Strategic Directions
- Area #4: Community Involvement and Capacity Building
- Area #5: Life Long Learning
- Area #6: Coordination of Services
- Area #7: Facility Utilization

It also described three to four important competencies within each of the seven areas. Please see listing in appendix 1. Of note, this listing will continue to be refined based on the input of personnel from other community schools. At this time, the committee has not described specific success indicators for each competency; however, it recognizes that such indicators will need to be developed.

Recommendations:

There are a variety of personal and professional development approaches to enhance one's knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviours. The following recommendations are proposed for the short and longer term:

- That ACEbc sponsor a two-day coaching and mentoring workshop in late summer or early fall of 2005. This workshop will discuss the proposed competency leadership model for community school personnel. It will also develop a proposed competency program for implementation in 2005/06 and train potential coaches and mentors.

- That ACEbc establish a training committee to review the various competency approaches and to develop specific training programs for community school personnel. This committee should consider the following possibilities:
 - development of a self-assessment competency tool;
 - development of audio, electronic, print and video resources;
 - development of specialized in-service training programs;
 - utilization of community school exchange opportunities;
 - utilization of list serves and websites;
 - utilization of the "Flint Michigan" courses and programs.

- That ACEbc develop specific success indicators for each of the seven competency areas.

- That ACEbc consider developing a one-year diploma program in community education through the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University; through Continuing Studies, the Community Development Program at Langara College; or through another post-secondary institution.

- That ACEbc propose how the competency framework can be effectively utilized in orienting new community school personnel.

Section 4: Continuous Improvement Framework for Community Schools

Goal #4:

To examine the development of a continuous improvement framework to enable community schools to assess and improve their effectiveness, while documenting their success.

Current Situation:

A number of community school coordinators are tracking indicators in an attempt to facilitate continuous improvement. In most cases, these indicators track the number of participants in a program or the number of volunteers or volunteer hours involved in its delivery. They also track the number of rooms being booked and associated rental information, if applicable.

Some community school coordinators do conduct an annual evaluation of their programs; implement participant satisfaction surveys at the completion of each program; and/or seek feedback from instructors, staff and volunteers. Again, this work focuses primarily on program delivery and facility utilization and is often in response to requests by funders and others.

A few community school coordinators establish outcomes, indicators and/or benchmarks (see definitions on following page). In most cases, this work is learning or program specific and does not relate to broader community, economic and social development goals. Based on the information provided by respondents to the questionnaire, many of the outcomes and indicators are not readily measurable and are based on qualitative feedback (e.g., observations, stories, testimonials, etc.). Examples of this work are attached in Appendix #2.

Some community school coordinators stated that they are developing outcomes, indicators and benchmarks in response to increased accountability requirements under the CommunityLINK program or in response to District Accountability Contracts and School Plans. Of note, the latter two initiatives establish goals and strategies (including targets) which are often used to guide the allocation of resources for program implementation and support. Based on information received, the most common goals deal with reading, writing and mathematics or some aspect of social responsibility.

Challenges:

While most community school coordinators recognize the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of their programs in the broadest possible sense in order to facilitate continuous improvement; most also report that they do not have the knowledge, skills and/or time to do this work. Several coordinators commented that they would not know how to get started and that they rely on informal feedback from program participants, staff and volunteers. Other coordinators noted that compiling documentation and doing evaluative work takes time away from their primary roles of planning and delivering programs and facilitating community access to school facilities.

A number of community school coordinators stated that greater emphasis is being placed on accountability, especially given limited dollars and concerns about duplication. As such, they emphasized that an annual report containing a detailed budget and program information is no longer sufficient. Instead, they noted that funders are increasingly asking for tangible evidence as to program effectiveness and outcomes achieved. Additionally, they noted that funders are increasingly interested in how community school programs are improving learning outcomes and student achievement, as well as contributing to broader community, economic and social development goals.

Proposed Framework:

A continuous improvement framework is intended to improve community school effectiveness and accountability, while documenting success. Regarding effectiveness, it should provide information to assess and improve upon existing performance. As for accountability, it should provide 'defensible' evidence to funders and others that desired outcomes are being achieved. With regard to documentation, it should capture the emotional, human side of community schools – the stories and testimonials of people who have made positive changes in their lives and in their communities as a result of the assistance, empowerment and support provided by community schools. As such, there is a need to balance the collection of measurable, quantitative data and non-measurable, qualitative information.

In reviewing the literature, five key components became apparent: outcomes, indicators, benchmarks, learnings and reporting.

- Outcomes: (Where do we want to go?)

Outcomes refer to results that arise from actions taken and can be both individual and organizational. Outcomes for individuals are results for people and are related to identifiable clients (e.g., students) or target populations (e.g., parents, community members within school catchment areas, etc.). These outcomes may focus on academic success, community involvement, healthy lifestyle choices, social responsibility, etc. Outcomes related to organizations are results for the service delivery system and are often related to organization, products, resource utilization, etc.

- Indicators: (Where are we in the journey?)

Indicators operationalize outcomes. They are used to measure the existence and direction of change (i.e., getting better or worse or staying the same) and to assess whether observable changes are consistent with the achievement of desired outcomes. Their usefulness rests in changes over time against a benchmark or comparisons (e.g., between schools).

Good indicators are comparable and measurable; are easily understood by everyone in the community (and not just the experts); are readily available on an ongoing basis; identify both challenges and opportunities; and, most importantly, relate to goals and outcomes. The tendency is to identify too many indicators, many of which do not meet the above criteria.

While comparable and measurable data is important, it should not be used in isolation. A number of community school coordinators collected non-measurable, qualitative information (e.g., stories and testimonials) and used this information to support quantitative data (e.g., profiling a child's progress in the area of reading skills). Additionally, they collected qualitative information to highlight progress in areas where quantitative data is difficult or impossible to collect (e.g., community capacity building and empowerment).

- Benchmarks: (How do we know when we have arrived?)

Benchmarks refer to reference points related to a given indicator against which achievement can be compared. Ideally, benchmarks reflect a desired level of performance (e.g., that 90% of students achieve their Dogwood Certificate within six years of entering Grade 8). This performance is determined by what is thought to be reasonably achievable based on historical performance; what has been achieved in comparable schools (i.e., best practices); or as established by authorities (e.g., the Ministry of Education, School Districts, etc.) with an operational interest in the outcomes.

- Learnings: (What did we learn along the way?)

Learnings arise from taking the time to reflect on both quantitative data and qualitative information and the progress made in achieving established benchmarks. For example, if a benchmark was met or exceeded, then this may suggest that a program or strategy was successful. Conversely, if a benchmark was not achieved, then this may suggest that a program or strategy may need to be revisited and possibly revamped. Of note, it is recognized that outcomes cannot always be directly related to one program or strategy and it is often difficult to make a direct cause and effect relationship. However, when a cluster of indicators are tracked, it is possible to gain an overall impression around whether an outcome is improving as a result of a program or strategy.

- Reporting: (What information do we need to share with others?)

Documentation and reporting are essential in making the case for continued support and funding for community schools. In making the case to School Districts and others, there is a need to use both quantitative data and qualitative information. The former will satisfy the need by some for 'defensible' or 'hard' evidence, while the latter will provide a human face on the difference that community schools are making in the lives of people served by them. In fact, several community school coordinators emphasized the influence and power of having people tell their stories.

Currently, only about ten community schools (grouped into four School Districts) employ a framework similar to that described above. As such, most community schools are not defining outcomes, tracking indicators, establishing benchmarks, reflecting on learnings or reporting on success.

Possible Areas of Inquiry:

Based on the questionnaire results, most community school coordinators who are actively trying to assess their school's performance focus their efforts in the following three areas: academic achievement, program delivery and facility utilization. This focus is understandable, as this information is readily available, comparable, quantifiable and regularly updated.

Given that community schools have a much broader mandate, including community, economic and social development, other areas of possible inquiry need to be considered.

Based on the literature review, and, in particular, the work of Joy G. Dryfoos in her report entitled Evaluation of Community Schools (November 2000), the following five areas of possible inquiry became apparent with regard to organizing outcomes, indicators and benchmarks:

- Student Learning and Achievement
- Child and Youth Development
- Family Functioning and Support
- Parental/Community Involvement and Facility Utilization
- Community Life

Regarding the latter area of inquiry, this could include higher rates of volunteerism; enhanced intergenerational linkages; increased neighbourliness and social cohesion; etc.

These five areas of inquiry, especially the second, third and fifth areas, would address concerns raised by community school coordinators that they had difficulty justifying the time they spent facilitating community capacity building, fostering economic development, improving service integration, reaching out to isolated community members, supporting families, etc.

Developing the Framework:

Given the need to develop a continuous improvement framework which can be consistently applied by community schools across the province and given the limited time available to and statistical training on behalf of community school coordinators, it is recommended that a steering group be established with dedicated resources.

This steering group should include representation from School Districts which have developed continuous improvement frameworks (e.g., Abbotsford, Burnaby, Vancouver, etc.), as well as experts in the field of documentation and indicator research and funders.

As an initial first step, examples of continuous improvement frameworks, documentation templates and evaluation tools being used by community schools should be collected and reviewed by the steering group. Of note, the consultant as part of phase 1, collected a significant amount of related information.

As a second step, the steering group should agree on suggested provincial wide outcomes to be achieved by community schools in the five areas, as well as suggested documentation requirements and indicators. With regard to documentation requirements, this could include but not be limited to individual profiles, observations, stories and testimonials. As for indicators, they should be limited to no more than ten in each area, thus ensuring a manageable number in which to track. If community schools want to track other indicators, then this would be left up to their discretion.

The proposed framework and draft list of outcomes and suggested documentation requirements and indicators would be shared with community school coordinators for their feedback, possibly using the ACEbc website. Coordinators would be asked to comment on the practicality of the framework and the relevance of the outcomes, documentation requirements and indicators to their work. They would also be asked to identify what resources and training they would require to operationalize the framework in their community school.

As a third step, the steering group would finalize the framework and related outcomes, documentation requirements and indicators. With regard to benchmarks, they would be left up to individual community schools or School Districts to identify. In this way, unrealistic benchmarks, which do not take into consideration local factors (e.g., high rates of child poverty, increasing ESL population, large numbers of lone parent families, etc.) are not established. For example, that 90% of students achieve a Dogwood Certificate by 2006/07 may be a realistic benchmark in one community school but totally unrealistic in another.

On an annual basis, a report would be released containing quantitative data and qualitative information. This report would contain historical information in order to ascertain trends and comparative information by which a community school could determine its position relative to other community schools in a School District or elsewhere. Regarding the latter, this information could be used to raise questions as to why some schools are doing better than others. This information would be important in developing best practices and in allocating resources to address identified needs.

This report and the information available to individual community schools, including non-measurable, qualitative information, could also be used to demonstrate the many benefits associated with such schools both to the individual and to the community. As such, this may go some way to addressing the needs of funders with regard to greater accountability, while freeing up the time of community school coordinators, who are spending more and more of their time justifying the monies in which they receive. The learnings from this report would also enable community school coordinators to better assess their programs and make improvements, while documenting success.

Recommendations:

- That a database be established containing continuous improvement frameworks, documentation templates and evaluation tools being used by community schools in the province. This database could be housed on the ACEbc website.

- That a steering group be established to develop a consistent continuous improvement framework for use by all community schools in the province. This framework would prescribe a core set of outcomes and indicators, while leaving the establishment of specific benchmarks up to individual community schools. It would also prescribe a suggested documentation template to assist in the collection of non-measurable, qualitative information such as profiles, observations, stories and testimonials.
- That training be offered to community school coordinators with regard to the collection and tracking of both quantitative data and qualitative information.
- That a mentorship program be established by which community school coordinators who are proficient in documentation, indicator research and statistical analysis can assist and counsel those who are not.
- That an expert in documentation and indicator research be designated to collect and collate the data and information from all community schools and to report back the findings on an annual basis.
- That community school principals and coordinators have an opportunity to discuss the findings and to identify best practices and learnings in order to facilitate continuous improvement, possibly as part of the ACEbc annual general meeting.
- That the findings, including non-measurable, qualitative information, be used in educational and promotional materials related to community schools and that they be used to justify existing and make the case for new monies for community schools, especially in the areas of community, economic and social development.

Appendix #1: Proposed Competency Leadership Model for Community School Personnel

Competency Characteristics/Clusters:	Required Knowledge, Skills and Abilities	Success Indicators
Area #1: Student Learning and Growth		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides opportunities for families and communities to become involved in preparing children for and supporting them in school. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops a sense of emotional competency and social responsibility. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhances the curriculum through community involvement and the utilization of community resources. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates community involvement in the school and community. 		
Area #2: Personal Mastery		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts with integrity and builds relationships. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practices effective communication. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practices effective facilitation. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies and understands the process of change. 		
Area #3: Strategic Directions		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops a shared vision and short and longer term goals. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translates community school goals into achievable actions and results. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employs a collaborative decision-making approach. 		
Area #4: Community Involvement and Capacity building		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes, values and builds upon the existing assets in the community. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates communication between School District administrators, principals, teachers, agency representatives and the community. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the importance of community education and development and works toward their implementation. 		

Competency Characteristics/Clusters:	Required Knowledge, Skills and Abilities	Success Indicators
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Area #5: Life Long Learning

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates a nurturing and welcoming environment. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responds to the diverse needs of all learners. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapts programs and services to address community and neighbourhood issues. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops the assets and capacities of volunteers. 		

Area #6: Coordination of Services

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies and accesses community resources. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Builds and sustains partnerships. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitates joint planning and maximizes sharing of information and resources. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies and addresses gaps in facilities and services. 		

Area #7: Facility Utilization

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinates activities, events and programs which respond to community needs. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocates for and facilitates maximum community use of school facilities. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconciles conflicting interests with regard to the use of school facilities. 		

Appendix #2: Examples of Continuous Improvement Frameworks in Practice

School	Harwin Community School (Prince George)	
Community Education Goal	Kids at Risk	
Specific Objective	Programs	Performance Indicators
To develop programs that encourage healthy and positive lifestyles.	Family Group	1 family night with 10 families. (More were expected but did not come due to a snowstorm.)
	Opportunity Group	25 students participated in 5 sessions.

School	Bayview Community School (Vancouver)			
Program	Big Brothers In-School Mentoring Program (Little School Buddies)			
Anticipated Outcomes	Indicators of Success	Indicator Measurement		
		Baseline	Target	Achieved
To increase confidence and self-esteem in a child's ability to succeed.	Parent surveys. Oral and written feedback from children, parents, mentors and teachers.	In 2002/03, we provided support to 14 students.	Our target for 2003/04 is to increase this support to 16 students.	

School:	Norgate Community School (North Vancouver)		
Area of Focus:	Classroom Reading Proficiency		
Objective	Strategies	Key Performance Measures	
To improve the reading performance for primary students.	To annually assess all students in Grade 4 using the FSA.	Baseline: <u>Grade 4 FSA in May 2002</u> (81% meet or exceed) Target: <u>Improvement of 5% over a 4-Year Period (2003 to 2006)</u> Actual:	