



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: General Purposes Committee
From: Cathryn Volkering Carlile
General Manager, Community Services
Date: April 30, 2013
File: 07-3070-01/2013-Vol
01
Re: **Richmond School District Report: Child Poverty Issues and Initiatives in the Richmond School District**

Staff Recommendation

That the report from the General Manager of Community Services dated April 30, 2013, "Richmond School District Report: Child Poverty Issues & Initiatives in the Richmond School District", be received for information.

Cathryn Volkering Carlile
General Manager, Community Services

Att. 5

REPORT CONCURRENCE			
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER	
Recreation Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
REVIEWED BY DIRECTORS	INITIALS: DW	REVIEWED BY CAO	INITIALS: GD

Staff Report

Origin

At the October 10, 2012 Council/School Board Liaison Committee meeting, a School District report, "Child Poverty Issues & Initiatives in the Richmond School District" (**Attachment 1**), was discussed. The matter was referred to the City and, at the November 5, 2012 General Purposes Committee meeting, the following motion was adopted:

That Richmond City Council consider:

- (1) That the report to the Richmond Board of Education titled Child Poverty Issues and Initiatives in the Richmond School District, dated September 17, 2012 from the Assistant Superintendent be referred to staff:*
 - (a) for analysis; and*
 - (b) to examine what is being done at the City and at the School District, including comments from the Richmond Children's First, Richmond Community Services Advisory Committee and the Poverty Response Committee and report to the appropriate City Committee; and*
- (2) That staff report back to the Council / School Board Liaison Committee by Spring 2013.*

This report responds to the motion, and supports the following Council Term Goal:

2.1 Completion of the development and implementation of a clear City social services strategy that articulates the City's role, priorities and policies, as well as ensures these are effectively communicated to our advisory committees, community partners, and the public in order to appropriately target resources and help manage expectations.

Findings of Fact

This section includes (1) an overview of poverty indicators, (2) a summary of the School District report, (3) an outline of relevant City initiatives, and (4) results of stakeholder consultation.

1. Poverty Indicators

1.1 Definition of Poverty

No official definition of poverty exists at the federal, provincial or municipal levels in Canada. There are two main approaches to its measurement: (1) absolute poverty, meaning that basic necessities of life are unaffordable, and (2) relative poverty, whereby the food, shelter and clothing required for physical survival are attainable, but financial ability to access other activities, goods or services is non-existent, minimal, or significantly below that of the societal average. Indicators of absolute poverty include homelessness and food bank use. Indicators of relative poverty are based primarily on household income and cost of living.

1.2 Low Income Cut-offs (LICO)

The most commonly used relative income measure by Statistics Canada is the “Low Income Cut-off” (LICO), “below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income on the necessities of food, shelter, and clothing than the average family” (Statistics Canada). LICOs are adjusted by family and community size, but not region, based on the annual Consumer Price Index. In 2011, Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) with a population of 500,000 or more, such as the Vancouver CMA, had family LICOs ranging from after-tax income of \$23,498 per year for a two-person family (e.g., lone parent with one child) to \$50,631 for a seven-person family. LICO for a family of four was calculated at \$36,504.

As indicated in 2006 Census results, the most recently available, Richmond had relatively high numbers of residents with income below 2005 LICOs:

- 21% of Richmond’s overall population had incomes below the LICO (second highest in Metro Vancouver, after Vancouver).
- 26% of Richmond children were in families with incomes below the LICO (second highest in BC, after Duncan).

1.3 Market Basket Measures (MBM)

MBMs, also used to measure relative income, are based on the cost of goods and services required to meet a modest, basic standard of living, including food, clothing, footwear, transportation, shelter and other expenses, and remaining disposable income. MBMs are also based on economic family size, community size and region.

In 2010, Statistics Canada identified \$31,789 as the minimum required income to acquire necessities and maintain a modicum of disposable income for a family of four in the Vancouver CMA. The Canadian Center on Policy Alternative’s “Living Wage” guidelines provide higher estimates, whereby two parents in a family of four must each make \$19.62/hr (\$71,416 per annum) to achieve a basic level of economic security (“Working for a Living Wage 2013: Making Paid Work Meet Basic Family Needs in Metro Vancouver”). The Living Wage calculation does not allow for debt payments, savings or home ownership.

1.4 National Household Survey (NHS)

Due to the cancellation of the mandatory long-form Census, income data in the future will be provided through the voluntary NHS. As this methodology provides no assurance of statistical validity, it is less likely to be representative of the population than previous mandatory long-form Census data. The 2011 NHS Income data will be released in August, 2013.

1.5 Terminology

While no official definition of poverty exists, the term is often used to refer to income below the LICO or Market Basket Measure as defined by Statistics Canada. As the School District and other organizations identified below use the term poverty to refer to these indicators, the same terminology is used in this report.

1.6 Low Income Families in Richmond

The Richmond Children First (RCF) report, “A Profile of Children in Richmond, 2009”, includes the 2006 Census data previously cited and describes concomitant impacts on children (excerpt, **Attachment 2**). The Profile includes a map illustrating UBC’s Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) Socio-Economic Index by Richmond neighbourhood. The SES Index is based on eight predictors of development vulnerability, including income, employment, residential stability, and lone parenting. Results indicate that Steveston is the most advantaged, while City Centre is the most disadvantaged neighbourhood as measured by these criteria. Neighbourhood disparities reflect results of HELPs Early Development Instrument, whereby childhood vulnerability is measured on five scales (physical health and well-being; social competence; emotional maturity; language & cognitive; and communication). As anticipated by the SES Index, Steveston had the lowest overall rate of vulnerability (23%), while City Centre had the highest (43%). While a clear correlation exists, some degree of child vulnerability is found in all neighbourhoods, regardless of SES. The Provincial average rate of vulnerability is 31% in at least one aspect of development.

It must be noted that some of the SES Index predictors were comparatively low in Richmond; compared with provincial averages, parental education levels are relatively high throughout the City and numbers of income assistance recipients relatively low. As observed by RCF (Richmond City Centre Early Child Development Report, 2012), many working immigrant parents residing in the City Centre are, in spite of relatively high education levels, employed for low wages. Province-wide, nearly half (43%) of economic families below the LICO had at least one parent working. As noted in First Call’s “2012 Child Poverty Report Card”, minimum wage earners raising families live well below the LICO. Financial challenges are also more commonly faced by lone-parent families, and particularly by female lone-parent families; in 2005 in Richmond, 30% were living below the LICO, compared with 20% of all economic families.

While no Richmond-specific information is available, provincial figures about the “depth of poverty”, or how far income falls below the LICO, are provided in the attached RCF report excerpt. In 2005, the average income of lone-parent families living below the LICO was \$11,600 less than the cut-off, and \$10,300 less for two-parent families. Families of four living on income assistance lived \$20,457 below the LICO (First Call, 2012 Child Poverty Report Card). This information highlights the severely limited financial resources some families have available.

2. School District Report: Child Poverty Issues and Initiatives in the Richmond School District

2.1 Origin

At the April 2012 Richmond School Board Meeting, Richmond LICO data was discussed. Trustees concluded that, regardless of the definition or the accuracy of Statistics Canada figures, child poverty is of significant concern to educators because of the detrimental impact on children’s ability to learn, develop self-esteem, be accepted by peers and participate in school and community life. It was resolved:

That the Board of Education (Richmond) request senior staff to submit a report to the Board in the fall of 2012 that outlines:

- *the perceived impact of child poverty in the district;*
- *those measures that have already been taken;*
- *suggestions for actions by the school district that will help to improve student success for those impacted by poverty.*

In September 2012, the Board of Trustees reviewed a report from the Assistant Superintendent including information about current initiatives undertaken in schools to mitigate the effects of poverty, school principals' estimates of poverty levels, and possible further undertakings (**Attachment 1**). Findings are summarized below.

2.2 Estimates

The School District gathered estimates from school principals about the number of families in each school living at or below the poverty line. It should be noted that, as school staff have no data on income levels of students' families, results are entirely observational.

While some principals were "unsure" (19%), the majority (56%) estimated that 10% or less of their families were living "at or below the poverty line"; 13% estimated that between 16-20% of families were in such circumstances. While none noted a range of 21 to 30%, which would reflect LICO data, three estimated that even more (over 30%) of their families lived in such circumstances. Principals were also asked if they observed an increase in recent years. While half (50%) had not, 20% felt that the number had increased.

2.3 Current Measures

Principals were asked to identify measures currently in place to address child poverty in schools, either regularly occurring or informally offered. Of those occurring regularly, the most common were meal programs, including hot lunches, offered at-cost although subsidized on a discretionary basis; breakfast clubs, sponsored by Parent Advisory Committees, charities and businesses; and a free Provincial Healthy Snack program.

While not specifically for low-income families, homework clubs were identified as another regularly-offered means of supporting low-income families. The report notes that these programs are supported through PAC funding, volunteer teachers, peer tutors, and community centre staff.

A number of other means of supporting children in need were identified, offered on an ad-hoc, case-by-case basis, including emergency food cupboards, free field trips and transit passes provided to students.

2.4 Further Undertakings

The report indicates that, following receipt of the 2011 NHS data, the School District may consider further undertakings, including:

- strengthening ties with various community organizations supporting families in need
- using the Neighbourhood Learning Centre to provide a place for district or community initiatives focusing on student success (e.g., the Cook Early Learning Centre)
- continuing to participate in district-wide survey tools such as the EDI (Early Years Development Index) and MDI (Middle Years Development Index), identifying childhood vulnerabilities at school and neighbourhood levels
- raising awareness of grants and/or support programs available to schools and how to access
- providing a small amount of additional staffing for a “community outreach coordinator” to plan and organize supports for needier students

While recognizing the importance of such initiatives, the District acknowledges the challenges of implementation given the scarcity of financial resources, staff time and related expertise, particularly given the fiscal challenges of fulfilling their primary mandate of education.

3. City Initiatives

3.1 Social Development Strategy

A draft Social Development Strategy to guide City action on social development matters over the next 10 years has recently been prepared. Community consultation has resulted in the identification of broad themes to guide actions, including equity and inclusion. The Strategy is currently being refined, following stakeholder review, for presentation to Council for adoption later this year.

One of the four Strategic Directions proposed to address social equity and inclusion is to “help Richmond’s children, youth and families to thrive”. While senior government policies most significantly impact social equity and inclusion, a number of actions have been identified for City and stakeholder collaboration. Once adopted, specific actions will be incorporated into annual work programs to ensure effective implementation of City roles.

3.2 Current Undertakings

The City already undertakes numerous initiatives that contribute to improving the quality of life for low-income Richmond residents. Some aim to directly address social inequity, while others enhance the quality of life for all residents. These include:

- *Affordable Housing Strategy*, through which subsidized, affordable and market rental units, entry-level home ownership units, and secondary suites/coach houses are secured
- *City-owned Child Care facilities*, negotiated from private developers and leased to non-profit providers at a nominal rate

- *Child Care Grants*, to improve access to and the provision of quality, affordable, accessible child care
- *Richmond Centre on Disability & Richmond Therapeutic Equestrian Society* funding
- *Recreation facilities and programs* for children and families, including: Richmond Opportunities for Affordable Recreation (ROAR), a guide to low cost and free programs; the Recreation Fee Subsidy Program for Richmond residents in financial need; and the Recreation Access Card, providing a 50% discount to persons with disabilities
- *Social Service Wellness Programs in Schools*, a new undertaking whereby the City provides non-profit organizations with the opportunity to offer wellness programs in school gyms through the City-School Board Partnership Agreement
- *Parks and Park Programs*, including community gardens, operated in partnership with the Richmond Food Security Society
- *Library Services and Programs*, including Babytimes, Storytimes, Homework Clubs and Parent Programs
- *Nominal Lease Payments and Permissive Tax Exemptions* to organizations serving children and families, including Caring Place tenants, Richmond Family Place, Richmond Centre for Disability, Richmond Society for Community Living Group Homes, Developmental Disabilities Association, and others
- *City Grant Programs*, supporting community agencies working with low-income children and families, as well as community capacity-building initiatives and many other quality of life initiatives, and
- *Civic engagement initiatives*, undertaken by a range of departments for a variety of purposes, to promote social inclusion and promote participation in community life.

4. Stakeholder Consultation

The Richmond Community Services Advisory Committee, Richmond Poverty Response Committee, and Richmond Children First were consulted about the School District report and how community services might support the School District to mitigate the effects of child poverty.

4.1 Richmond Community Services Advisory Committee (RCSAC)

School Board Chair Donna Sargent and Superintendent Monica Pamer attended the March 14, 2013 RCSAC meeting to present the September 2012 Richmond School District report. At this meeting, the School District invited the RCSAC to partner with them to identify further child poverty-related impacts, issues and initiatives. The RCSAC has formed a Task Group for this purpose (**Attachment 3**). As a result of subsequent discussion with the RCSAC, the Superintendent will strive to attend RCSAC General Meetings when possible, thus furthering opportunities for collaboration.

4.2 Richmond Poverty Response Committee (RPRC)

The RPRC discussed the School District report at its April meeting and made several observations, identified in an April 17, 2013 letter to the City (**Attachment 4**). The RPRC were appreciative that community agencies' contributions were acknowledged and that the School District is taking steps to strengthen collaboration with the non-profit sector.

Further challenges noted by the RPRC include the range of approaches and difference in capacity to support these children, depending on the school (e.g., administrative approaches, teacher initiatives, parent volunteer time, financial resources). A specific concern is the need for low-income parents to apply for field trip subsidies, which may present a significant barrier due to the loss of privacy and dignity incurred by the process. The RPRC will seek to work with the School District to address barriers that may be identified in follow-up School District reports.

4.3 Richmond Children First (RCF)

Of particular relevance to the School District report is the United Way of the Lower Mainland and Ministry of Children and Families-funded RCF project, “The Face of Child Poverty in Richmond”, outlined in **Attachment 5**. The Project aims to explore the impact of poverty on Richmond families and bring the community together to determine what can be done, collectively and individually, to ensure all Richmond children are healthy and able to reach their potential. A Community Leaders Forum is planned for June 20, 2013 to share information and identify strategic directions for further action. In the next few months, RCF will also be embarking on a project, “Reducing Barriers for Families” that will build on these results. Both initiatives further implementation of the Richmond Children’s Charter, endorsed by the City, the Richmond Public Agency Partners Group including the School District, and a number of family-serving agencies in Richmond. The purpose of the Charter is to guide the development of a child-friendly city based on the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Charter was developed by Richmond children under the guidance of RCF, with assistance from the School District and other organizations.

In follow-up to the School District report, RCF met with the Superintendent and staff to discuss how the Face of Child Poverty project will support further District initiatives, and how the two organizations might work together in supporting low-income families.

Analysis

Child poverty is of grave concern because of the immediate and long term impact on children’s well-being and commensurate social costs. As summarized by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (The Cost of Poverty in BC, 2011), “Living in poverty means having to face hunger and inadequate nutrition, living in over-crowded, unsafe or inferior housing, and having few if any opportunities to fully participate in mainstream society. Both the material deprivation and the psychological stress that accompany poverty and economic insecurity take an enormous toll on the people who struggle with low income...Poverty is linked to poorer health, higher justice system costs, more demands on social and community services, more stress on family members, and diminished school success for children”.

As the School District recognizes the need for additional supports for low-income families in order for their children to thrive in an educational setting, a number of initiatives are proposed for future consideration by the School Board and Senior School District Staff. A complete list of possible future School District initiatives is found in **Attachment 1**. Should these be undertaken, several have relevance for the stakeholders identified in the referral, as outlined below.

Possible School District #38 Initiatives	Stakeholders*	Potential Collaboration
Strengthen ties with various community organizations supporting families in need to explore school connections	RCSAC RPRC RCF	Working relationships are underway, including the RCF Face of Child Poverty Project
Use the Neighbourhood Learning Centre to provide a place for district or community initiatives focusing on student success (e.g., the Cook Early Learning Centre)	RCF	RCF has discussed such a proposal
Continuing to participate in district-wide survey tools such as the EDI (Early Years Development Index) and MDI (Middle Years Development Index) that identify childhood vulnerabilities at school and neighbourhood levels	RCF	RCF uses EDI and MDI results in planning for child development services, e.g., City Centre Early Years Report
Raise awareness of grants and/or support programs available to schools and how to access	RCSAC RPRC RCF, City	Convey information about grant and program opportunities available to the School District
Provide a small amount of additional staffing for a "community outreach coordinator" to plan and organize supports for needier students	RCSAC RPRC RCF, City	Position would liaise with stakeholders to maximize opportunities

* As many non-profit service agencies, as well as statutory organizations, are involved in these committees, they are not named individually. Several agencies participate in more than one of these committees. The list is not meant to be exclusive as there may be other non-profits, governmental agencies, service clubs etc. that are also partners. Acronyms are explained in "Stakeholder Consultation", above.

Community collaboration with the School District to address child poverty is in progress, as previously described. The RCF Face of Child Poverty project will strive to move these relationships and solutions forward. Participation in the RCSAC, including the RPRC, will also provide additional momentum and support for collaborative efforts.

As illustrated by UBC HELP's correlation between SES and childhood vulnerability, the School District, the City, Vancouver Coastal Health, statutory and community organizations all have important roles to play in developing communities with optimal conditions for child development: "In Canada, child development is influenced by various socio-economic circumstances that have created a 'developmental gradient' (i.e. an incremental, step-wise trend) that moves along the socio-economic spectrum....inequalities in child development emerge in a systematic fashion over the first five years of life according to well-organized factors: family income, parental education, parenting style, neighbourhood safety and cohesion, neighbourhood socioeconomic differences, and access to quality child care and developmental opportunities" (SES Mapping Package, School District 38 Richmond, 2009).

City initiatives including affordable housing, childcare, parks, recreation, arts, civic engagement, neighbourhood planning, community safety and other undertakings play a significant role in developing these optimal conditions.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

The School District report and subsequent Council referral have resulted in enhanced communication about child poverty issues in the community and stronger relationships to address these issues. School District participation in RCSAC Task Group and General meetings, continued participation on the RCF Steering Committee and in the Face of Child Poverty Project, and consultation with the Poverty Response Committee will help to ensure that families and children in need are supported by community services and initiatives.

While the School District, the City and community organizations undertake to improve the quality of life for Richmond residents, senior government intervention is required to provide significant supports to low-income families (e.g., affordable housing, child care, employment and income measures) to ensure that children have the best possible opportunities.

The City's commitment to making Richmond the "best place in North America to raise children and youth" will continue to be reflected in numerous City undertakings and, once adopted, Social Development Strategy implementation plans to further improve social equity. As emphasized in the draft Strategy, the City will need to be strategic, set priorities, and work in collaboration with senior governments and other partners to create environments that foster resilience, provide supports and services, and optimize the quality of life for Richmond families.



Lesley Sherlock
Social Planner
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LS:ls



Report to the Board of Education (Richmond) Public

DATE: September 17, 2012

FROM: Nancy Brennan, Assistant Superintendent

SUBJECT: Child Poverty Issues and Initiatives in the Richmond School District

INTRODUCTION

The following report to the Board is for information only. No further action on the part of the Board is required at this time.

BACKGROUND

In the spring of 2012, the following resolution was approved by the Board of Education (Richmond):

111/2012

THAT the Board of Education (Richmond) request senior staff to submit a report to the Board in the fall of 2012 that outlines:

- the perceived impact of child poverty in the district;
 - those measures that have already been taken;
 - suggestions for actions by the school district that will help to improve student success for those impacted by poverty.
- CARRIED

Child poverty is defined by Statistics Canada as the percentage of children under the age of 18 who lived in low-income families, whose average income after tax was \$21,400. On average, these families would have needed an additional \$8,000 not to be considered low income. According to 2005 figures, 26% of Richmond children (31.4% before taxes) live at or below the poverty level.

Childhood poverty has been the focus of more than a few studies. Some of these studies have indicated that children who experience poverty, especially persistently, are at higher risk of encountering difficulties—health problems, developmental delays and behaviour disorders—and they are also more likely to fall into low income themselves in adulthood (Kornberger et al. 2001, Finnie and Bernard 2004). The negative effects associated with poverty are inconsistent with the general opinion that all children should live in conditions that allow them to reach their full potential.

But defining and measuring poverty among children is not straightforward, not only because for the most part children do not earn any income, but also because Canada, like many developed nations, has no official definition of poverty. Even so, it does have surveys of family income that enable various measures of low income to be defined. Some analysts question the validity of family income as an indicator of children's well-being, and still wonder about the actual link between the low-income experience, especially temporary, and an increased risk of encountering problems in adulthood. However, most agree that it is unfortunate when families with children do not have a sufficiently high income for suitable housing, food, clothing or some family activities.

Fleury, Dominique. 2008. "Low-income children." *Perspectives on Labour and Income*. Vol. 9, no. 5. May. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-001-XIE.

Regardless of whether or not there is an "official" definition of poverty, anyone who works in schools understands how children who come from struggling backgrounds which can be the result of low income or other factors, knows that these can have a huge impact on those children and their success in school. To provide a few examples:

- children who come to school hungry cannot concentrate on their learning,
- students who are anxious about situations at home cannot always focus on the academics,
- children who do not have the "right" clothes, or accessories can suffer from embarrassment or self-esteem issues that make them nervous to participate
- children whose families cannot pay for field trips, grad ceremonies, etc. can miss out on valuable learning and social experiences

The list goes on and on. As teachers, principals and support workers, it is understood that we cannot always help students to learn or to experience academic success if the important "building blocks" of their lives (food shelter, clothing, family support) are not already in place. Many Richmond schools and individuals are already working to help lessen the disadvantages for these children, as witnessed in the section below.

CONSULTATION

In June of 2012, all Richmond school-based administrators were asked to complete a survey regarding any anecdotal information that they had at a school level about child poverty, as well as if and how they respond to the concerns of children in need. The following information was collated solely from this data source, and is therefore largely anecdotal with very little or no quantitative data. The information has not been listed by school names in order to respect the privacy of school communities and their families, as well as because this information is entirely based on the opinions and perceptions of the school principals and may therefore not be entirely accurate.

At this point, there is no way that schools districts can obtain this data in a formal manner at the school level as we do not and cannot ask families questions relating to their socio-economic status, what public services and resources they may or may not access, or any other questions related to their income. Therefore, we must rely largely on census data to provide us with this information on a larger municipal and neighbourhood level. The 2011

census data related to family income has not yet been released by Statistics Canada and is scheduled to be made public after September 19, 2012.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS	38	%	Sponsored by:
With hot lunch program	11	29%	PAC, Nova Foods (most programs are "user-pay" with parents covering the costs, therefore not necessarily for students in need. However, some schools do subsidize these programs for some students)
With breakfast club	9	24%	Grants, local charities and businesses, PAC, school budgets. Run by volunteer staff, PAC, leadership students
With fruit and vegetables snack program	29	76%	Once monthly free Provincial Program (Agriculture in the classroom), serves all students and staff
With homework club	9	24%	PAC and parent funding, grants, Community centers. Run by community center staff, teacher volunteers, high school student volunteers
SECONDARY SCHOOLS	10	%	
With hot lunch program	3	30%	Local charities and businesses, school cafeteria programs, school budgets. Run by volunteer staff and students
With breakfast club	3	30%	Grants from "Breakfast for learning", local businesses, school budgets. Run by volunteer staff, leadership students
With fruit and vegetables snack program	7	70%	Once monthly free Provincial Program (Agriculture in the classroom), serves all students and staff
With homework club	3	30%	Run by volunteer teachers, peer tutors

In addition to what is listed above, many if not all schools also outlined the other things that they do on a regular basis to help out those children and families in financial need. They include, but are not limited to:

At the Elementary level:

- Christmas hampers to families in need
- "Emergency food cupboard"
- School supplies provided at no cost when necessary
- Shoes and clothing made available when necessary
- Information to access free recreational and support programs
- Free access to all field trips (sometimes covered by school budgets, often by PAC)
- Inclusion in special food days even if they haven't paid
- Strongstart and other similar programs
- Outside organizations volunteer time and manpower for activities such as reading, after school crafts program, etc.
- Outside organizations contribute funds to help pay for snacks, pancake breakfasts, etc.

- PAC funding for in-school activities for all students (i.e. Hip hop dancing, cultural assemblies, etc.)
- Free parenting programs
- Milk programs
- Schools host after school drop-in programs and Scouts program to provide after school activities and a place to go for those students whose parents work
- Close monitoring at the school and district level of those students identified by the Ministry of Children and Families as being "Children in Care"

At the Secondary level:

- Christmas hampers to families in need
- Free transit passes enabling student to get to school and work
- "Emergency food cupboard"
- Free cafeteria chits for those in need
- Waiving of school fees (athletic, fieldtrip, etc.)
- Nomination of students for the Cinderella project
- Seeking pro bono support from professionals (i.e. optometrist)
- Opportunity to "work" in lieu of payment of optional activities (i.e. grad dinner/dance)
- Close monitoring at the school and district level of those students identified by the Ministry of Children and Families as being "Children in Care"

When considering the huge number of initiatives that are listed here and that have been voluntarily undertaken by staff and the school community, one can't help but be impressed by the dedication and hard work of these people.

ORGANIZATIONAL, FINANCIAL, PERSONNEL IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

While we know that it is not the mandate of the education system to end child poverty, every single person in our organization also knows too well the negative impact that child poverty has on student learning and student success as noted above. It is for this reason that schools do what they can to try to mitigate the situation for some of our less fortunate students. As witnessed by the data above, the level of support varies greatly from school to school and can even change within a school from one year to the next, depending on the needs of the students. Individual staff members or PACs are other factors that impact which programs are in place in a given school. Sometimes a program such as a hot lunch program or breakfast club which was initiated by one staff member does not continue if the staff member retires or leaves the school. Also, outside events, such as last year's teacher job action can have a negative impact on these types of programs that are entirely voluntary.

Also on the survey, principals were asked to estimate the percentage of students in their catchment area whose families were living at or below the poverty line. Not surprisingly, the estimates varied greatly across the district as outlined in the chart below.

Estimated percentage of families living at or below poverty line in each school community	Number of schools (48)	Percentage of schools
0-5%	17	35%
6-10%	10	21%
11-15%	3	6%
16-20%	6	13%
30% and above	3	6%
Not sure	9	19%

What was perhaps most surprising was the number of schools who felt that those percentages had increased in their community in recent years, as noted in the chart below.

Perceived change in number of families living at or below poverty line	Increase	Decrease	Stayed the same	Not sure
Number of Schools/Percentage	10 (20%)	8 (17%)	24 (50%)	6 (13%)

This information, although entirely anecdotal, does show us that as anticipated, the socio-economic levels and needs are different across the district, making it very difficult and perhaps even unnecessary for us to plan for support at a system-wide level. It would not seem to be a wise use of district resources to attempt to plan for district support when it is not currently needed at all of our schools. What would be better is if those schools that did require additional support were able to access additional resources (i.e. funding, staffing, etc.) based on their individual needs. Currently, the only funding available for schools to access is through community grants, donations and fundraising.

Unfortunately, we are also well aware of the fact that the Ministry of Education funding that we currently receive on a per pupil basis does not entirely cover the educational needs of all of our students, and cannot therefore be considered as a source of funding support for those students living in poverty. It is for this reason that many schools do year round fund-raising, either through the school staff or the PAC, as well as complete numerous grant applications in order to come up with the additional funding that they need to sometimes feed, clothe and provide other support to their students in need. This efforts are largely spearheaded by the school-based administrators or concerned staff, all of whom are doing it "off the side of their desk" while also doing their regular, full-time jobs teaching students and managing the day-to-day functions of their school sites. In other cases, the school's Parent Advisory Council takes on this responsibility, and this is also an enormous task for people who are doing this voluntarily on their own free time.

If the child poverty numbers continue to grow as they seem to have done in the past few years, it is simple to surmise that eventually school staffs and PACs may not be able to continue to support the larger number of needier students. The 2006 census data reports that Richmond's child poverty rate in 2005 (26% after taxes) was the highest in the province ("Child poverty rate still too high in Richmond", Richmond News, November 25, 2011). It is not known at this time what the 2011 census results will show, but all indications are that the numbers will not vary too much from the 2006 results. Therefore, the sustainability of current initiatives and the creation of additional supports become a concern, given that as noted much of this is already happening in an informal, voluntary, or "as the need arises" way.

OPTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Once the 2011 census data is available and can be used to compare with the anecdotal information provided by schools, it is suggested that a number of initiatives could be considered by the Board of Education and Senior Staff. These ideas may include, but not be limited to:

- At a district level, look to establish stronger ties with various community organizations which already support families in need and see if there are connections that can be made in the context of schools.
- Examine the possibility of using the Neighbourhood Learning Centre, on at least a part time basis to provide a place for district or community initiatives which will focus on student success (such as the Cook Early Learning Centre).
- Continue to advocate for Richmond students.
- Continue to participate in district-wide survey tools such as the EDI (Early Years Development Index) and MDI (Middle Years Development Index) that provide us with a very clear understanding of the needs and vulnerabilities of our elementary-aged children on a school by school and neighbourhood level, and therefore allow us to plan for support.
- Make school-based administrators aware of which grants and/or support programs are available to them, and how to access them.
- Set aside a small district fund (amount and funding source to be determined) that could be accessed by individual schools in need. Schools would need to meet a specific set of criteria, and would apply yearly, but would then be able to use these funds in a way that best meets their individual needs (i.e. money to purchase food for breakfast and lunch programs, release days for staff members to plan and implement specific programs, funding for after school programs, etc.)
- Provide to the needier schools a small amount of additional staffing (i.e. 0.20) in the form of a "community outreach coordinator". This person would be responsible for the planning and organization of all programs and initiatives within the school related to supporting our needier students.

CONCLUSION

As stated earlier in this report, while it is not the mandate of any school district to attempt to end child poverty, we can all recognize that in order for all of our students to learn and to be successful, we sometimes need to help them in ways other than the traditional academic support. Unfortunately, these additional supports often require additional training for our staffs and funding to help them to deal with these issues. This is a large and important topic that requires more analysis and discussion before any long term decisions can be made.

Nancy Brennan
Assistant Superintendent

1.4

CHILD POVERTY

In 2006, the poverty rate for children in Richmond was 26%. Richmond had the second highest child poverty rate of any municipality in the province.¹

The risk of poverty varies greatly by family type. The poverty rate for Richmond children living in families headed by lone parent mothers was 35.6% in 2006, while the poverty rate for Richmond children in 2-parent families was 24.2%.

Statistics Canada, 2006 Census (based on before tax income)

HOW DO YOU COMPARE?

In 2008, for the fifth year in a row, British Columbia had the highest child poverty rate. The proportion of children living in poverty in BC was 21.9%, well above the national child poverty rate of 15.8%. There are an estimated 181,000 poor children in British Columbia.

Top three BC jurisdictions on child poverty

- Duncan 30.1%
- Richmond 26.0%
- Burnaby 24.4%

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Low income is related to poorer outcomes in children's health, development and achievement. Children living in poverty are at greater risk in terms of long term health and well-being, do less well in school, have to cope with dangerous or unhealthy physical environments, are less likely to graduate from secondary school and as adults often suffer from job insecurity, underemployment and poor working conditions.

Child Health: A Profile of Children Under 6 Years in the Vancouver Coastal Health Region. (Vancouver Coastal Health: February 2009.)

Higher family income levels provide families with a means to access better quality services and goods. As income rises, so does access to quality child care, nutritious food and secure housing.²

In 2009, 8% of Richmond youth (grades 7 – 12) experienced hunger some of the time and 3% went to bed hungry often or always. Youth who reported going to bed hungry were more likely to report poor/fair health and to have considered suicide in the past year compared to their peers who did not go to bed hungry.³

Poverty in Canada is measured by using Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Offs (LICOs). The cut-offs are based on the concept that people in poverty live in "strained circumstances" – that is, they spend a disproportionate amount of their income on food, clothing and shelter. The Survey of Household Spending conducted by Statistics Canada shows that the average family spends 34.3% of its income from all sources before taxes on food, clothing and shelter. Families are considered to be in "strained circumstances" if they spend 54.3% or more of their income on these three items.



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2.8

INCOMES OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

The average family income of all census families in Richmond in 2005⁹ was \$74,790

- The average family income of lone parent female parents was \$48,305

Income Distribution:

- 11.8 % of families had an income below \$20,000
- 52.5% of families had incomes between \$20,000 - \$79,999
- 35.8% of families had incomes over \$80,000
- In Richmond, a total of 24.2% (47,835) of families live in poverty—almost one in every four families. This is a 2% increase from 2001.
- The 2007 poverty line released by the Canadian Council on Social Development for a family of four in larger urban areas, which would include Richmond, was \$40,259 before tax and \$33,946 after tax.

DEPTH OF POVERTY

While the rate of child poverty is a key measure of children's economic well-being, this measure does not reveal how far children and their families fall below the poverty line—that is the depth of poverty. Both female lone-parent families and two-parent families have incomes on average that are far below the poverty line.

In 2006, the average income for lone-parent families living in poverty in BC was \$11,600 below the before tax LICO, compared to \$9,300 in 2005. The overall trend line shows that, over time, the depth of poverty for lone-parent families seems to be increasing slightly.

Two parent families in BC, on the other hand, saw a decrease in the depth of poverty. The average household income for two parent households living in poverty was \$11,200 below the before tax LICO. The before tax depth of poverty figure for two parent families in 2006 was above the national average depth of poverty for this family type of \$10,800. The trend line shows that the depth of poverty seems to be decreasing slightly for this household type.

2008 Child Poverty Report Card, BC Campaign 2008

HOW DO WE COMPARE?

Top three BC jurisdictions on overall poverty

- Vancouver 21.4%
- Richmond 20.9%
- Burnaby 20.6%

Statistics Canada, Census 2006

Average incomes in BC were fairly flat through the mid 1990s. While the average income has gone up since then, the richest families have enjoyed the greatest increases by far.¹⁰

The richest 10% of BC's families with children had an average income of \$201,490 in 2006, up from \$153,899 in 1989 (in constant 2006 dollars). By comparison, the poorest 10% of families with children had an average income of \$15,657 in 2006, down from \$16,966 in 1989.

Children who live in low-income families score lower for school-readiness in areas such as knowledge, skills, maturity, language and cognitive development.

Chief Public Health Officer of Canada

2.9

WORKING IN RICHMOND

Nearly 45% of Richmond residents worked in Richmond in 2006; 8% worked from home. This ranged from 19% in Gilmore to 50% in Sea Island. Another 35% travel outside of their community to go to work.

Statistics Canada, Census 2006

12% of Richmond's labour force travel to work by Public Transit.

Statistics Canada, Census 2006

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The proximity of people's workplace to home is important since commuting to and from work has implications for the time that is taken away from family as well as implications regarding the hours of child care required.

PARTICIPATION OF MOTHERS IN THE LABOUR FORCE

	Working Mothers with Children Under the Age of 6	Working Mothers with Children Both Under & Over the Age of 6	Working Mothers with Children Over The Age of 6
Richmond	64.9%	63.8%	62.5%
Metro Vancouver	69.6%	67.4%	69.0%
British Columbia	68.5%	68.4%	72.5%

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Statistics Canada, Census 2006

2.10

MOTHERS IN THE LABOUR FORCE

The participation rate of women in the labour force, particularly those with young children remains high. However, the number of Richmond mothers in the labour force is significantly lower than in Metro Vancouver and British Columbia.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Work-life balance is difficult for many families. Three out of four mothers and one in two fathers feel stretched to meet the demands placed on them. The pressure is greatest in families with pre-school children.¹¹

As the number of mothers in the labour force continues to grow, regulated child care is not available to most families. And, part-time or flexible child care to meet the schedules of parents who work non-traditional hours is almost non-existent.

In Canada, there has been a significant increase in the number of fathers taking parental leave, from 10% in 2001, to 15% in 2005 and 20% in 2006.

2.11

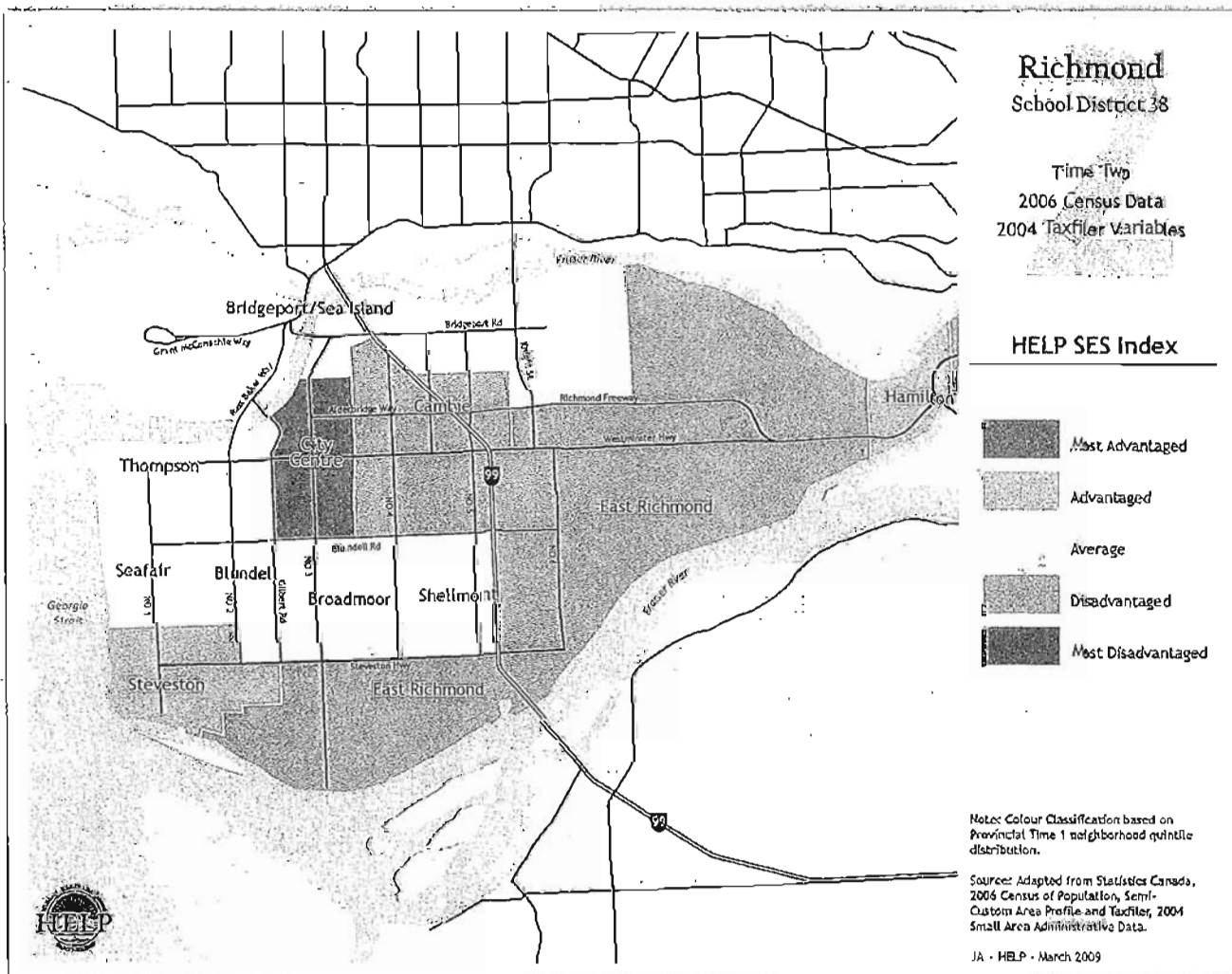
SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDEX

Socio-economic status (SES) is used to describe a variety of social and economic conditions within a geographic area of residence. For example, income, employment and education are most commonly used to determine the general SES of individuals, neighbourhoods or communities. Other factors also have important effects on SES, including ethnicity, language, citizenship, etc.

Over the last few years, researchers at the Human Early Learning Partnership at the University of British Columbia have identified, through statistical analysis, the characteristics that provide a more comprehensive measure of a child's early experiences. The eight strongest of these components, all contributing equally, form the Socio-Economic (SES) Index.

The SES Index provides one value for each Richmond neighbourhood that summarizes its SES based on these 8 components that are most important in predicting child development vulnerability.

The SES Index scores become a baseline for tracking how socio-economic status changes over time, both for BC and for particular neighbourhoods or school districts.



Some planning area boundaries have been manipulated to ensure a sufficient number of children for data reliability.



RCSAC | Richmond Community Services Advisory Committee

April 11, 2013

City of Richmond
Mayor and Council
6911 No. 3 Road
Richmond, B.C. V6Y 2C1

RE: Response to City Council request for response on School District 38 Report on Poverty

Dear Mayor and Council,

This letter is in follow up to a request from the City Liaison for a response to the School District 38 Report on Poverty, presented by School Board Chair Donna Sargent and Superintendent Monica Pamer, at the March General Meeting.

After having received the report and presentation, the RCSAC was invited by the School District to partner in a further consultation to identify the impact and issues related to children and families who are facing poverty in Richmond. In response to this request forming a task group to work on this project has been added to the April General Meeting Agenda.

Further updates may be provided as requested. Please contact us if you have questions or require more information regarding this request.

Sincerely,

Richard Dubras
Co-Chair

Lisa Whittaker
Co-Chair



April 17, 2013

Lesley Sherlock
City of Richmond
6911 No. 3 Road
Richmond, BC
V6Y 2C1

Dear Lesley Sherlock

Re: School District 38 Report on Child Poverty

Thank you for requesting feedback from the Richmond Poverty Response Committee (PRC) to the City on the above noted report.

Attendees at our April meeting had an opportunity to review the report prior to the meeting. We had a lively and fruitful discussion. In general, the PRC can state that the report recognizes that a variety of community agencies are already contributing to schools by providing food programs, and some have been doing so for many years.

We are hopeful that the report will lead to School District 38 (SD 38) becoming more involved in community projects and actions. The PRC has decided to again, extend an invitation to SD 38 to send a representative to our meetings. I must say it was a good sign that Monica Pamer attended the April RCSAC meeting. This bodes well for relationship-building in the future.

Concerning the content of the report, we noted that although the report mentioned field trip subsidies and the like, it focused more on food programs. Some agencies dealing directly with low-income families such as Chimo and Family Place, tell us when they discuss available resources including subsidies, parents and children know about them but do not access them because the required procedures are insensitive and do not give them privacy and dignity. We believe current procedures may be acting as a barrier to access.

Further, PRC attendees commented the report had few actual statistics on child poverty in the school system. It appears some teachers and principals were approached and many were not, or they were questioned but were not aware of any problems. However the report provided a partial inventory of school breakfast and lunch programs and it does give them a good starting point on food programs. Follow up reports should employ quantitative methods and ensure appropriate questions are asked in order to drill down into the whole issue of child poverty. Child poverty is not just about lunches and field trips.

Finally, the report recognizes that not every school is the same. All their programs depend on the willingness of teachers to sponsor a program and some schools have more parents with free time that can volunteer to help. And the majority of their programs depend on the ability of non-profit

c/o Richmond Food Bank Society, #100-5800 Cedarbridge Way, Richmond, BC V6X 2A7
Tel 604-205-4700 www.richmondprc.ca

community agencies to receive grant funding earmarked for school age children. We hope that follow up reports will address the barriers posed by their dependence on current practices and implement improvements to those practices.

Members of the Richmond PRC include the Richmond Food Bank Society, Richmond Women's Resource Centre, Salvation Army, Richmond Food Security Society, SUCCESS, Volunteer Richmond Information Services, Richmond Family Place, Richmond Health Services, Family Services of Greater Vancouver, KABROS, ISS of BC and representatives of various Faith Groups, among others.

Should you have questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned at de_whalen@hotmail.com or at 604.230.3158.

Yours Truly,

De Whalen

De Whalen
Chair, Richmond PRC

Cc PRC Executive Committee



April 12, 2013

Lesley Sherlock
Community Services Department
City of Richmond
6911 No. 3 Road,
Richmond BC V6Y 2C1

Face of Child Poverty in Richmond

Dear Lesley,

The research components of Richmond Children First's (RCF) project, the Face of Child Poverty in Richmond, are almost complete and the following provides an overview of activities and next steps.

Parent Conversations

Staff have engaged 60+ parents in conversations about the impact of poverty on their children.

Child Engagement

Based on the Richmond Children's Charter, 3 groups of children are being engaged in a series of activities to provide a children's perspective to inequality.

Service Providers

A focus group with service providers who work with children and families is scheduled early in May to collect information on how poverty is impacting child development.

Inventory of Programs and Services for Low-Income Children and Families

Public and non-profit organizations have been sent a survey with questions related to programs, subsidies, access, and staff awareness of community supports.

All this information will be analyzed over the month of May and will be shared with the community in a variety of ways –

- A forum for community leaders is scheduled for June 20, 2013 to begin to strategize community solutions
- Sector specific dialogues will unfold over the summer and fall as themes emerge
- A communications strategy is being developed to share the information with the broader community

RICHMOND CHILDREN FIRST

8660 Ash Street, Richmond, BC V6Y 2S3 • Phone: 604.241.4035
richmondchildrenfirst@shaw.ca **GP - 164** www.richmondchildrenfirst.ca

This project is being coordinated by the Face of Child Poverty Action Team who then make recommendations to the RCF Steering Committee. The role of Richmond Children First is to guide the project, build community involvement and work with Richmond Children First partners to develop collaborative strategies.

This past week I had an opportunity to meet with Monica Pamer, Superintendent of the Richmond School District, and district staff to discuss how our work connects with their Child Poverty Summary. The parent conversations we are hosting are of particular interest to the school district. We also had a preliminary discussion on where our work intersects with the school district's and how we might align activities and work on joint projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "H Davidson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Helen Davidson
Implementation Manager
Richmond Children First