



**Suzuki Charter  
School**

# **Strategic Plan**

**2016-2021**

October 14, 2016

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## OVERVIEW

Significant progress was made in the engagement of Suzuki Charter School stakeholders in identification of ideas that will inform planning for a successful future. In the winter of 2015 the Board of Directors approved a Collaborative Strategic Planning initiative. The process was completed in June 2016 resulting in this report. The steps in the process are defined in **Appendix 1: What is Collaborative Strategic Planning?**

Over **twenty events** were scheduled to solicit input from stakeholders. The gathered data was organized into a format that was used to develop school improvement goals and strategies. Over **325 Suzuki stakeholders** provided input. All input was reviewed and analyzed and is available for future reference as part of future planning initiatives by the Board. Information has been organized in a robust file (and digitally supported) and is available from the Superintendent or Secretary Treasurer.

A volunteer **Facilitator Leadership Team** was formed and this group received ongoing training in the areas of effective facilitation and data analysis. The leadership provided by this group was outstanding and resulted in the collection of rich information and data to guide planning priorities for Suzuki Charter School. Refer to **Appendix 2: Planning Task Team**.

## STAKEHOLDER INPUT ACTIVITIES

Between February 2015 and June 2016 information was collected from stakeholder groups. Refer to **Appendix III: STAKEHOLDER INPUT SUMMARY** where the table identifies significant events in the planning process. The information gathered from all stakeholder groups was used in the development of vision statements for the future. In addition to input from stakeholders the Board of Directors and Senior Administration reviewed the mandates for Charter Schools (Department of Education, Alberta Government) and identified additional priority areas of focus relevant to Suzuki Public Charter School.

## EMERGENT THEMES

As the process advanced four main themes were identified as common priorities from stakeholders. The themes were expanded into Concept Papers a written document identifying historical and contextual elements as well as possibilities for future consideration. The concept papers are important reference documents for future planning as they provide a research base for each topic and include the priority feedback from stakeholder input. Five concept papers were developed:

- Staff Development
- Music Learning
- School Expansion
- Student Experience

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR ACTION IN CONCEPT AREAS

### *Group 1 – Expansion*

#### **Overlying Themes/Questions/Concepts**

- Programming – How do we meet the needs of the students (age)?
- Staffing – How do we staff academic and music faculty and have enough Suzuki trained teachers for individual lessons?
- What type of expansion: Junior High? Middle School (4-8 or 5-9), second Elementary site?
- Facility – size, expansion possibilities?
- Provincial Government approval – Charter changed

### *Group 2 – Staff Experience/Development*

#### **Overlying Themes/Questions/Concepts**

- How do we address the change in student needs (inclusive education)?
- Community engagement and communication
- Music program modification
- Teacher Development (PD)
- Assessing needs of students, staff and parents to determine direction of programming for possible future expansion.

### *Group 3 – Music Program -*

#### **Overlying Themes/Questions/Concepts**

- Accessibility to teachers/lessons – additional Suzuki trained teachers needed for any program or individual lesson expansion
- Comparable experiences across societies – every student gets same expectations/experiences while still allowing families choices (develop roster or Suzuki trained teachers so parents can explore all options)
- Additional repertoire/themes to increase student engagement and interest
- Expand IMI opportunities and align with Junior/Senior High schools to expand “band” programs to include strings and allow students to carry on with their instruments after leaving SCS
- Community engagement/sharing opportunities (service learning should be music based)

### *Group 4 – Student Experience*

- Students need to feel safe, happy, understood and heard at school
- Students want to expand extracurricular and learning opportunities (drama, physical education, technology, senior choir etc.)
- Students want to have more opportunities to share musical excellence with community

- Older students want opportunities to have more freedom and to be leaders within school community

## **VISION STATEMENTS FOR THE FUTURE**

Stakeholder participants were asked to define a preferred future for Suzuki Charter School. Feedback to key questions was collected and organized into the following five focus areas.

***In five years what would you desire as answers to the following five questions?***



**1. *Describe what students are doing at school and what they are saying about the school?***

- Confident, happy, engaged students learning the skills they need to succeed
- A safe and comfortable environment
- Students feel they are understood and supported (responsive to needs) by staff
- Sharing skills/talents with the public
- View music as fun and an important part of daily learning

**2. *What words do staff use to describe the employee experience?***

- Students are engaged and happy and are receiving a fulfilling education
- Staff feel valued and inspired
- Staff are supported to ‘think outside the box’ to help enrich the student experience
- Access to excellent professional development
- Support from administration and the Board of Directors
- Amazing teamwork with technology and other learning programs streamlined and focused
- Leadership is responsive to changing staff needs and changing student needs/priorities

**3. *Describe what parents say about the school?***

- Strong core curriculum
- High student achievement in both academics and music
- Parents are valued and invested in the education of students (provide support for teaching and learning)
- Harmony between school, home and music societies
- Student work is manageable
- Good communication between parents and school

- Feel welcome, involved and part of student success and celebrations
4. ***What school accomplishments are you especially proud of?***
- Reaching higher music levels of success (continuing music focus/programs into junior and high school)
  - Community involvement and outreach
  - Advocating for the positive impact of Suzuki approaches
  - Showcasing the students/school in the community (concerts, advertising, outreach)
  - Past events: International Music Festival, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Stollery Hospital and other community events
5. ***What do outsiders (community/organizations) say about SCS?***
- High student achievement and innovative teaching/learning approaches
  - Safe, caring environment
  - They understand how SCS uses innovation, research and music learning to optimize student success in school
  - Alberta Education assists in sharing SCS best practices with other public education providers
  - General public accepts that Charter schools are a valuable schools of choice, are inclusive and provide quality education for all students.
  - That the school/programs should be expanded to fill rising parent demand

## ***BOARD AND ADMINISTRATION IDENTIFICATION OF PRIORITIES***

The Board Directors and Senior Administration reviewed government expectations for Charter Schools and added areas of priority relevant to Suzuki School that were included in the strategic plan. The collective information was studied and five goals of priority focus were developed.



## **GOALS TO SUPPORT STRATEGIC PLAN**

From the multi-stakeholder input the Board of Directors has identified the following goals to guide future planning for Suzuki Charter School. These goals will provide direction for annual school planning for the period of time 2016 – 2021.

- ***SCS will extend student programming to include junior high and a second campus.***
  - Strong interest exists to extend programs for students by adding junior high grades. This would provide students with learning opportunities to continue Suzuki music learning experiences, extend French language learning and program opportunities to enrich the K – 6 Suzuki school program. Also, the demand by the public to enroll at SCS significantly exceeds available spaces. A second possibility for expansion is the addition of a second elementary in the Edmonton metro area.
- ***SCS will provide students with a stimulating music program that inspires students.***
  - The music experiences for Suzuki students sets the elementary school experience apart from other public schools. Quality music experiences are essential to student success. Priorities in music learning include strategies that attract and maintain highly trained Suzuki music instructors and staff who provide excellent music instruction, support student music performance experiences in the community, and strengthens networks in the local, provincial, national and international music communities.
- ***SCS will provide quality learning experiences in an inclusive, challenging, and safe environment where adjustments are made to instruction to meet individual needs of all students, encourage socially responsible citizenship, and incorporate a balance of music, personal and academic excellence.***
  - Staff will strengthen and clarify curriculum objectives to meet the individual needs of students in academic, personal and music excellence. The safety of students is reflected in risk management protocols that focus on sustaining a quality safe and caring school environment.

➤ ***SCS honors all staff and is committed to providing ongoing professional development support for all staff to provide quality educational experiences for all students.***

- All staff contribute to the success of all students at SCS. The school has a priority to support staff with professional development experiences that ensure current, relevant and effective teaching strategies that align with Alberta Education priorities and embrace educational research.
- The development of leadership capacity is important to school success.
- Staff are encouraged to create networks and develop relationships with the broader educational community to optimize the use of leading approaches to teaching and learning.

➤ ***SCS supports participation in educational innovations and research.***

- SCS will revitalize its commitment to educational research in collaboration with Alberta Education and university research opportunities.



# ***APPENDICES***

## **APPENDIX I**

### **WHAT IS COLLABOARTIVE STRATEGIC PLANNING?**

#### **OVERVIEW**

- Planning process to enable stakeholders to ‘thrive’ in the future
- Stakeholders are ‘horizon thinkers’ -- management and admin are participants in the process not directors of the process
- Process of meaningful involvement builds commitment, trust and ‘sparkle’ for a ‘refreshed’ approach to future
- Moving from Past – Present to Preferred Future – respecting critical success factors and realistic barriers show Drivers Model of Planning diagram
- Input that informs all planning for five years (or at least 3 – 5)

#### **CHARACTERISTICS**

- Meaningful engagement of all stakeholders (face to face vs surveys)
- Transparency of information
- Diversity of ideas (from diverse stakeholders, builds understanding, trust - organization becomes ‘smarter’ through collective learning of all stakeholders)
- Ownership of the planning process – especially the outcomes
- Reflection and making sense of central issues – (making sense of emerging issues, institutional values, complexity of challenges, clarification of aspirations)
- Discovery and learning – (no hidden agenda, no steering of stakeholders toward some anticipated or predetermined outcome)
- An external perspective (looking at external realities, addresses ‘listening to yourself too much – becoming trapped in own way of thinking about issues and a bit too self-referential, too inwardly focused on details and unwilling to take an honest look at themselves and possibilities)
- Community building and connections – (people voice and bring value, ideas are respected across boundaries, voice about what they want the institution to become – not a false sense of community -- – open dialogue that helps stakeholders see other perspectives – ‘informed dreaming notion’)

#### **INDICATORS FOR NEED**

- Historical evidence informing a need/interest in updating various components of school operation (student, parent, staff surveys, board minutes, discussions with board, administration, faculty, parents)
- Indicators that opportunities exist to better serve 21<sup>st</sup> century school context
- Need for a long term budget plan to align with all priorities

- Emergent opportunities available with 'owning the school facilities.

### **DESIGN CONCEPT**

- Creative process of planning and facilitating a set of activities to move a group successfully and transparently toward conscious goals
- Is attentive to the Rule of Four theory of group development and interaction which advocates that- "4 or 5 people will dominate the discussions of groups of 10 – 50 people ----this group does 80% of the talking and are generally assertive, verbal and often those with assigned leadership roles
- Requires professional facilitation
- A volunteer team is formed by representatives from various dimensions of the organization and this group commits to a year of training and development in leading the process
- All input is recorded and kept on file for easy access during all planning initiatives taken by the organization

### **ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING/SUPPORT**

- Commitment to an open and critical self-reflective review
- Openness to looking at possibilities (try rather than dismiss)
- Commitment to taking action on findings (completing the process)
- Time and resources devoted to the initiative
- Comfort with a period of exploration and ambiguity
- Confidence in the process to help reframe an optimal future.

### **SNAPSHOTS OF ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONS**

- What makes you most proud of Suzuki school?
- What is one thing we do well and must preserve at all costs in our future?
- What challenge(es) do you anticipate us needing to deal with effectively over the next five years?
- What is one thing we must change to increase our success in the next five years?
- What key issue(s) must we address to be as excellent a school as possible?
- What best practice do you know of that would give added value to our school?
- What is the thing you enjoy most about our school (student question)?
- What about our history helps us as a school? Hinders us? Hurts us?
- How would you describe school climate (as a parent, as faculty, as a student)?

## APPENDIX II

### PLANNING TASK TEAM TEAM MEMBERS JAN 2015

Lead:	Superintendent	Lynne Paradis
Board:	Two members	Brian Morrison Nicole Palmer
Faculty:	Two teachers (academic) One teacher (music)	Tarah Callin Shannon Eremenko Jennifer Wolff
Parents:	One parent council	Kristi McKenzie
Admin:	Principal	Karen Spencer
Senior Admin	Secretary/Treasurer	Heather Christison

Planning groups take responsibility to determine composition of the stakeholder groups, instruments/processes used in the process, recording or data, making arrangements for informing participants, facility booking and any other facilitator needs.

Central Services (Heather and Lisa S) house the facilitator materials, file input from stakeholders, organize recorded input into documents for future reference by the planning team. Assistance in communication of the process to stakeholders assisted by central services and school principal.

## APPENDIX III

### Stakeholder Input Summary April 2016

DATE	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANT #	FACILITATOR LEADERS
February 18, 2015	Train Facilitators	9	Dr. Gerry Paradis
March 11, 2015	Stakeholder Group – 5/6 Students	60	Tarah Callin & Brian Morrison
March 12, 2015	New/Prospective Parents	7	Shannon Eremenko & Nicole Palmer
March 12, 2015	Support Staff	6	Shannon Eremenko & Nicole Palmer
March 13, 2015	SAGE	6	Karen Spencer & Kristi MacKenzie
March 18, 2015	Student Representative Council	14	Karen Spencer
March 19, 2015	Alumni Students	13	Tarah Callin & Brian Morrison
April 15, 2015	Alumni Students	15	Karen Spencer & Kristi MacKenzie
April 15, 2015	Current Parents – Day Session	17	Tarah Callin & Brian Morrison
April 19, 2015	Current Parents – Evening Session	19	Tarah Callin & Brian Morrison
April 23, 2015	Grade 3 Students	43	Shannon Eremenko & Nicole Palmer
April 3, 2015	Grade 4 Students	46	Shannon Eremenko & Nicole Palmer
May 15, 2015	Teachers, Music Teachers & Support Staff	29	Lynne Paradis, Jennifer Wolff & Heather Christison
June 19, 2015	Making Sense of Data	9	Facilitation Team

DATE	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANT #	FACILITATOR LEADERS
September, October & November 2015	<b>Concept Papers written:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Expansion</li> <li>• Music</li> <li>• Program Improvements</li> <li>• Staff Opportunities</li> <li>• Student Experience</li> </ul>		L. Paradis, H. Christison & N. Palmer J. Wolff & B. Morrison K. Spencer & K. MacKenzie  T. Callin & S. Eremenko K. Spencer
November 18, 2015	Visioning Initiative	21	Lynne Paradis
January & February 2016	Data Analysis		Administration Team
March 2016	Exploring action items (Administration)		Administration Team
April 21, 2016	Sharing findings with Board of Directors		Administration Team
May 2016	Identification of Goals	11	Board & Administration Team
September 2016	Approval of final report Alignment of annual Education Plan to Strategic Plan		Administration Team

**TOTAL PARTICIPANT INPUT: 325 individuals**

Approved by the Board September 15, 2016