

## **HALIFAX REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD**

### **Halifax Regional School Board's Strategic Plan 2013-2017**

**PURPOSE:** To have the Governing Board approve the Halifax Regional School Board's Strategic Plan 2013-2017.

**BACKGROUND:** In January and February 2013, the Governing Board and Senior Staff participated in a strategic planning process led by Maureen Reid, Boardworks Consulting. After a draft plan was created, the Superintendent circulated the draft for feedback from principals, staff and School Advisory Councils. A link was placed on the website so that the public could provide feedback. The Communications staff used Twitter to promote the feedback site.

**CONTENT:** Feedback was received until March 8, 2013 and there were 43 respondents. These responses came from individual parents/guardians and community members (11), School Advisory Councils (22), principals (4) and staff (6). The feedback was shared with the Governing Board and Senior Staff.

It became clear that there should have been a more thorough explanation of how the Strategic Plan and the Business Plan and Budget documents are connected. The Strategic Plan sets direction for the next four years. The Business Plan identifies the goals and priorities that the school board will undertake over the next year to move towards its stated goals. The budget is allocated annually to support the implementation of the Business Plan.

Feedback from the submissions was compiled and reviewed for common responses and new ideas (Appendix 1).

The Governing Board considered the feedback in the context of the discussions during the development of the draft plan and the feedback as it related to each section. Some of the suggestions had been previously raised by the Governing Board during the discussions in developing the plan. The summary of the submissions was considered point by point to reach consensus on whether the suggested changes should be included.

Revisions were made to the draft Strategic Plan and the final document is attached as Appendix 2.

**COST:** N/A

**FUNDING:** Annual budget from the Department of Education.

**TIMELINE:** April 1, 2013 – March 31, 2017

**APPENDICES:** Appendix 1: Feedback to Draft Strategic Plan – Executive Summary  
Appendix 2: Halifax Regional School Board's Strategic Plan 2013-2017

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** That the Governing Board approve the Halifax Regional School Board Strategic Plan 2013-2017.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

<b>AUDIENCE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
Principals and School Advisory Councils	Danielle McNeil-Hessian, Director School Administration	Following Approval by the Governing Board
HRSB Staff	Judy White, Superintendent	Following Approval by the Governing Board
General Public, Community Partners	Communications via hrsb.ca & social media	Following Approval by the Governing Board

**From:** Gin Yee, Chair, Halifax Regional School Board and District 3 Representative, [gyee@hrsb.ca](mailto:gyee@hrsb.ca) or 464-2000 ext. 4445

**To:** Governing Board, Halifax Regional School Board

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## **Feedback to Draft Strategic Plan Executive Summary**

The Governing Board developed a draft Strategic Plan to set direction for the next four years. The draft plan was sent out to School Advisory Councils (SACs) and Principals. It was also posted on the front page of the Halifax Regional School Board website to allow members of the public to provide additional feedback. The Communications Department used Twitter to promote the feedback site. The deadline for feedback was March 8, 2013.

On March 11, 2013, the feedback link was removed from the website and the responses were reviewed. In total, there were 43 email responses. These responses came from individual parents, guardians and community members (11), SACs (22), principals (4) and staff (6). Overall, people indicated that they were pleased to have the opportunity to provide feedback. There were some minor editorial revisions suggested.

There is a desire for the strategic plan to be more detailed with regard to the action steps required to achieve each goal. There were also suggestions about additional areas that the Governing Board may wish to consider as part of the strategic plan.

There is a strong desire for more quantitative outcome measures rather than qualitative measures. It is repeatedly suggested that numerical values should be used instead of words like “increased” and “improved.”

The feedback indicated that some words required a clear, consistent definition (i.e., courageous leadership, exemplary, safe and engaging learning environment, student engagement). The general feedback on each section is as follows:

### **INTRODUCTION**

More explicit information regarding budgetary constraints was requested for this section.

### **MISSION**

One respondent suggested the following:

“We are entrusted by the public of HRM with the daily care and education of its children. All of our activities are geared towards providing a safe and engaging learning environment / rich and rewarding learning experience for all of our students. All of our strategic goals are designed to support that basic mandate.”

Another, the following:

“Providing a high quality education for every student every day *that prepares them to be successful and productive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*”

### **VISION**

Nothing substantive was suggested.

## **HRSB VALUES**

Overall, there is support for this section.

It is suggested that the word “strive” be replaced with the word “will” in this sentence: “in carrying out our Mission, we *will* demonstrate...”

It is suggested that the following two bullets be added:

- a focus on instruction and assessment
- a commitment to community engagement

It is suggested that the word “staff” be included in the following bullets:

- a commitment to fostering a school system where students *and staff* learn because they want to and not because they have to
- an ability to connect with, motivate and empower students *and staff* to discover their talents and passions
- a welcoming and supportive learning environment for our diverse student *and staff*

On three occasions, respondents indicated that “a commitment to fostering a school system where students learn because they want to and not because they have to” be changed to a more positive statement. Either remove “and not because they have to”, or replace the statement with, “a commitment to fostering a school system where all students are actively engaged in their own learning.”

## **STRATEGIC THEMES AND DESIRED OUTCOMES**

Nothing substantive was suggested.

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 1**

Overall there is strong support for goal 1. However, there is some concern that the outcomes are more focused on secondary students rather than elementary school students.

It is suggested that numerical values should be used instead of words like “increased” and “improved.”

In the key outcomes section for this goal, “100% of school administrators having completed instructional leadership development programs,” prompted questions over whether “completed” is the right word. Should it be “implemented” to demonstrate that administrators are doing more than just taking the course?

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 2**

Overall, there is strong support for this goal. However, there is concern that outcome measures are qualitative, yet should be quantitative.

Respondents felt that recognition should be given to “evidence-based teaching.”

Beneath the bullet “Under a teacher appraisal system that”, it is suggested that the following two sub-bullets be added:

- Encourages and provides opportunities for teachers to talk about their learning and changes in practices and the resulting changes in student learning
- Identifies when teachers need support in their practice, offers support and documents teacher growth or continued issues

One SAC suggested that the process around teacher appraisal system should be more widely communicated.

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 3**

There is strong support for increasing diversity in the workforce, but not at the expense of hiring qualified exemplary teachers.

It is suggested that the word “support” be added to this bullet:

- “Continue to recruit, *support* and retain staff to reflect the diversity of the student population.”

Questions are raised around more options for student transportation and whether that means bussing options for program and/or bussing for afterschool activities?

What do “raising the bar” and “closing the achievement gap” mean? How would it be different in each school? More clarity is required around this statement.

It was suggested that this goal be divided into two separate goals; one that deals with diversity in the student population and the other, equitable access to programming.

It was believed that “fine arts” should have been included in the following outcome: “An increased percentage of students accessing IB, AP, skilled trades, O2, French Immersion and co-op courses, *fine arts*, among others.”

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 4**

There is support for this goal, but it received the fewest comments.

The key outcome, “broader community engagement through the adoption of best practices,” was not understood.

It is suggested that HRSB should recognize that the Internet is not the only tool that should be used for communications.

There is concern around whether or not parent surveys will be a true indicator of public confidence.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

People were pleased to see an accountability section, but questions were raised regarding consequences if goals are not met.

## **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

There was a great deal of general feedback to the draft strategic plan.

A number of people suggested that the strategic plan include reference to mental health. In one instance, it was strongly suggested that an additional goal be added, as follows:

*To build a learning environment where students can succeed free from stigma associated with mental health issues.*

### *Strategies:*

- *Identify best practices for supporting mental health needs for students and staff*
- *Create a community that values and strives to develop and support an atmosphere that supports mental wellness*
- *Establish connections with community partners that facilitate education for staff, including training in mental health literacy*

Another area of concern is there is not mention of any anti-bullying initiatives, especially given the government's focus on this issue.

Several respondents indicated a desire for the Governing Board to address equity issues in rural areas (i.e. transportation, program, teacher turnover).

There was recognition that the document does not clearly articulate how the funding will be provided to implement the plan. In particular, it was suggested that the Governing Board will need to continue to find efficiencies when dealing with underutilized or overcrowded schools.

Respondents appreciated the commitment to new technology and transportation infrastructure. Some questions were raised around how technology will be used to support student learning.

Respondents indicated that the relationships between the strategies and the key outcomes were not always aligned.

## Halifax Regional School Board Strategic Plan 2013-2017

### A. Introduction

The Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB) is responsible for administering the public school system within the geographic boundary of the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). The board operates 136 schools serving over 49,000 students and employing about 4,900 FTE teachers and support staff.

The Governing Board consists of 9 elected school board members, 1 appointed Mi'kmaq representative and two student advisors.

The Board works in partnership with the Department of Education and the Halifax Regional Municipality in providing programs and services for students. The Board strives to develop the capacity to address current and emerging student needs.

The following is the strategic plan that will provide direction and focus to the Governing Board over the next four years. Steps to achieve the goals through the strategies will be described in detail through the annual Business Planning and Budget process. Progress will be reported quarterly to the Audit Committee as part of the Business Plan and Financial Update.

School boards must also develop measures against which performance can be assessed for reporting on the Business Plan to the Department of Education. Each goal will include performance measures, baseline data, target, reporting year and timeframe to facilitate performance reporting as part of the annual Business Plan. Performance measures will be chosen based on what data is currently available for reporting or what data the board plans to collect.

### B. HRSB's Mission

Providing a high quality education for every student every day.

### C. HRSB's Vision

Providing a safe and engaging learning environment where every student learns, grows and succeeds.

#### D. HRSB's Values

In carrying out our Mission, we will demonstrate:

- a focus on student achievement and school improvement
- a commitment to put the best educational interests of students first
- a commitment to fostering a school system where all students are actively engaged in their learning
- an ability to connect with, motivate and empower students to discover their talents and passions
- equity and fairness of opportunity and quality of programs across the system
- a welcoming and supportive learning environment for our diverse student community
- the ability to adapt and thrive in constant change
- a commitment to optimize existing resources
- forward-thinking and collaboration with partners
- recognition and support of the inter-dependence of parents, educators and the community in the success of our students
- courageous leadership

#### E. Strategic Themes and Desired Outcomes

In order to achieve our Vision, the HRSB will be focused on the following strategic themes for the next four (4) years:

1. Student Achievement/Success
2. Exemplary Teaching
3. Equitable Opportunities for Students
4. Public Confidence in Education

## F. Goals, Strategies and Key Outcomes

### **Strategic Goal 1: To improve student achievement and personal success.**

#### **Strategies:**

- Ensure appropriate program planning is in place for every student
- Ensure an ongoing process to support all schools in their focus on school improvement planning
- Continue to support existing and to develop new instructional leadership skills for administrators
- Prepare students for a fulfilling path beyond school

#### **Key Outcomes:**

#### **We will know we have been successful when HRSB achieves:**

- 100% of schools actively engaged in the provincial Continuous School Improvement framework
- Continued improvement in student achievement results, including provincial and board assessments
- An increased percentage of students graduating within three (3) years of entering Grade 10
- An increased percentage of students having identified a post-secondary path upon graduation
- 100% of school administrators having completed instructional leadership development programs
- Increased student engagement at the Grade 9 level as indicated through student survey results

**Strategic Goal 2: To maximize exemplary teaching practices to support high quality instruction.**

**Strategies:**

- Create a common understanding of exemplary and innovative teaching practices through professional development grounded in research
- Increase the cultural proficiency of teachers and administrators
- Emphasize exemplary teaching in the teacher appraisal process
- Encourage teachers to continuously assess the effectiveness of their instructional strategies in meeting the diverse needs of each student

**Key Outcomes:**

**We will know we have been successful when HRSB achieves:**

- 100% of teachers completing professional development on (a) exemplary teaching practices and (b) cultural competency and proficiency
- A teacher appraisal system that:
  - Emphasizes exemplary teaching and cultural competence
  - Demonstrates professional growth in teaching practices arising from annual professional development
  - Achieves consistency in evaluation standards used by the school administrators
- An increasing number of teachers receiving exemplary ratings for their teaching
- A common understanding and effective implementation of professional learning communities in all schools

**Strategic Goal 3: To achieve equitable learning opportunities for all students.**

**Strategies:**

- Develop a common understanding of the breadth and depth of diversity within our school system and address any policy implications
- Establish systems and processes to analyze and report student achievement data for identified groups
- Continue to recruit and retain staff to reflect the diversity of the student population
- Improve technology and transportation infrastructure to support broader access to programming

**Key Outcomes:**

**We will know we have been successful when HRSB achieves...**

- Improved student achievement for identified groups within our diverse student population
- An increased percentage of students accessing IB, AP, skilled trades, O2, French Immersion and co-op courses, fine arts, among others
- A more diverse workforce
- An increased percentage of students who feel their school is welcoming and inclusive
- 100% of schools with WIFI and equitable access to technology
- More options for student transportation

**Strategic Goal 4: To build engagement, support and confidence in HRSB.****Strategies:**

- Identify and implement best practices for community engagement at both the board and school levels
- Create protocols for proactive, open and timely internal and external communication
- Nurture strong relationships with the Department of Education, HRM and other community partners
- Achieve greater efficiency in the management of our facilities

**Key Outcomes:****We will know we have been successful when HRSB achieves...**

- Improved public confidence in HRSB
- An increased percentage of parents feeling positive about their engagement and satisfied with the quality of their children's education
- A significant increase in the number of parents and community members accessing HRSB's publications or communications tools
- Broader community engagement through the adoption of best practices
- Influence on public policy relating to education at provincial and municipal levels
- Completion of energy management projects and implementation of sustainable facility management practices with the savings being reinvested in the system
- An approved Facilities Master Plan with reduced excess capacity
- Provincial funding support for HRSB's Facilities Master Plan

**F. ACCOUNTABILITY FOR OUR PROGRESS**

Upon approval of the Strategic Plan, Senior Administration will be accountable for developing annual business plans for the operational implementation of the strategies described herein. The achievement of our strategic goals will require not only instructional and administrative leadership, but also the support and engagement of the entire HRSB community.

The School Board and the Administration are committed to providing our parents and community with an annual report on HRSB's progress towards its strategic goals.