

More with Less

Feb. 12th, 2010

Supplemental District 57 Sustainability Report: a three year plan for saving nine million dollars

At the January 26th, 2010 public board meeting, School District 57 trustee Roxanne Ricard challenged the audience of parents, educators, students, and the general public to help come up with solutions for addressing the district's anticipated budget shortfall. Although our expertise and insight is spread in many directions and has limitations, we are honoured to be tasked with this challenge and have taken the request seriously.

In addition (or in alternative) to measures taken by the board to close and consolidate schools (and other actions from the *DSC Report*), here are some ideas that could impact district budget sustainability and save over \$9 million within three years. Some of these items are one-time savings, others will result in yearly deficit relief. We welcome feedback on these ideas, by email or in person, as well as corrections to our cost estimates, positively or negatively. Without intimate access to all budget data, we have used approximate figures based on available evidence; conservative estimates were used when possible.

These recommendations are intended as an example of the savings that could be considered and achieved through an alternate planning process and are without prejudice to current district practices or individuals. Many of the savings would only be realized after three years, but would also result in lower overall long-term operating costs if sustained beyond the three-year period. Alternately, alleviating some of these measures in three years would leave all partner groups in the district with the sense that everyone pitched in to make sustainability possible. Some of these savings are realized by cuts from district management infrastructure, others through reductions in school allocations, and others have already been referred to in the *DSC Report*. In all cases involving labour costs we recommend the use of attrition and reassignment over layoff, and prior consultation with representatives of affected labour organizations.

There is no doubt that the district needs to balance its budget and pursue sustainability. This quest is where the questions and decisions need to dwell, and it is here that we wish to provide options. Beyond financial savings, many of these suggestions could put SD57 at the cutting edge of Northern Community Sustainability, innovative educational leadership, school system sustainability models, choice/diversity of programs, and continued focus on student learning.

Respectfully submitted,

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SUMMARY OF SAVINGS

<u>Category</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Estimated Cost Savings</u>
Pro-D and Travel	1. Travel Costs	\$680,400
	2. Release Time	\$334,800
	3. Catering Costs	\$161,450
	4. District Vehicles	\$109,466
Efficiencies	5. Carbon Offsets	\$60,000
	6. Copying and Printing	\$98,730
	7. Professional Printing	\$36,767
	8. Department Budgeting	\$131,640
	9. Supplies	\$341,284
	10. Use of Planners	\$87,638
	11. Plants and Landscaping	\$50,886
Leadership Structures	12. Admin Hiring Freeze	\$656,413
	13. Advanced Leadership Program	\$494,940
	14. Expressed Need HR Policy	\$2,104,848
	15. Teacher Leader Program	\$317,496
	16. POSR Grants	\$108,500
Technology	17. Technology Greening Plan	\$195,390
	18. Peripherals Freeze	\$224,280
	19. Cellphone Subsidy	\$149,491
	21. Laptop Grants	\$60,600
	20. BCeSIS Strategy	\$337,000
Facilities	22. Move DRC	\$450,000
	23. Move CAO	\$1,893,750
	TOTAL	\$9,085,769

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. REDUCE TRAVEL COSTS

Three-year freeze on non-essential out-of-district travel paid for by district funds. Encourage use of Eluminate and Skype for virtual meetings and take advantage of the many available virtual education conferences and Knowschool online professional development short courses. Discharge contracted travel agent. Apply carbon offsets and consider cap-and-trade system for board office travel air-miles or calculated carbon impact. The district currently spends \$1,113,355 on centrally administered Professional Development and Travel (does not include money schools use for this purpose from their allocations or the BCTF Pro-D Fund) according to the published 2009-2010 budget. This translates to some combination of 629.75 (\$1800) trips or 3711.18 (\$300) teacher-release days each year. Estimate based on 20% total budget reduction for Professional Development and Travel for each of three years (approximately 126 fewer \$1800 trips per year: flights, agent fees, accommodations, transit/car rental, meals, and registrations). Carbon offset savings are not included. Various accountability tools exist to screen out-of-district travel if it is difficult to establish criteria.

Area of savings: District/CAO travel costs

Estimated cost savings: \$680,400

2. REDUCE/RE-ENVISION RELEASE TIME

Restructure release-dependent professional development, district meetings, and school projects. Use a three-year freeze on non-essential meetings requiring use of paid release time. Restructure release-dependent action initiative grants and mentoring. Mitigate with macro-level use of non-instructional time (e.g. existing collaboration blocks) or micro-level alternatives or incentives to find meeting time (three-year trial). Consider using BCCT-certified district staff or administration as guest speakers and learning facilitators to alleviate teachers from instruction when this is still needed. This could be part of a structured outreach/professional portfolio required by district staff and school administration similar to requirements for government officials. Such a program would be invigorating for BCCT-certified district staff and administration, and would lead the province in educational innovation. In 2009-2010 the district spent the equivalent of 3711 \$300 teacher-release days each year on Professional Development and Travel. Estimate based on reduction of 372 release days per year (x3) at \$300 per release day (10% of total yearly Professional Development and Travel 2009-2010 budget). Getting schools to match district savings on release time at an appropriate ratio would also further savings. Further clarity could be gained by publishing the data for travel vs. professional development as separate items in the annual district budget. Recommendations 1 & 2 represent a total reduction of about 30% applied to the district's Professional Development and Travel budget, and leave considerable room to continue meeting the Board's obligation to the teacher's Pro-D Fund as per article F.21 in the Collective Agreement.

Area of savings: release time

Estimated cost savings: \$334,800

3. REDUCE CATERING SERVICES

Remove or create alternatives to food catering in the district, or begin a three-year freeze on catering. The district paid \$215,267 to two catering companies in 2008-2009. Some portion of this relates to event and meeting catering. Estimate based on reducing total catering costs by 25% in each of three years.

Area of savings: catering

Estimated cost savings: \$161,450

4. CURB USE OF PERK/POOL/LEASED VEHICLES

Transfer all CAO (Central Administration Office) executive vehicle allowances (5?) and CAO pool car allowances (2?) into a fund for per-km reimbursement. As Canadian Leasing Laws are currently being revised, the timing on this change would be proactive and strategic. Restrict use of subsidized travel to essential tasks (some of which may be reduced through other recommendations) and recover surplus. Examine travel record for patterns and match district staff travel routes to public transit. Our CAO and most schools are on efficient bus routes and documented use of transit could be applied as a carbon offset and used as a Sustainable Communities promotion opportunity. Estimate based on reducing use of subsidized (leased vehicle) travel sufficiently to cover the per-km fund (use of personal vehicles) and public transit passes (a choice for district staff). The second part to the savings comes from a reduction in total vehicle leases, fuel purchases, and servicing: 4% in year one, 8% in year two, and 12% in year three (consistent with decline in student numbers) starting with perk and pool vehicles. Last year the district spent \$250,968 on leases and at least \$205,142 on fuel and vehicle service centres. Carbon offsets not included.

Area of savings: CAO travel

Cost savings: \$109,466

5. PROACTIVITY ON CARBON OFFSETS

Create carbon offset team from all partner groups to develop three-year plan for reducing carbon footprint by 15% over three years (2010 carbon offsets under the Greenhouse Gas Act cost district \$200,000). Most strategies should focus on reducing heat and electricity costs, although there are many areas for action. Even planting 80-120 pine, spruce, or fir trees on school district property would capture one tonne of a carbon per year. Every one-hectare plot of removed trees in our district decreased our ability to capture carbon by approximately 200 tonnes per year (with stems 5 metres apart). Estimate based on meeting the goal with 5%, 10%, 15% reductions over three years. The team could also manage the carbon balance software for the district and establish a cap-and-trade system for each zone in the district (friendly competitions to reduce footprint). Reducing fuel consumption (recommendation 4) is the most effective way to score carbon credits, and any efforts to reduce utilities costs will have spin-off benefits beyond the impact on the carbon tax. The opportunity is here to address loss of community greenspace due to pine-beetle damage and set a standard for northern communities addressing climate change, sustainability, and carbon neutrality.

Area of savings: carbon offsets

Estimated cost savings: \$60,000

6. REDUCE COPYING AND PRINTING

Issue a friendly challenge to reduce paper footprint by 5% or more cumulative each year in each CAO and school department for three years with a small prize at each site (goal: 15% less or more copying and printing by year three). Most district employees are not even aware of their current paper footprint, although this data is tracked. Sponsor a student viral video competition to show how many trees (or another measure) it takes to justify our volume of photocopying. End use of paper-based memos, especially one-sided, where electronic communication meets access and equity tests. Balance this goal with the recognition that provincial curriculum development and online provision of print materials has increased our paper demands. Even a one-year 5% reduction at one school (D.P. Todd Secondary) with 60 staff would save \$900 based on \$18000 of print- and copier-dependent costs and servicing (does not include lease or machine amortization). Estimate extrapolated for 1097 district users for three years only at 5%, 10%, 15% reductions. The number of 1097 includes 755 teachers, half of the 401 CUPE employees, 22 PEA, 79 administrators, and 41 exempt staff but does not include 57 Trades or 100 Custodians. The estimate does not include positive impact on carbon offsets nor extension of service anticipated for printers and copiers.

Area of savings: photocopying and printing

Estimated cost savings: \$98,730

7. REDUCE PROFESSIONAL PRINTING

Match goals to reduce paper footprint with a goal to reduce professional printing costs. The district spent \$122,557 in 2008-2009 at two professional print vendors, and perhaps more with other vendors. Estimate based on a 5%, 10%, and 15% reduction of this known amount over three years. Encourage fidelity to existing district goals to go increasingly paperless.

Area of savings: professional printing

Estimated cost savings: \$36,767

8. DEPARTMENT BUDGETING EFFICIENCIES

Publish budget details related to supplies, purchases, and expenditures in CAO and school departments as an accountability measure. Some budgets have been squeezed for years, others will be shown to have potential for savings. Accompany with a friendly challenge for all CAO departments and schools to eliminate non-essential purchases for three years and self-target surpluses for recovery. Estimate based on a short study of three school departments with five staff spending and average of \$700 in department budgets and \$100 in central supply budgets per year (this would vary highly depending on departments (e.g. HR vs. lab sciences). A three-year total freeze may not be realistic, so a 25% reduction in each of three years is assumed or can account for differentiated nature of department budgets (e.g. staplers vs. hydrochloric acid). Extrapolated for 1097 staff. The potential to apply this to learning resources is not present in the current estimate.

Area of savings: department supplies & purchases

Estimated cost savings: \$131,640

9. SUPPLY BUDGET EFFICIENCIES

Clarify nature of \$5,688,063 supply budget and look for savings. Set a target of 3% reduction over three years (1%/2%/3%). Some of these savings may already be anticipated by associated measures.

Area of savings: supplies

Estimated cost savings: \$341,284

10. REDUCE USE OF PLANNERS

Begin a three-year freeze or reduction in the use of student and teacher planners and similar “school agenda” products. Seek a sponsor to provide these for free or use an alternative (web template, study skills calendars, Firstclass calendars, notebooks, year-less calendars that can be recycled). The estimate is based on a 50% reduction in the costs associated with Premier School Agendas (\$58,425 in 2008-2009) for each of three years. Carbon offsets not included.

Area of savings:

Estimated cost savings: \$87,638

11. USE LANDSCAPING ALTERNATIVES

As a three-year trial, seek donated trees and plants for use in district landscaping and horticulture projects. School programs have not had difficulty accessing free trees in the past. Work with the carbon offset team to identify school properties requiring “re-greening.” Estimate based on reducing plant store costs by 50% for three years (the district spent at least \$33,924 on this last year)

Area of savings: plants and trees

Estimated cost savings: \$50,886

12. INITIATE ADMIN HIRING FREEZE

Three-year freeze on hiring new administrators. Use attrition (retirements, relocation) to assist other recommendations involving CAO reductions. Long-term trends normally require hiring at least three new administrators per year. Avg. principal/vice-principal salary in 2008-2009 was \$98015 and \$100,038 in 2009-2010. Benefits are in the range of \$20,896 per year per school administration employee, and average expenses of \$624 per school-based administrators is (Special Purpose Fund in the 2008-2009 Financial Statement). The typical new hire would cost somewhat less than this total of \$121,558. Estimate based on not hiring 0/2/2 over three years with savings perpetuating (used 90% of average cost per school-based administrator. Normally admin hiring would be net zero, but our admin numbers have grown in recent budget years relative to student population. Reversing this trend is essential in meeting a balanced budget and would bring school district 57 closer to provincial averages for administrator-student ratios.

Area of savings: admin hiring freeze

Estimated cost savings: \$656,413

13. ESTABLISH ADVANCED LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Reduce assistant superintendent positions by one upon the first available retirement, and remain thus for a period of not less than three years. Respect the legacy and importance of this position by dividing some of the relinquished job duties among principals and vice-principals as a three-year advanced leadership program. This would mirror the district’s Encouraging Leadership Program at a senior administrative level and assist human resources in identifying principal and CAO executive candidates. Estimate based on reducing an average assistant superintendent salary (\$127,152), benefits (\$20,896?), and expenses (\$16,932) thus \$164,980/yr (2008-2009 Financial Statement), assuming a retirement.

Area of savings: CAO staffing

Cost savings: \$494,940

14. CREATE EXPRESSED NEED HR POLICY

Consider a three-year trial for a human resources policy that restricts the placement of administrators between school level assignments at the Central Administration Office. Recent policy, while intended to support student learning and resolve human resources issues, has increased the cost of the CAO while other areas in the district have decreased in response to demographic decline. Establish criteria for creating new jobs (e.g. district support positions, district principals, other labour groups) at the CAO only with expressed need from constituent partner groups. Use the existing process and qualification criteria for returning surplus administration back to teaching positions, even if it is for a transition period between administrative assignments (could also be asset to professional portfolio and alleviate burnout). Estimate based on reduction of four FTE positions in year one, two in year two, and none in year three. Based on district principal average salary (\$105,262), benefits (\$20,896?), expenses (\$5395) thus \$131,553 with savings perpetuating. Utilize attrition (retirement/relocation) rather than layoffs to implement policy. Capitalize on CAO experience by using any transfers related to this policy as experts to define, coordinate, and participate in an Advanced Leadership Program.

Area of savings: CAO staffing

Estimated cost savings: \$2,104,848

15. INITIATE TEACHER LEADER PROGRAM

Convert some vice-principal or even principal positions to rotating teacher positions of special responsibility. Add this “Teacher Leader” opportunity to the spectrum of leadership identification programs that already include Encouraging Leadership and might include Advanced Leadership. Select promising candidates for part-time or full-time secondments to assignments that include current administrative duties, especially those centered on instructional leadership. This helps address a perception gap that administration and teaching are on separate tracks, and allows teachers to make an important leadership contribution and then return to the classroom with dignity. It will also help identify the future leaders of the district with a built-in risk-aversion scheme: many are called, all are honoured, some are retained. This would be another opportunity for the district to lead the field in the ecology of leadership, and recognize that “master teachers” may wish to contribute to leadership structures without permanently losing their classroom. The trial would build four part-time positions (0.5 FTE x 4 = 2 FTE) and two full-time positions (2 FTE) in each of 3 years (total 12 FTE) with District POSR stipends (\$8100). This cost would be offset by reducing four FTE administration positions in each of three years. As with other labour items, the filter to apply to this trial should be to use attrition over layoffs to determine spaces available for Teacher Leaders, or apply a no-net-loss across labour groups as there will be some movement. This program could be used to make small and rural schools more viable (staffing flexibility), and is based on a similar “Head Teacher” program in School District 20 Kootenay-Columbia. This program may also be a means to write and coordinate the School Plans for Student Success. Finally, this program, once applied, would be flexible as to the amount of FTE needed per site and may be a respectful way to reintegrate laid-off administration (i.e. from school closures) back into teaching positions. The differential between full-cost teachers (with district stipend) and administrators is about \$26458. The estimate is based on 12 FTE teachers vs. 12 FTE administrators.

Area of savings: administrative costs

Estimated cost savings: \$317,496

16. ELIMINATE POSR GRANTS

Each secondary school currently has a minimum of one Position of Special Responsibility charged with developing the School Plan for Student Success and fulfilling other school-determined duties, at a cost of one district-funded block (about \$10000) and a \$5600 stipend. These duties can be taken up at the school level and supplied with prep blocks and/or lieu days similar to what is being done for athletics coordination and department leadership positions. This has the advantage of making these positions based on needs generated on site and not perceived needs from the district. This estimate does not include district POSRs (support teachers; covered elsewhere) and would require that SPSS writing and coordination are funded by the district through an alternate means.

Area of savings: service consolidation

Estimated cost savings: \$108,500

17. RENEW TECHNOLOGY GREENING PLAN

Extend greening schedule for computer lab replacements by one year with allowances for replacement machines. Recent computers show an increased life expectancy in terms of their ability to remain current with developing software needs. Conservatively, a minimum of 40 schools replaces a mid-functioning lab (\$30,000 including some associated costs) every five years (\$1,200,000) every five years. Additionally, our five secondary schools replace a minimum average of one lab per year (\$750,000 over five years). Yearly cost of \$390,000. Moving to six instead of five year rotations would realize a 16.7% cost savings or \$65130 per year. More tech support time may be needed for aging machines; however, this may be balanced with fewer installations and startup support time each year.

Area of savings: technology greening plan schedule

Estimated cost savings: \$195,390

18. REVISIT PERIPHERALS AND ASSOCIATED GRANTS

Three year freeze on purchasing technology peripherals, including smartboard and projector purchase/installation and also including a three year freeze on district innovation and action initiative grants, especially where they involve purchases. Estimate based on yearly purchases and grants of \$4200 at a school of 750 students and 60 staff. If 13350 students generate similar needs, this is \$5.6 per student or \$74,760 per year. Alternately if 1079 staff generate similar needs, this is \$70 per staff or \$75,530 per year. Estimate uses lower figure x three years. Involves both DTT budget and school allocations.

Area of savings: technology peripherals & grants

Estimated cost savings: \$224,280

19. END TO CELLPHONE SUBSIDY

End subsidization of district Blackberries and cellphones. Encourage more use of existing land-lines, emails/free messaging systems, devices that replicate Blackberry functions, and face-to-face communication to mitigate loss of subsidized cellphones. Estimate based on an elimination of the Telus Mobility Cellular bill (2008-2009 Financial Statement) for three years.

Area of savings: cellphones

Estimated cost savings: \$149,491

20. LAPTOP GRANTS

Revisit administrator laptop grants where a duplicate, dedicated machine already exists at an administrator's worksite. Create a greening fund for administrator laptops or desktops that allows for a limited set of options and configurations (determine choices from a user-based needs assessment). Set the schedule to coincide or mirror school greening cycle. Estimate based on 50% reduction in each of three years (79 Admin, 22 PEA, \$2000 laptops), With computers amortized over five years.

Area of savings: technology

Estimated cost savings: \$60,600

21. CHANGES TO BCeSIS STRATEGY

Adjust approach to using BCeSIS. Abandoning BCeSIS is not realistic although it would realize substantial savings. Any alternative would also be expensive, and some aspects of the data system are meeting current needs and have required substantial investment of time and money. More effective would be to work with provincial partners to renegotiate the contract with eSIS/Fujitsu in recognition that we don't need many aspects of the service (e.g. use of the teacher assistant module for gradebook entry is now an exception rather than district practice). Our initial province-wide contract was based on delivery of a product designed around input from a small focus group and was not subjected to field tests or end-user trials. Our district could be a provincial leader in applying the knowledge we've gained from the "trial period" and revising our description of the product we actually require from eSIS/Fujitsu, and, in return, helping make their product more viable in new markets. Contract negotiation should set a goal of at least a 10% reduction in user fees to reflect our restricted/revised use of the service. Reflect these changes, as well as the demographic decline in the number of students in our data system, by adjusting the district staffing for BCeSIS (tech support and oversight) – our "trial" period is over and we should not need as many oversight and technical positions to run this program. Estimate based on reducing at least one FTE of program oversight/support (\$104,000, savings perpetuates) and reducing our fee per student from \$20 to \$18 by the end of three years (\$2 x 12,500 students = \$25000). Impact and potential reductions in school data officers are not included.

Area of savings: BCeSIS

Estimated cost savings: \$337,000

22. RESTRUCTURE DISTRICT RESOURCE CENTRE

Consolidate the District Resource Centre at PGSS. Reorganize and streamline service based on a needs assessment from the people who use the DRC. Estimate based on reducing DRC costs by 50% (perpetuating) based on a yearly cost of \$300,000 (figure used during 2002 closures). Additional savings will be in shipping, streaming video consolidation, and removal of duplicated service at PGSS (will hold 11% of district's student population in 2011). Alternately, the DRC could simply be absorbed into existing libraries with a new protocol on inter-library loans. Part of a transition year could be used to make sense of library consolidations from closed schools, remove duplicated services, and investigate the use of district-wide streaming video services.

Area of savings: service consolidation

Estimated cost savings: \$450,000

23. PROPERTY SALES AND THE CAO

According to BC Assessment, the CAO property is worth \$3,228,000 (land \$1,822,000 and buildings \$1,406,000). The John McInnis site is worth \$17,329,000 (land \$6,264,000 and buildings \$11,065,000), and the Lakewood site is worth \$10,014,000 (land \$1,388,000 and buildings \$8,626,000). In a year of large potential for student movement between schools, the sale of the CAO property is most realistic, considering its operations could be housed elsewhere (e.g. John McInnis or Lakewood), and the other two sites are student-ready. The CAO site is also prime real estate with commercial potential indicated in the Prince George Official Community Plan (http://www.city.pg.bc.ca/city_services/ocp/ocp.pdf p. 50). The estimate is based on 100% of assessed land value and 50% of assessed building value. This number (\$2,525,000) has then been multiplied by 75% to factor in anticipated moving costs and modifications to the new CAO host. Implications for capital vs. operational savings need to be qualified. Tax savings and carbon offsets not included.

Area of savings: service relocation

Estimated cost savings: \$1,893,750

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

These other measures, although difficult to quantify, would result in significant savings and continue the process of addressing change while maintaining a focus on student learning.

EFFICIENCIES

24. Encourage “healthy schools” approach to real communication vs email and hands-on teaching and learning strategies. Set a goal to cap or reduce student-computer ratio and enforce district standards on servicing and maintaining obsolete machines. Make up access deficit by implementing/fast-tracking existing plans to allow appropriate use of protected networks by students and staff on their own computers. Efficiencies should also realize savings in tech support, and make use of our collective knowledge as to how to use computers and technology more effectively for essential and innovative tasks.

25. Freeze any plans for parking lot repaving in the next three years and extend any current repaving schedules by a number of years to realize substantial savings.

26. Assuming some cuts at the CAO, empty space will open up for new opportunities. Consider relocating the Centre for Learning Alternatives (key operations) to the CAO building. Alternately, both the CAO and the CLA (and others services) could relocate to Lakewood or John McInnis and their former sites sold or leased.

27. Establish a district-wide "greening" process for textbooks (bulk purchase of recommended titles). Transfer unused class sets ("off-semesters") between sites based on need. No central administration of this is required as our coding system works across district and would only require cooperation between libraries and monitoring by business managers.

28. Investigate potential savings in using ebooks/pads for textbook delivery (pilot one class set at each secondary school). Savings likely but not necessarily within the three-year period.

29. Investigate how Netbooks, iPads, cloud computing, open source, and thin clients might be used in our schools, especially when something other than a full computer is not needed. Pilot needed and savings not likely within the three-year period.

30. Re-examine snow removal contract/bidding process.

31. Allow schools and employees to seek less expensive options for replacing equipment and resources when they can demonstrate that the item meets the intended need. For example, a replacement bulb for a digital screen projector can be purchased online for \$160 compared to the \$300 price quoted by our district supplier.

PROGRAMS

32. Alter mentorship program to make better use of in-school match-ups. The appeal in being a mentor is not in the release time, it is in contributing to the profession. Use inexpensive incentives (e.g. UNBC uses gift certificates for thanking practicum teacher-sponsors) instead of release time wherever possible.

33. Extend the mentorship program to identify and recognize successful teaching & learning environments and programs. Issue grants to record and archive the educators in these programs, and build web-accessed content for use in distant education and rural/small schools. Along with some synchronized sessions and a teacher/facilitator, these asynchronous offerings could make a multi-subject or multi-level classroom more realistic and manageable at small schools. There has been some experimentation with this already in the district, but without the archival use of mastery teaching & learning in an asynchronous environment. Podcasts and web content exist that parallel this model, but very little of it is tied to BC Curriculum. This might also be an excellent way to transition educational leaders (e.g. surplus administration) back to the classroom. This may require partnering rural schools with larger schools and aligning timetables to allow for the virtual classroom/videoconferencing (synchronous) part.

34. Create a three-year focus of all learning, technology, and action-initiative grants on teaching & learning projects that centre on viability and sustainability. For example, a project that provides solutions for educational delivery in a rural school would be considered for a grant. Tie the size/scope of the grant to the impact on savings and positive impact on learning.

35. Use partnerships with UNBC and CNC to encourage more research exchange. This may provide alternatives to release-dependent professional development and alleviate the need for some of the CAO-administered curriculum and instruction support and multi-site mentoring. The advantage (and mutual benefit for different educational systems) is in tying the expressed needs of educators to authentic and existing (and free) research assets. Examples of contributions that post-secondary educators and grad students could make include reading coaches, technology innovation, informal auditing, multimodal literacy projects, music therapy, and creative writing seminars. Likewise, our K-12 educators have much to offer to their post-secondary counterparts, especially concerning assessment for learning. Set goals for this mutual exchange to benefit small and rural schools.

36. Pilot a school organization (timetable) project wherein the learning needs of similar groups within a school (e.g. enriched students, reluctant learners, jr. core classes, math students, art students, all students at a small school interested in trades, etc.) can be treated as outcome-based cohorts rather than grade- and course-specific classes. Allow teachers and principals (and students) to design a program of study based on the cohort's needs that targets teaching & learning while maximizing on class-size savings. Allowing flexibility on divisions (5 groups of 18 vs 3 groups of 30), cross-curricular content, and self-directed options ensures that the class-size fits the learning needs. This has been tried before, on various levels, in our own district (PGSS), SD35 (D.W. Poppy), SD42 (Thomas Haney), and elsewhere. Savings would be realized in schools and scenarios where programs and courses would otherwise not be viable.

37. Pilot use of school grounds for community gardens. These have traditionally met roadblocks. A current proposal exists that, if approved, would have no net costs to the district (donated materials arranged) and provide a teaching garden for two distinct groups of students, and an opportunity for summer involvement by the neighbourhood and local seniors' residence. The value to the district is in carbon offsets, reduction of other learning resources costs, school beautification, daily physical activity, and community ties.

AUDITS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

38. Set up a first-year audit (formal or informal) of all secondary schools impacted with population changes. Ensure that expected efficiencies (economies of scale) translate into savings. One of the justifications for larger schools is efficiency of service, but this goal requires specific changes and monitoring.

39. Set up a comparative audit (formal or informal) to ensure that cuts to district infrastructure are carried through to related costs. For example, less new postings at the CAO and district schools should result in less money being spent at the Prince George Citizen (\$33,906 in 2008-2009). Savings should also be expected from travel, office supplies, travel, paper, computers, and other vendors. A goal that an audit may highlight could be a reduction of total costs to all services and vendors consistent with the demographic decline in our district.

40. Work at matching user-groups to targeted computer platform and configuration consolidations. Use a comprehensive needs assessment (if not a formal technology Program Evaluation) to determine cross-district strategy for bulk purchase of computers and systems, including secondary levels (not yet included in greening plan). Site-specific decisions on consolidation and differentiation of platforms may induce savings, as some high-performing computers labs are underutilized (built for potential) and other areas with low-performing machines are in need of upgrade or platform swap. While "greening" has resulted in savings, the savings data for single platform consolidation were successfully challenged four years ago (data was based on the separate cost factors of reduction of service and the elementary greening plan, and an erroneous measure of tech support by platform). Global platform consolidation will not save money as it would accelerate the obsolescence of millions of dollars of hardware and erode years of OS-specific professional development and inservice. Conversely, having a flexible strategy is the most effective way to bring secondary schools on-board with the overall greening plan. Most PCs are cheaper to buy than most Macs, but costs rise if software parity is important to the end-users. PCs generate tech tickets faster than Macs (4 x faster at one of our schools), but are also easier to upgrade and use with open-source software. Both platforms have significant long-term investment of money, time, and use in teaching & learning. Perhaps each site gets a set number of high-performing machines (either platform, variable but limited number of configurations), and a set number of functional machines (least expensive machines and platform, and simplest base configuration). Let the needs assessment determine the agenda, and any consolidations targeted on a user-group basis. Long-term planning by numerous stakeholders is necessary so as not to incur a net loss through replacing current high-functioning hardware where it is not necessary to do so.

SUSTAINABILITY MODELS

41. Consider an addendum to the Jan. 19th *DSC Report* with more granularity behind figures, explanations, and rationale. For example, provide details as to the savings were calculated in removing dual-track from the three elementary schools. This could then be compared to renovation costs and timeline considerations for an altered John McInnis. Another example would be to use school maps and formulas to show how nominal and working capacities were determined. More information would make the decision-making process more transparent and would make feedback more specific and constructive. Although data and details do not always tell the whole story, they provide the public with another tool for thoughtful feedback and accountability.

42. Consider macro-level budget allocations in light of the goal to rebuild the school district on sustainable principles. For example, re-visioning how and why our district allocates Supplies & Services or devises its plan for administration, oversight and support could significantly reduce our budget strain. Compare, for example, our district with another similar in size:

<u>2009/2010</u>	<u>SD57 Prince George</u>	<u>SD73 Kamloops</u>
# of schools	47	46
# of students	13,374	14,128
# of teachers	755	767
# principals/vice-principals	79	64
total FTE staff	1334	1354
total revenue	\$125,538,281	\$121,686,051
teacher salaries	\$53,105,137	\$55,051,567
non-teacher salaries	\$37,443,175	\$34,511,368
Supplies & Services	\$18,304,323	\$13,216,310

43. Consider other models of consultation on future facilities configuration. Having a process that invites feedback on potential closures and other options before a comprehensive puzzle-locked proposal is placed before trustees will allow a more diverse set of ideas to come to the surface, and have opportunities for savings positioned alongside (and possibly alternative to) school closures. Achieving district sustainability is a difficult learning process, and every district is different, but there is likely much to be learned from the experiences of other school districts in our province. Such an example can be seen at <http://www3.sd73.bc.ca/FacilitiesConfiguration> -- note the semantic focus in the Kamloops District report on options, solicited feedback in addition to school community consultation, and use of inquiries related to individual schools and actions. Another example can be seen at <http://www.sd46.bc.ca/secheltschools> -- the consultation process happened before the proposal to close schools, and involved the work of a committee that included representatives from all partner groups. An interesting example of prioritizing can be seen at http://web.deltasd.bc.ca/sites/files/shared/Budget_a4.pdf -- Delta used this process to improve their teacher to non-teacher salary ratio to 1.9:1 (SD57 is 1.5:1).

44. Consider keeping the "sustainability" process and related inquiries open for three years to keep up the momentum on balancing budgets and focusing on learning. A previous (2003) district sustainability report, *Secondary Configuration in School District 57*, contained many measures, some not taken, some postponed, that would have substantially mitigated the financial challenges currently facing our district. The recent *DSC Report* also contains ideas and recommendations that, if not acted on, should not be forgotten as the district looks ahead to future challenges. This present *Supplemental Report* and other simultaneous feedback, in turn, should be collated and maintained beyond the current budget year. An example of why this is important comes from the 2003 Configuration Report. It was suggested that a detailed analysis was required to determine how amalgamations would translate into savings in the area of supplies, technology, learning resources, and other benefits due to economy of scale. Such a study, had it been conducted, would have allowed the current DSC to use more accurate figures in their impact analysis of school closures and reconfigurations. An ongoing inquiry-mindset will make sustainability decisions less shocking and more closely tied to the enrichment of students.

45. Build a diverse outreach group from district partner groups (trustees, central administration, teachers, DPAC, maintenance, clerical, etc.) for a short-term examination of how other districts in the province achieve sustainability and trade various choices in order to balance financial and educational goals. Some of the structures existing in our district are mandated, many others exist only by tradition. Use this knowledge to steer or advise ongoing sustainability in SD57; the experience in other districts may help us do more with less..

Helpful Documents

- Secondary Configuration in School District 57, 2003
- SD57 Statement of Financial Information 2008-2009
- Superintendent's Financial Challenges Powerpoint, May 2009
- SD57 Annual Budget Fiscal Year 2009-2010
- District Sustainability Committee Report, Jan 19 2010
- Superintendent's Powerpoint to Board, Jan 19 2010
- SD57 website; district and school plans for student success
- SD57 Intranet/Firstclass archived meetings & minutes
- Budget and Planning documents posted on other districts' websites