

**PRELIMINARY INPUT FOR NEW DIRECTIONS FOR  
AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL:  
RICHMOND CHRISTIAN SCHOOL**

by

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## **Abstract**

The Richmond Christian School (RCS), an independent school located in Richmond, British Columbia, has experienced tremendous growth over the last few years. It is looking for ways to sustain its success and better manage the future demands. This, coupled with the plans from the BC Ministry of Education to reform education in the province, resulted in a need for RCS to carefully consider all its options. To do so, the RCS Board of Trustee is preparing to develop a Strategic Plan.

This report serves as preliminary input to this initiative. The research and analysis performed include: defining key elements for RCS, gathering comments and feedback from various stakeholders and articulating strategic options for the Board of Trustees to consider. The intention is to generate good discussions and provide ideas to assist in developing an all-inclusive Strategic Plan for RCS.

**Keywords:** preliminary input, new directions, strategic analysis; Richmond Christian school; independent school; element map;

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my family -- Rita, Cresten and Kaylin – for their encouragement, support and understanding. The sacrifice that they had to endure is difficult put into words. They made it possible for me to complete this project and the EMBA program.

## **Acknowledgements**

The idea for this project came about in December 2011 when I ran into Mrs. Neufeld, the Elementary school Principal, and Mr. Grose, the Superintendent of the Richmond Christian School, at the same time (which does not happen often). Our brief discussion led to Mr. Grose suggesting that I should assist the school in formulating a Strategic Plan.

I am thankful for the RCS Board of Trustees' approval of this project. They have given me complete access to past and current data. Mr. Grose has provided me with unparalleled support throughout the project. He has spent many hours discussing ideas with me, digging through old documents for me, and helping to proofread my earlier drafts. Similarly, Mr. Au, the Elementary school Vice Principal, has graciously given his time and allowed me to bounce ideas off him. He also helped proofread an earlier draft. I would also like to thank all interview participants for their time and for giving honest thoughts and feedback about Richmond Christian School.

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# **1: Background**

## **1.1 Purpose**

The Richmond Christian School Association manages and operates an independent school in Richmond, British Columbia (BC). The Richmond Christian School (RCS) has experienced tremendous growth over the last few years. In anticipation of further growth, its Board of Trustees is preparing to develop a Strategic Plan. This report provides preliminary input for this initiative and includes the identification of key elements, input from various stakeholders – Board members, staff, teachers and parents –, and options for new directions.

Chapter 1 provides a brief background on independent schools in BC and describes how they have performed relative to public schools. Chapter 2 provides both a brief history of RCS and examines the factors that have driven its growth over the last few years. Chapter 3 describes the methods used to gather and analyze data from the stakeholders. The results from interviews and secondary data are presented in Chapter 4. The discussion identified a list of options that RCS can use as input to form the basis of a Strategic Plan. The concluding chapter offers suggestions for moving forward with the creation of a Strategic Plan. The findings from this research will be presented to the Board of Trustees.

## **1.2 Independent Schools**

The concept of independent schools in BC has been around for over a century. The first privately run school was opened to the public in 1858 (BC Ministry of Education, 2011a). Prior to 1989, not all independent schools were regulated. Those that did not receive government funding were unregulated. However, beginning in 1989, an updated Independent School Act (ISA) (BC Ministry of Education, 1996) required that all independent schools, both funded and non-funded, be regulated. A statement published on the BC Ministry of Education’s website explained the reason behind this change. “The ISA balances an independent school authority’s autonomy with provincial standards the independent school is required to meet.” The Office of the Inspector of Independent Schools is responsible for administering the ISA.

The BC government, through the Ministry of Education, supports parents' right to choose among different kinds of education for their children. These options include alternatives such as distributed learning, homeschooling and independent schools. The Ministry considers that distributed learning takes place when a student is: a) primarily at a distance from the teacher, b) at home (e.g., homeschooling), or c) connected to teachers from another learning facility (Distributed Learning, n.d.). Distributed learning gives students the flexibility to learn outside of a fixed classroom schedule. Independent schools provide parents and students with the structure of a school but, in addition, offer a particular religious, cultural, philosophical or educational approach.

According to the ISA, an independent school can be categorized into one of four groups.

- **Group 1:** receives 50% grant; per-student spending on par with local schools; employs BC-certified teachers; provides education that meets the outcomes of BC curricula; meets various administrative and municipality district codes.
- **Group 2:** receives 35% grant; able to exceed per-student spending of local schools but otherwise has the same educational requirements as Group 1.
- **Group 3:** receives no government funding; is not required to employ BC-certified teachers or to follow BC curricula.
- **Group 4:** receives no grant from government; caters mainly to out of province and international students; has the same educational requirements as Group 1.

The Richmond Christian School operates under Group 1, receiving half of its funding from the government. The remainder comes from annual tuition fees and charitable donations from its member community. However, it must not exceed the Per Pupil Operating Cost (PPOC) specified by the Richmond School District; otherwise, RCS would not be qualified to be in Group 1 and would lose its government funding.

With the existing funding structure, there are cost savings for the government in supporting independent schools. For example, in the 2010/11 school year, a total of \$258 million for 72,014 students was provided to independent schools. It would have cost \$564 million to educate the same number of students in the public school system. However, despite the cost saving, it should be acknowledged that there are groups and individuals who opposed spending any taxpayer dollars to support independent schools.

Independent schools are self-identified through the Federation of Independent Schools Association (FISA). The association represents a diverse community within the independent schools system.

### **1.2.1 Federation of Independent Schools Association (FISA)**

FISA is a non-profit society registered with the Corporate and Personal Property Registries office, Ministry of Finance of BC. Currently 284 independent schools and campuses are voluntary members of FISA, representing 91% of the total independent school enrolment (Federation of Independent School Associations, n.d.).

FISA is a voice for its members in BC and acts as a liaison between the schools and the government, as well as other educational institutions. It consists of a number of associations, which includes:

- ACSIBC - Association of Christian Schools International in BC (28 schools);
- AMG - Associate Member Group (115 schools);
- CIS - Catholic Independent Schools (76 schools);
- ISABC - Independent Schools Association of British Columbia (23 schools);
- SCSBC - Society of Christian Schools in BC (42 schools).

### **1.2.2 Society of Christian Schools in BC (SCSBC)**

The Society of Christian Schools in BC is an organization of Christian school communities sharing the biblical vision that affirms the creating, sustaining and redeeming activity of the True God in the individual, in the community and in all creation. Its purpose is to strengthen and promote Christian education by serving, supporting and encouraging its members (Society of Christian Schools in BC, n.d.). At the time of writing, the society has 32 members with a combined total of 42 school campuses employing over 1,000 teachers, educational support staff, principals and administrators, and serving 10,000 students. The SCSBC provides a wide range of services for its member schools as well as others seeking resources and support in the provision of Christian education. This research focuses on a member of the SCSBC, Richmond Christian School.

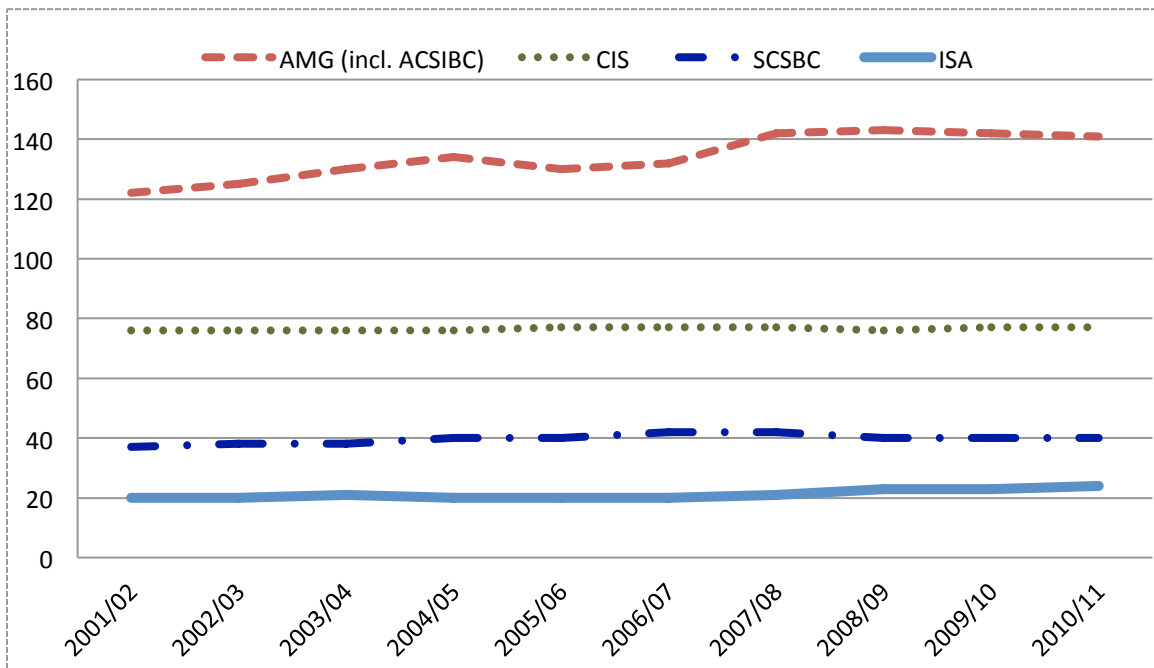
### 1.3 Shifts in the Education Landscape

Over the last 10 years, the landscape for K-12 education in BC has been shifting. Alternatives to public schools, such as independent schools, homeschooling and distant education, have become more popular. The latest data provided by the Ministry shows that the number of independent schools has increased by about 6% over the last decade (see Table 1 for data). Figure 1 shows the changes in the number of schools for each of the member associations in FISA.

Table 1 Changes in the Number of Independent Schools in a Decade

2001/02	2010/11	Change	% Change
338	360	22	6%

Figure 1 Number of Independent Schools in BC from 2001/02 to 2010/11



Source: FISA report: <http://www.fisabc.ca/sites/default/files/2010%20Number%20Ind%20Schools.pdf>.

Furthermore, between school years 2000/01 to 2009/10, the total enrolment in public schools has decreased by nearly 10 percent (52,851 students) from 610,851 in 2000/01 to 558,000 in 2009/10. Over the same period, the enrolment in independent schools has increased by about 14 percent (9,529 students) from 59,743 in 2000/01 to 69,272 students in 2009/10 (see Table 2).

If distributed learners were taken into consideration, there would be a 27% growth for independent schools over the last twelve years (SCSBC, 2012) as shown in Figure 2.

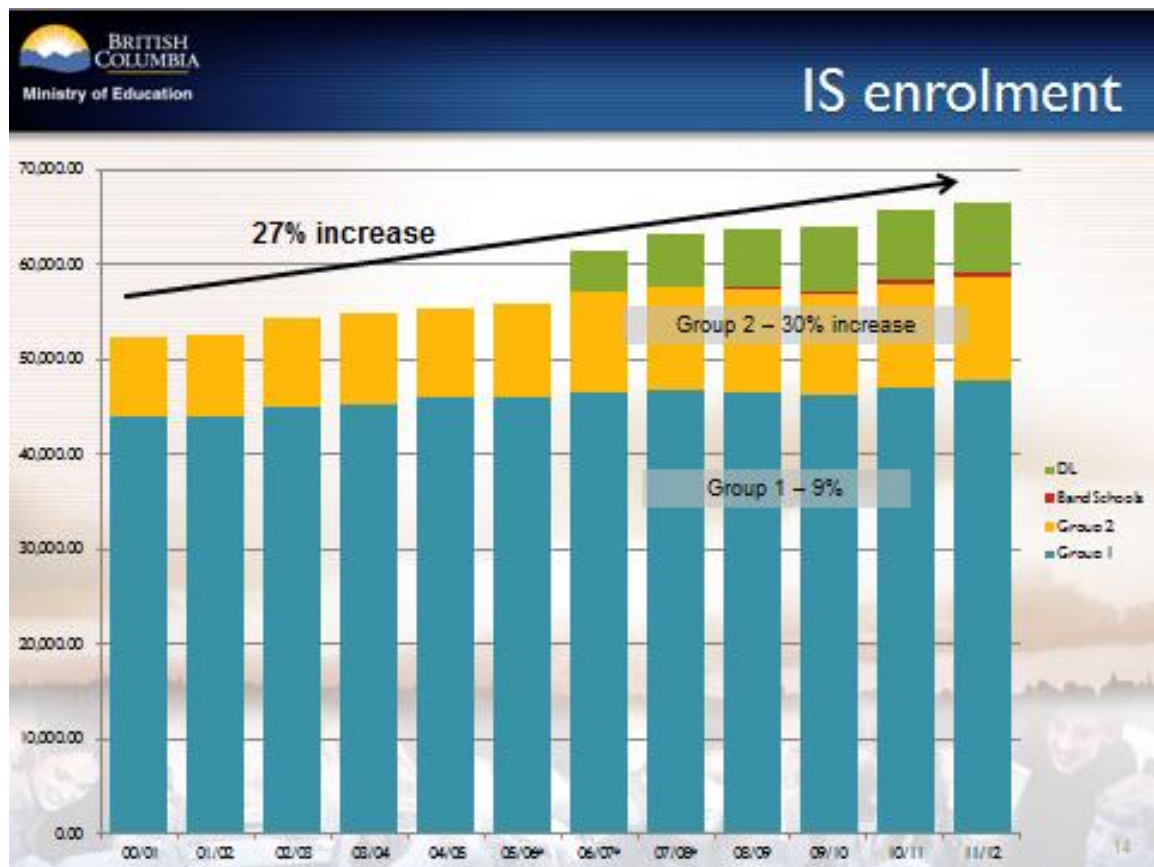
Table 2 Growth of Enrolment in Public and Independent Schools from 2000/01 - 2009/10

	Enrolment 2000/01	Enrolment 2009/10	Enrolment Change	% Change
Independent Schools	59,743	69,272	9,529	13.76%
Public Schools	610,851	558,000	-52,851	-9.47%

Source: FISA report:

<http://www.fisabc.ca/sites/default/files/Enrolment%20%20Ind%20Public%20Comparison.pdf>

Figure 2 Independent Schools Enrolment Trend



Source: (SCSBC, 2012).

It would be beneficial to determine the factors that are driving this shift. BTAWorks, the urban research and development arm of Bing Thom Architects, has done a study on the changes in enrolment in public and independent schools in the Greater Vancouver area in 2010 (Yan, 2010). This study attributed the changes to three factors: 1) availability of alternate education systems (e.g., independent schools, distance learning and home-schooling), 2) demographics -- declining birth rates and school age population, and 3) housing costs (e.g., housing prices soared in the Metro Vancouver area which contributed to growth in Surrey where housing prices are still relatively low).

This report focuses on one particular independent school, the Richmond Christian School. The next chapter describes the school in detail. First, a brief history of the school is presented. In particular, it shows the growth of the Richmond Christian School from a small private school to the largest independent school in Richmond. The chapter goes on to examine the factors that have driven this growth, especially in the last few years.

## **2: Richmond Christian School**

### **2.1 History of the School**

Richmond Christian School (RCS) is an independent school that provides pre-K to grade 12 education to 932<sup>1</sup> students on three campuses. RCS was started by a group of Christian parents who wanted consistent teaching at home, school and church. The first campus opened its doors on September 27, 1957 with 37 students ranging from grades 1 to 8 (Richmond Christian School, n.d.a). It grew gradually over the years but remained relatively small.

In 1986, RCS moved into a newly built campus on Woodward's Road, close to No. 2 Road in Richmond (see Appendix B for an aerial view of the campus). It served students from kindergarten up to grade 8. When RCS began to offer secondary education, they had to rent additional space in a nearby building to accommodate the increase in the number of students.

In 1992, an opportunity came up for RCS to merge with Seacliff Christian School. At that time, Seacliff was renting a facility from the Richmond Bethel Church (RBC) and the Richmond Chinese Mennonite Brethren Church (RCMBC) on No. 5 Road (see Appendix B for an aerial view of the campus). With the merger, RCS consolidated all grades 8 to 12 into the No. 5 Road building; the other grades continued to use the Woodward's campus.

Due to the increase in enrolment, the RBC/RCMBC building on No. 5 Road began to run out of space by 1995. The Board at that time decided to renovate and expand the facility. Since the property is owned by the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches (Conference), a complex negotiation took place among the Conference, RBC/RCMBC and RCS. The result was a leasehold agreement where RCS was to fund the expansion project and in turn has the option to use it, rent-free, for the next 40 years.

The renovation was completed in 1997. The No. 5 Road facility continued to serve as the Secondary school for RCS, providing classes from grades 8 to 12. Soon, the Board began to put together a plan that would expand the school into a regional Secondary school to service students from South Delta, South Vancouver and Richmond. One option discussed at that time was to

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<sup>1</sup> Based on RCS's enrolment in 2011.



further expand the RBC/RCMBC facility. It was estimated that the expansion would cost approximately \$2 million.

The Board commissioned a consulting firm, Field & Marten, to evaluate the possible expansion and come up with alternatives. In early 2003, the consultants presented their recommendation. They suggested that RCS should not expand the existing facility. The main reason given was that RCS neither owned the building nor the land. After further consideration, the Board decided not to proceed with the expansion plan. Instead, they began to look into constructing a new campus that RCS would own.

In 1999, RCS purchased land just south of the RBC/RCMBC property. The land was originally zoned for agricultural purposes (part of the Agricultural Land Reserve [ALR]). A rezoning request was submitted to the City of Richmond. In 2006, the request cleared the public hearing process and RCS was approved to build on the first 110 metres of the property from the No. 5 Road (see Appendix B for an aerial view of the area). The remainder of the property remains within the ALR.

With the approval to rezone, the Board moved ahead with building the new secondary campus. In a study conducted by a consultant from SCSBC, a total of 68 individuals (participants included existing and former RCS members) were interviewed. The study found that 82% were supportive of the project to accommodate the school's needs (Ebbers, 2003). They also sought assistance from the Conference to secure the majority of the loan required for the construction. RCS was to make annual payments to the Conference. This resulted in an even more complex relationship between RCS and the Conference.

The new secondary campus was completed in 2008 and began servicing students in grades 9 to 12 in the fall of the same year. RCS also implemented the concept of a Middle school. It would house classes for grades 6 to 8 at the RBC/RCMBC facility. Moving the grades 6 and 7 students out of the Elementary campus freed up space for further growth over the next several years.

## **2.2 Mission Statement**

RCS has crafted a mission statement that succinctly communicates its core values. It states:

“It is the mission of the Richmond Christian School, in obedience to the infallible Word of God and led by His Spirit, to provide a quality, Christ-centered education, equipping all students to joyfully serve Christ in all aspects of life.”

This statement is an effective communications tool. It promotes an understanding of what RCS is all about and gives a clear sense of where the school is heading. Board members, principals and teachers have regularly referred to the mission statement during gatherings, especially when speaking to new families.

From the mission statement, the following objectives can be identified: to provide education that is 1) Christ-centered, 2) high quality and 3) serves all students. The last objective is especially important to the school community. RCS does not require students to write an entrance examination. The only requirement for those who apply is that at least one member of the family is a Christian of any denomination. This is to meet one of the requirements defined in the RCS Constitution, and that is to operate according to the Reformed Creeds (see Appendix A for the RCS Constitution). Teachers and staff who work at RCS are given a copy of the constitution when they are first employed. To adhere to the mission statement, it is important to ensure that the same set of values is applied unambiguously throughout the school.

## **2.3 Governance Structure**

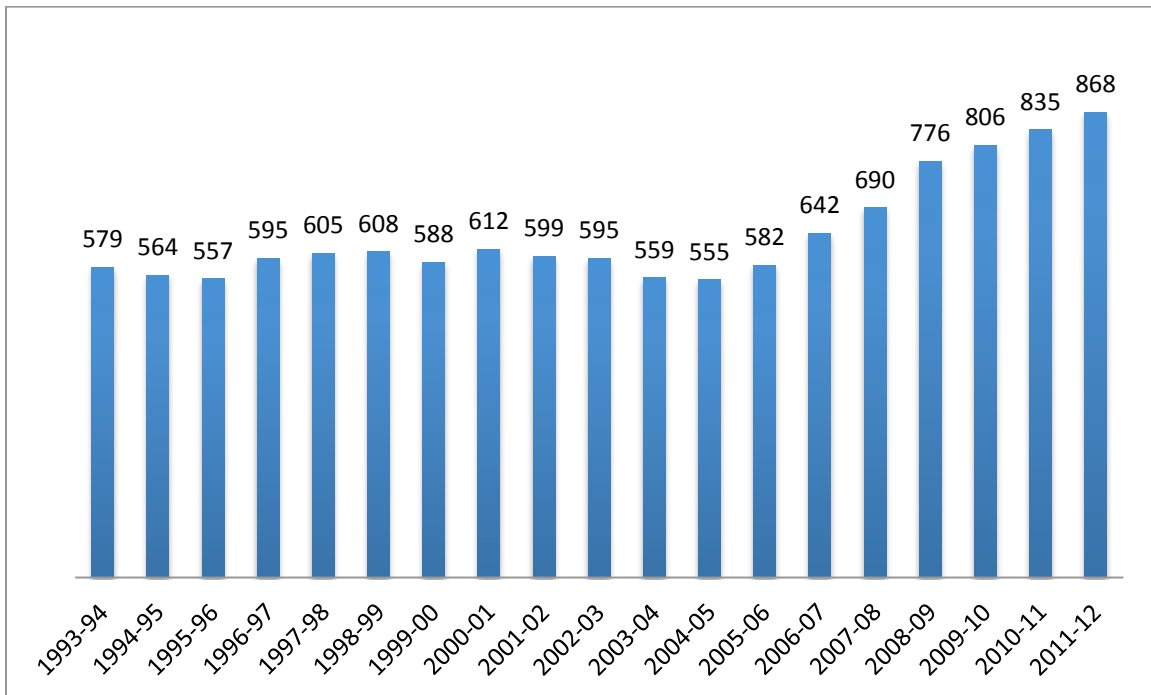
A Board of Trustees governs RCS. The trustees are elected from RCS members by members. All families whose children have been accepted into the school can become part of the association. Altogether there are nine trustees on the Board. Each trustee can serve up to two terms before he or she has to step down for at least one year. Each term is for a three-year period. Appendix C describes the governance structure in detail and lists the committees currently available. Parents are very much encouraged to serve on the Board or as committee members.

A Superintendent reports to the Board. The Superintendent is responsible for all three campuses and works alongside the Board on strategic, longer-term issues. In each of the three campuses, a principal and a vice principal manage the staff and look after the day-to-day operations. Appendix D shows a partial organizational chart for RCS.

## **2.4 Growth**

RCS has experienced tremendous growth since 2004. The total number of students almost doubled from a low of 555 in 2004 to 932 students in 2011. It is important to analyze and understand what drove the growth, as it is a relatively recent phenomenon and was not happening a decade earlier. Figure 3 shows enrolment at RCS from the 1993/94 to the 2011/12 school year.

Figure 3 Enrolment (K-12) at RCS from 1993/94 to 2011/12



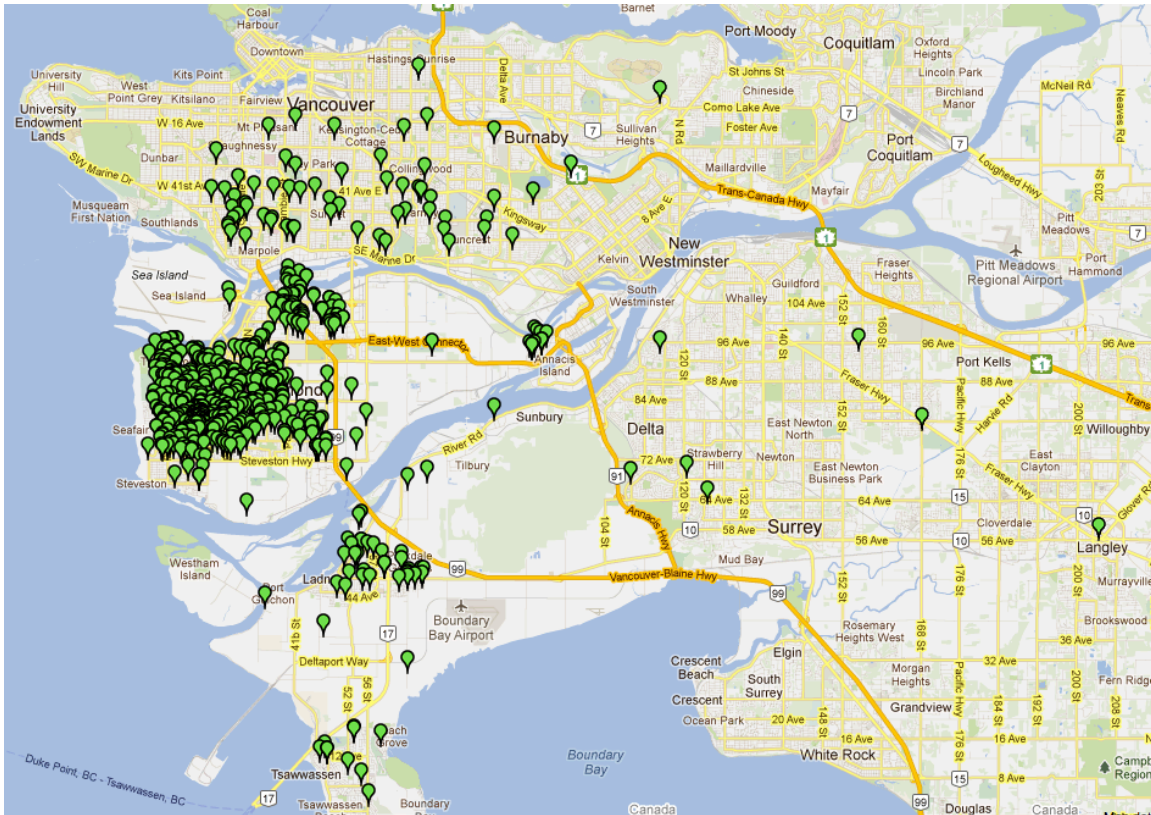
Source: Based on past RCS principal's reports.

The next five sections will explore several factors that have contributed to the increase in enrolment at RCS. They include: 1) Changes in Demographics, 2) Affordable Tuition Fees, 3) Improved FSA Ranking, 4) Dissatisfaction with Public Education and 5) New Secondary campus. Having a good understanding of these factors will help RCS to anticipate and manage its future growth.

#### 2.4.1 Changes in Demographics

The first factor is the demographics of the families who enroll their children in RCS. According to the 2011/12 registrations, most of the families live in South Vancouver, Richmond and Delta. However, a few travel from as far as Burnaby, New Westminister and Surrey. Of the 613 families enrolled in the 2011/12 school year, 81% live in Richmond, 10% in Vancouver/Burnaby/New Westminister, and 9% in Delta/Surrey (Figure 4 shows a plot of the families' location). The remainder of this section will focus on Richmond where the majority of the families are located.

Figure 4 Map showing the location of RCS families



Source: Plotted using MapAList.com based on information from RCS's member directory.

In the last few years, the demographics of Richmond have changed dramatically. First and foremost, according to the 2006 Census<sup>2</sup> the population in Richmond has increased by 6.2% since 2001; that is 2,023 people or 1.2% per year. The data also shows that over 80% of the immigrants came from Asian and Middle Eastern countries. The top countries of origin for the immigrants are shown in Table 3.

This change in demographics has turned what was once a visible minority in Richmond into the majority. According to the 2006 Census, 65.1% of the people in Richmond are considered a visible minority. The predominant group is Chinese (at 44%, which is the highest proportion in Canada), followed by South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani at 8%), and Filipino (5%).

<sup>2</sup> The 2011 Census will be released in parts by Statistics Canada starting in February 8, 2012.

Table 3 Top Countries of Origin for Immigrants in Richmond

Areas of Origin	% of all Immigrants
People's Republic of China	26.8%
Hong Kong, SAR	23.0%
Other Eastern Asia (e.g. Japan, Korea)	10.0%
Philippines	9.3%
India	5.2%
United Kingdom	4.1%

Source: City of Richmond Hot Facts: [http://richmond.ca/\\_shared/assets/Immigration6252.pdf](http://richmond.ca/_shared/assets/Immigration6252.pdf).

There are parents, especially among those who emigrated from Asian countries, who perceive that their children can obtain a better education from independent or private schools. In China, the Philippines and India (Mukherji, 2011), for instance, parents will work long hours and even two jobs just to ensure that their children can continue to attend private schools. Many also believe that this would allow them to attain higher social status and bring further long-term benefits to their family. Therefore, when they immigrated to Canada, this perception came along with them. A high percentage of Asian population, such as in Richmond, can lead to a high demand for independent schools.

#### 2.4.2 Affordable Tuition Fees

Over the years, RCS has intentionally kept its tuition fees low to make it affordable to more people. Table 4 compares RCS's tuition fees with St. George's and Crofton House, two of the elite private schools in Vancouver. It shows that RCS costs about a third. This range of tuition fees seemed very attractive to those living in Richmond, a primarily middle class area. According to the 2006 Census, the average family income in Richmond is \$74,790. This is an increase of 20% over the 2001 data. Hence, many are able to afford the tuition. For the small percentage of families who do have difficulties, RCS provides financial aid.

Table 4 Tuition Fees Comparison -- Crofton House, St. George's and RCS

	Crofton House	St. George's	RCS
Grades 1 - 7	\$16,800	\$16,085	\$5,727
Grades 8 - 12	\$16,800	\$18,500	\$6,883

Source: Data retrieve from the respective school's website.

### **2.4.3 Dissatisfaction with Public Education**

Some parents have expressed dissatisfaction with the public education in British Columbia. One of the main reasons was the job action that teachers carry out every few years. The British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) represents public school teachers. Since 1994, the BCTF has been the bargaining agent for all teachers; the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) is the bargaining agency for school trustees. In 2001, the BC government passed a law that declared that education is an essential service. Therefore, the BCTF was denied the right to strike. This has led to a reduced pressure for the BCPSEA to reach a deal quickly when faced with job action (Steffenhagen, 2012b).

The BCTF has organized a number of job actions in the last decade. In 2005, teachers were told to withdraw any supervisory and administrative duties. This escalated to an illegal strike action in October of that same year. Eventually, the dispute was settled in 2006 with a five-year agreement, including a signing bonus from the government to guarantee peace during the 2010 Olympics (Steffenhagen, 2012b). However, as soon as the contract expired in June 2011, BCTF again asked for a pay raise for the teachers. When the negotiations failed, they initiated another job action in September 2011. Similarly, the teachers were "...refusing to write report cards, supervise students outside of instructional hours, attend staff meetings, administer standardized tests or communicate with Principals about routine matters" (Steffenhagen, 2012a).

At the beginning of March 2012, with the approval of the Labour Relations Board, under the direction of the BCTF, the teachers voted to carry out a three-day province-wide strike. The strike was an attempt to show resistance to Bill 22, legislation that, among other things, bans further walkouts, forces teachers to resume their normal duties, imposes a six-month "cooling-off" period, and then sends the contract dispute to mediation. Eventually the bill was passed and became law on March 17. Teachers who continue to refuse to perform their administrative duties will face hefty fines (CBC News, 2012). Families seemed to be the ones most impacted by the strike. Not only did the strike leave parents scrambling to find proper childcare but the prolonged negotiation between the parties also continued to affect their children's education. The on-going spat between the BCTF and the government potentially results in parents losing faith in the public education system.

A number of school closures over the last decade have affected classroom size. Since 2002, a total of 194 schools have closed across the province, including six in the Richmond District. This has resulted in overcrowded classrooms in some areas. The BCTF ran a number of radio advertisements that claimed "B.C. has 12,000 overcrowded classrooms..." and "...B.C.

teacher salaries have fallen to 9th in Canada." Within a few days, the Ministry of Education disputed those statements with a posting on its website. According to the Ministry of Education, "... 95 per cent of public school classes in B.C. had 30 or fewer students, and 99 per cent had 32 or fewer students" (BC Ministry of Education, 2012). The average class sizes in public schools in Delta, Richmond and Vancouver are shown in Table 5. On the other hand, RCS has maintained a reasonable class size, especially for the higher grades. The allowable maximum number of students per class in public schools and RCS is provided in Table 6 for comparison.

*Table 5 Average Class Size in Public Schools (Delta, Richmond, and Vancouver)*

<b>Districts</b>	<b>Kindergarten</b>	<b>Grade 1 – 3</b>	<b>Grade 4 - 7</b>	<b>Grade 8 - 12</b>
Delta	17.2	20.8	27.1	26.4
Richmond	17.8	20.9	27.8	26.4
Vancouver	19.0	20.9	27.0	25.2

Source: (School District 5, Southeast Kootenay, 2010)

*Table 6 Maximum Class Size in RCS and Public Schools*

	<b>Kindergarten</b>	<b>Grade 1 – 3</b>	<b>Grade 4 - 7</b>	<b>Grade 8 - 12</b>
RCS	20	22	25	25
Public School	22	24	30	30

Source: RCS school policy

Some parents have also expressed their anger at certain controversial policies. For instance, the draft policy #5.45 prepared by the Board of Education in Burnaby was said to "...promote homosexuality and censor all opposition in the public school system." (Millette, 2011) Another parent, who is a member of the Parents' Voice said, "Parents are very concerned because it seems they have no option but to submit to the delivery of a curriculum which undermines their moral and religious beliefs." (Mattson, 2011) The main concern with that policy was, "...no student can opt out of teaching material they are opposed to or receive alternative delivery, (such as) instruction at home, unless it is part of the Health and Career Education curriculum." Even though this policy only applies to schools in Burnaby, parents in other areas fear that eventually a similar situation will develop in their school districts.

#### **2.4.4 Improved Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA)**

It is safe to say that most parents would put their child's education as one of their top priorities. This is particularly so with families who have emigrated from Asian countries where an

important cultural value is that one must be academically strong in order to be successful. These families pay close attention to the performance assessments and ranking of schools relative to one another. One popular ranking is the annual Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) administered by the Fraser Institute, an independent non-partisan research and educational organization based in Canada.

Started in 2000, the FSA is an “...annual province-wide assessment of British Columbia students' academic skills, and provides a snapshot of how well BC students are learning foundation skills in Reading Comprehension, Writing, and Numeracy.” (BC Ministry of Education, 2000) The FSA provides one data point for school and education planners to gauge and improve student achievements. Only students in grades 4, 7, and 12 are assessed.

Although the intention of the education offered by RCS goes beyond scoring well on the FSA, it still participates in the assessment. In 2011, the Elementary school scored 9.9 out of 10 and was ranked 15<sup>th</sup> out of 860 schools. The 2010 grade 12 assessment<sup>3</sup> ranked RCS's Secondary school at 30<sup>th</sup> out of 274. RCS's Elementary and Secondary “School Report Cards” are shown in Appendix E as Figure 10 and Figure 11, respectively.

It is important to note that during the first few years of participating in the FSA, RCS only achieved average rankings. Around 2003, the Lead Principal at that time began to put greater emphasis on the assessment. He got teachers to focus on improving the teaching quality of the core subjects, which happened to align with the FSA. The goal was not just to score well on the assessment but also to bring up the overall quality of learning in the school. RCS also introduced the 6+1 Traits of Writing program to improve the writing of all students from elementary to secondary. This has indirectly helped improve RCS's FSA scores. The administration team also believes in teaching students to become critical thinkers. This enabled them to explore and experiment rather than just memorizing facts that were fed to them. Students were also introduced to the format of the FSA so that they would feel comfortable when taking the assessment.

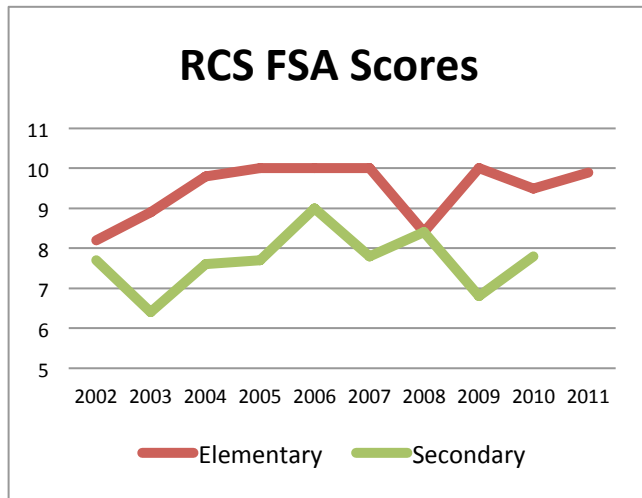
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<sup>3</sup> The 2011 ranking for the Secondary schools will be released later in May 2012.



Table 7 FSA scores from 2002-2011

	Elementary Grade 4,7	Secondary Grade 12
2002	8.2	7.7
2003	8.9	6.4
2004	9.8	7.6
2005	10	7.7
2006	10	9
2007	10	7.8
2008	8.4	8.4
2009	10	6.8
2010	9.5	7.8
2011	9.9	- *



\* Available in May 2012

In part, arousing the students' interest in various subjects has led to performance improvements at RCS. Table 7 shows the trend of RCS's FSA scores from 2002 to 2011. No one had expected that RCS would be able to achieve perfect scores in the Elementary school from 2005 to 2007 consecutively and consistently achieve high rankings throughout the period. Although FSA is just one data point, it has been widely publicized and is easily accessible. Ranking 1<sup>st</sup> on the assessment has helped propel RCS's reputation, especially among families that have a bias towards academic achievement. A study showed that this ranking has the greatest influence on Chinese-speaking parents (Steffenhagen, 2010).

However, from RCS' perspective, this ranking is a double-edged sword. Once RCS achieved a high ranking, parents expected the school to maintain its scores at this high level. Unfortunately this is a challenging undertaking as RCS does not administer an entrance examination and thus accepts students even if they have language or learning difficulties. The only requirement for a family to enroll in RCS is that least one parent must be a Christian (proven with a letter of reference from a local pastor).

Not everyone agrees with either the appropriateness or utility of the assessment by the Fraser Institute. For instance, the BCTF has openly disputed the validity of the assessment. It published a brochure indicating that a child's learning is more than just what is being assessed by FSA (British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 2010). It argued that ranking a school based only on FSA data would not be entirely justified. The BCTF even crafted a letter for parents (British

Columbia Teachers' Federation, 2012) to send to school Principals asking that their children be exempted from participating in the assessment. A Fraser Institute director tried to explain the purpose behind the school assessments, which is to enable parents to, "... easily identify schools that show improved academic performance year to year. And if their child's school is not improving, or has declined, the report card gives parents the information they can use to ask questions of school administrators and teachers." (Fraser Institute, 2011)

#### **2.4.5 Opening of the new Secondary Campus**

RCS' new secondary campus opened for the 2008/09 school year. This added about 200 spaces to the school. Not only did this make room in the Middle school, but also attracted students from other schools in the vicinity, especially those that only went up to grade 7 or 8. Furthermore, a brand new, modern facility always appeals to some families.

With increase in the number of students at the Secondary school, it became feasible to offer specialized classes and programs, such as the Honours and Advanced Placement (AP) programs. These new programs further reduced the number of families transferring out of RCS.

The five factors discussed above led to the increase of reputational capital for RCS. Reputation is especially important for a service-based organization such as a school. Each family pays tuition in exchange for the service of educating their children. A trust relationship must be cultivated between the school and the families. Having a good reputation helped to jump-start that process. Over the last few years, RCS has grown to become the largest independent school in Richmond.

### **2.5 Past Strategic Initiatives**

This section reviews some of RCS's past strategic initiatives. Having a good understanding of the past can provide important guidance in planning for new directions.

#### **2.5.1 2005/06 Strategic Plan**

During 2004 - 2005, the main concern was to find ways to attract new families to RCS and, at the same time, retain existing students. As shown in Figure 3, the enrolment at RCS hit a low point in 2004/05. Many students exited the school after finishing grade 7 because there were few options in the Secondary school program. There were neither Advanced Placement (AP) nor

International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. At times, there were not even enough students to conduct proper science lab sessions.

Therefore, the 2005/06 Strategic Plan, or vision statement, targeted four areas that would improve the situation. They were:

- Families connected: to bring together a partnership among school, family and church to provide consistency in a child's education;
- Students are challenged: to provide a well-balanced quality education to all students;
- Staff members are valued: to recognize the effort of teachers and support staff in educating students with proper compensation and professional development;
- Lives changed: to reach out to non-Christian parents, family members and friends in the community.

Some of the initiatives that came out of the planning were:

- Ambassador program: to promote Christian education through families and churches;
- Accept international/visa students;
- Provide summer school programs;
- Start RCS investment/endowment fund;
- Establish RCS as a regional secondary school, targeting Delta, South Vancouver and Richmond students.

Each of the initiatives had its challenges. For example, accepting international students meant finding boarding facilities and instituting programs to integrate the students into the school. As a result, the only initiative in the 2005/06 plan that was implemented was to establish RCS as a regional secondary school. At that time, Richmond and its vicinity lacked a Christian secondary school. Part of the initiative was to construct the new secondary campus. There were two phases in the construction plan. The first phase was to build the main campus on the property RCS owned close to No. 5 Road. It was thought that the second phase would commence once the Secondary school campus began to reach capacity. The expansion would occupy the empty space right besides the main building. Phase 1 was completed in 2008 and classes began later in that same year.

### **2.5.2 2009 Board Visioning**

With the completion of the new campus, the board organized a “Board Visioning Retreat” to review the appropriateness of the 2005/06 Strategic Plan. A consultant was brought in to facilitate the session. A number of key issues were identified, such as a) site location -- one or three sites, b) functional board meetings, c) strategic plan review, d) growth of numbers, e) staffing, and f) funding<sup>4</sup>. The Board also defined a number of core values and objectives as focal points. These were an expansion of the 2005/06 vision statements, specifically with regard to: Families, Students, Staff, Lives, Stewardship, and Mission. The refined vision statements were:

- Being the (independent) school of choice in Richmond;
- Being the employer of choice;
- Able to impact the community;
- Able to raise the leaders of tomorrow;
- Increase enrolment.

Since then, the Board and the administrative team have worked towards achieving those objectives even though no formal Strategic Plan was published. RCS was able to continue improving on the quality of its programs, building a desirable work place for the staff and partnering with a number of charitable organizations locally as well as overseas. All this has helped to increase the reputational capital of the school and led to a record growth in enrolment.

## **2.6 Status Quo: Not An Option**

At this time, it may seem that RCS is making good progress. There might be little reason to “rock the boat” and simply continue to maintain the status quo. However, change is ubiquitous and inevitable, even if it is not acknowledged or acted on. There is a revolution happening in education to transform the existing system to something that will enable students to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Fuelling this transformation is the number of new pedagogies, such as project-based learning (Project Based Learning, n.d.), challenged-based learning (Challenge Based Learning, n.d.), and personalized learning (Wikipedia, n.d.).

In 2010, the Premier’s Technology Council (PTC) published a visionary report on the need for schools in BC to start preparing students to be successful in a knowledge-based society

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<sup>4</sup> Based on unpublished summary report from the Board Visioning Retreat held on January 19, 2009.

in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Premier's Technology Council, 2010). Based on the recommendations in the report, the Ministry of Education launched a new website called BC's Education Plan (BC Ministry of Education, 2011b) to further inform and interact with the public on the kinds of reform that could take place here in BC. The Education Minister also indicated that a \$165 million "Learning Improvement Fund" had been setup for education over the next three years (The Canadian Press, 2011) to help special need students and to change the way education is delivered in the province. Christensen et. al., in their book *Disrupting Class* (2008), presented several reasons why this kind of change is very much needed now.

There will be more pressure for independent schools such as RCS to be prepared when these changes start to happen. RCS also faces a number of short-term challenges. The number of applicants continues to rise and the wait list grows longer each year, especially for a spot in kindergarten and grade 1. The recent open house event saw a record turnout – 78 families visited the school, with 53 families interested in the Elementary school (Table 8 provides the number of open house visitors in 2010 and 2011). Since 2008/09, the Elementary school has implemented a triple-track for all its classes. Thus, all the available space at the campus has been completely occupied. The Secondary school also faces capacity issues. The solution was to implement a staggered class schedule for the students; some grades would start their class earlier and some would start at a later time.

*Table 8 Number of open house visitors in 2010 and 2011*

	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Elementary	38	53
Middle	13	11
Secondary	15	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>78</b>

Source: RCS open house data

These pressures have led the Board to put Phase 2 on-hold and re-evaluate the growth situation. The discussion has been around whether to: a) continue with Phase 2 as part of the plan to establish RCS as the regional secondary school of choice, or b) to expand the Elementary school as it was experiencing the most growth. At the moment there seems to be a strong demand for Christian education. Based on a projection released by SCSBS, the full time equivalent enrolment will start to rise again in 2014/15 (see Figure 9, page 49). Is RCS prepared for this increase in enrolment? Is it in the best interest of RCS to turn away families that are looking for

quality Christian education? Is RCS able to equip students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, taking into consideration that changes in how education is delivered are occurring? All these questions must be answered in order for RCS to sustain long-term success. The remainder of this report will determine what matters most to RCS and uncover options for it to build a strong Strategic Plan.

## **3: Methods**

This chapter discusses the methods and steps used to conduct the research and analysis in this report.

### **3.1 Defining the Element Map**

The first step was to define the scope to ensure the focus is neither too broad nor too narrow. Therefore, analysis should begin with identifying key “elements” in the field of study. Elements should include all stakeholders, core processes or services, environmental factors, and the crucial interactions between them. Basically the identified elements should cover everything that could impact the desired learning outcomes at RCS.

All the elements can be organized into an Element Map to provide a visual picture for ease of understanding. Laying out the elements in an Element Map helps to identify the dependencies and relationships among them. The Element Map is a flexible mechanism and allows elements to be added or removed as necessary.

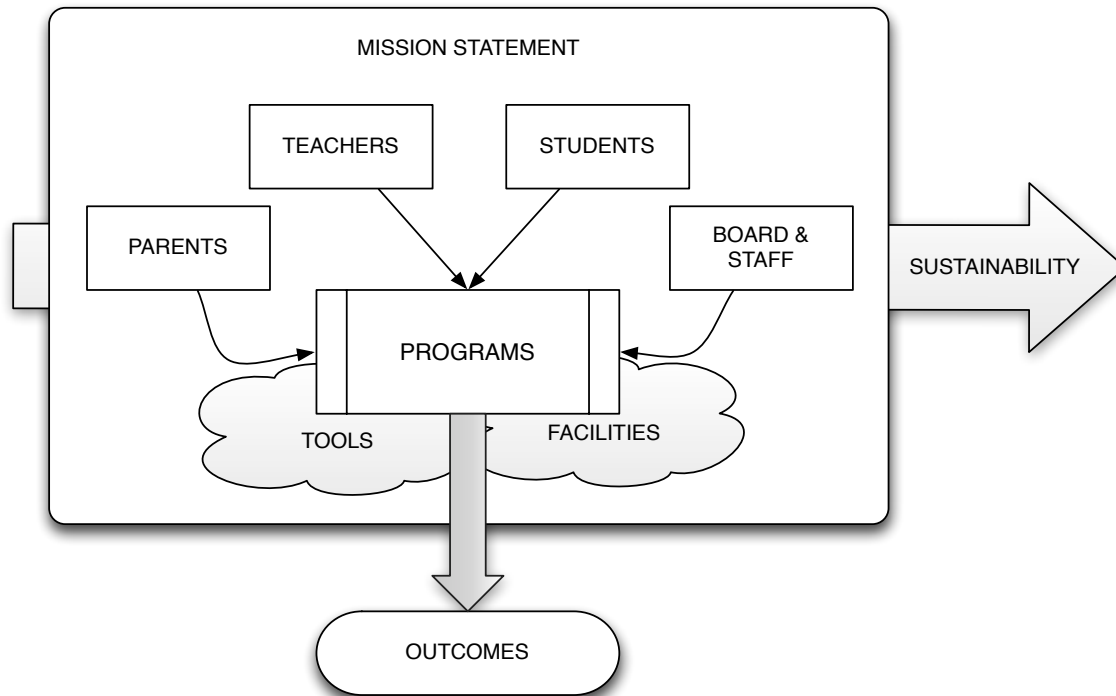
The Element Map for RCS was created by reviewing the school’s mission statement and through conversations with several personnel from the school’s administration team. The RCS Element Map is depicted in Figure 5. The key elements in the map are: 1) Mission Statement, 2) Students, 3) Teachers, 4) Tools, 5) Facilities, 6) Parents, 7) Board and Administration Staff, 8) Programs, 9) Outcomes and 10) Sustainability. Each of these is discussed in the next several sections.

#### **3.1.1 Mission Statement**

The mission statement defines the core values of an organization. Having a clear purpose can motivate everyone to work towards the same set of goals. As shown in Section 2.2, RCS has crafted a mission statement that captures the underlying purpose of the school. Hence, everything that the school does should fit with this purpose and help to strengthen it. All the other elements of the school should be built around the main purpose. For instance, RCS is all about providing Christian education to families who adhere to the Christian faith. It encourages schools, parents and churches to be part of an active ecology that nurtures children, thus forming “... an

environment where they may grow academically, aesthetically, emotionally, physically, socially and spiritually.” (Richmond Christian School, n.d.b) Therefore, any future initiatives must be aligned with these objectives and support the mission statement.

Figure 5 Element Map for RCS



Source: The author created the Element Map.

### 3.1.2 Students

Students are one of the main “ingredients” of a school. They are the ones being educated. However, each student is unique; they each have different personalities, characteristics, abilities, strengths and weaknesses. As RCS does not require entrance examinations, the types of students that it receives can vary significantly from one year to the next. Teachers and staff will have to work with bright and self-motivated students and those who require special assistance.

### 3.1.3 Teachers

Teachers and supporting staff are another “ingredient” of a school. They play a crucial role in ensuring that students are provided with the best opportunity to learn. Each student learns differently. A great teacher knows how to generate interest in students and motivate them to



excel. As the education landscape continues to evolve, teachers are required to keep up through on-going training and professional development.

#### **3.1.4 Tools**

Tools and learning technology do not produce the desired learning outcomes. Only when wisely facilitated by teachers can the students leverage the capabilities of the tools. There are both high-tech and traditional tools. Obviously, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, technology is playing an ever more important role in education. Teachers must not neglect the importance of adjusting their delivery approach or pedagogy to utilize these tools fully.

#### **3.1.5 Facilities**

The school's interior and exterior facilities can have a significant influence on the students' ability and desire to learn. Classrooms must be setup to have the right atmosphere to maximize learning from each lesson. In addition to facilities that support academic pursuits, playgrounds, play-areas and gymnasiums are important for students' physical development. Furthermore, special needs students also require different kinds of facilities.

#### **3.1.6 Parents**

Parents play an important role in Christian education. Building a strong relationship with the parent community is one of the core objectives of a school. A child's education does not stop at the end of a school day. It continues at home with parents or caregivers providing the necessary guidance. A strong parent community also provides a key source of resources (in terms of volunteers and funding) to enhance and sustain the school.

#### **3.1.7 Board and Administration Staff**

The Board and the administrative staff provide the necessary support to teachers and help govern the school. The board focuses on long-term strategic directions for the school while the administration team manages the day-to-day operations of the school. The board and staff have the responsibility to keep all members of RCS informed of the vision and direction the school is progressing towards.

### **3.1.8 Programs**

Educational programs are the main service provided by a school. They may include academic classroom lessons as well as non-academic ones, such as musical, theatrical and athletic programs. The quality of the programs is what sets great schools apart from merely good ones. A novel way to think about the programs is to imagine them as crucibles that bring together all the “right” ingredients to produce the desirable outcomes. At RCS, the mission is to provide all students with quality Christian education. This is accomplished through its programs; putting proper tools in the hands of the teachers in an optimal atmosphere and with support from staff and parents will enable students to achieve the outcomes that meet the school’s objectives.

### **3.1.9 Outcomes**

The expected outcome of a school is the quality of learning its students receive. Are the students prepared to pursue higher education? How well can the students fit into the society? What contribution can the students make to their community? These are all possible outcomes that parents would expect for their children. For RCS, the outcome is clearly stated in its mission statement: “... to joyfully serve Christ in all aspects of life.” However, there might be parents who do not share this view. Instead, they would rather focus on the academic achievements of their children.

### **3.1.10 Sustainability**

All the elements described so far are important for producing the desired learning outcomes. There is another element, which is just as critical. It has to do with the ability of the school to sustain itself in the long run. Enrolment numbers are one of the key indicators. Another indicator is the amount of pledges that can be raised from the community during fund raising campaigns. These additional funds can further “... enhance the educational choices of... students while keeping Christian Education affordable.” (Richmond Christian School, n.d.c)

### **3.1.11 Interconnectedness of the Elements**

One aspect of the Element Map (see Figure 5) that can be easily overlooked is the interconnectedness among the elements. For instance, the interaction between teachers and students plays a key role in making sure that optimal learning happens in the classrooms. It is important to understand the interdependent relationships during decision-making. Changing or adjusting one element can result in another being impacted.

## **3.2 Actionable Items**

A visual tool, such as the Element Map, can simplify the process of identifying the list of actionable items. An item is not considered actionable if RCS does not have sufficient control or influence to make any changes. For instance, as there is no entrance examination requirement to enrol in RCS, the “quality” of students cannot be controlled. The school will accept and work with all students as long as one of the parents is of Christian faith. Consequently, there is also no direct influence on the demographics of the parents associated with the school.

There are, however, a number of items over which RCS does have control. These actionable items were identified by evaluating each element’s potential impact on the outcomes. Only the ones that can produce improvement to the learning outcomes were selected.

The nine actionable items identified become the focal points for our assessment in Chapter 4. They are as follows:

1. Ensure there is an appropriate mission statement;
2. Hire and retain quality teachers;
3. Enhance teacher-student interaction;
4. Improve on the quality of educational programs;
5. Employ proper high-tech and traditional tools;
6. Ensure availability of proper facilities;
7. Increase effectiveness of the board and administrative staff;
8. Increase parent involvement in education and the community;
9. Improve on the sustainability of the school.

## **3.3 Interviews**

It is important to involve members of the community when deciding on new directions for RCS, as the decisions will impact everyone. For any plan to succeed, there is a need to gain support from the majority of the members. The way to do so is to let them voice their opinions. This can be accomplished through interviews. There were three objectives for the interviews:

- 1 To better understand the current state of RCS through inputs from key stakeholders; focused on things that are happening both inside and outside of classrooms;

- 2 To identify the stakeholders’ areas of interest and concern;
- 3 To obtain specific examples of things that have worked well in RCS and those that can be improved further.

All comments and feedback gathered were used to support the analysis and preliminary input.

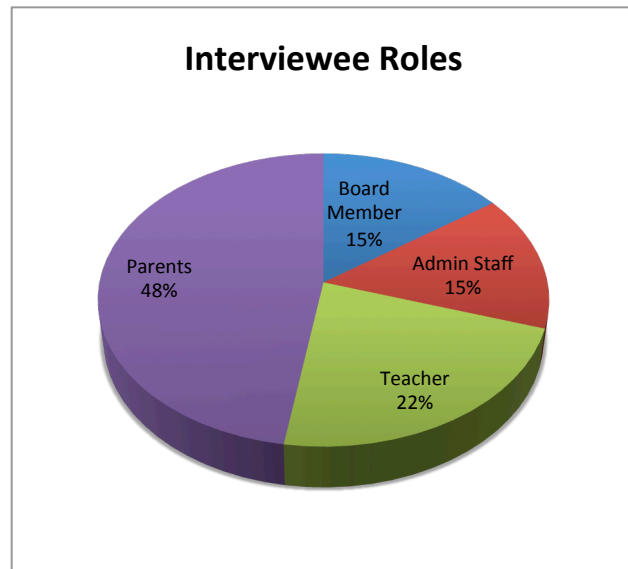
### 3.3.1 Interview Setup

A total of 32 participants were interviewed. They consisted of board members, staff, teachers and parents. Table 9 provides a breakdown of the interviewees by their roles. Some interviewees have multiple roles; for instance, there was a teacher who has children attending the school, and all board members are also parents of the school. The pie chart in Figure 6 shows the percentage of each type of role. It indicates that 48% were parents, which is desirable because as the main “customer”, they should have sufficient weight in any strategic planning effort.

*Table 9 Interviewees Breakdown*

Board member	5
Staff	6
Teacher	9
Parent	12
TOTAL	32

*Figure 6 Interviewee Roles Breakdown*



The format of the interviews was intentionally setup as informal conversations in a relaxed environment. None of the sessions were recorded or videotaped. Only through candid dialogue will the input given be honest and accurate. The questions were also left unstructured and open ended. This encouraged the participants to share what was the most critical concern on their mind.

The participants were asked to comment on three broad perspectives about the school.

The questions were:

1. What has worked well for you so far?
2. What could be improved further?
3. Over the next five years, what would you like to see changed/added/removed?

They had the choice to talk about any topic within the context of the three questions. For those who needed a little more guidance, a list of topics based on the elements in the Element Map was available. The topics included:

1. Effectiveness of the mission statement and Christian focus;
2. Appropriateness of the school environment, including tools and facilities;
3. Quality of the programs;
4. Quality of teachers and support staff;
5. Effectiveness of the Board and administrative staff;
6. Parent and community involvement.

All information gathered from the interviews has been kept confidential and only a summary is presented in this report (see Table 10 in Section 4.1). The questionnaire used in the interviews is available in Appendix F for reference.

## **4: Analysis**

### **4.1 Interview Data Summary**

The interviews were conducted over a period of 3½ months beginning in January 2012. Most of them were face-to-face informal dialogues that took place at one of the RCS campuses, local coffee shops, or the participant's residence. Due to various constraints, a few of the interviews had to be done over the phone. Comments and feedback gathered are summarized in Table 10. The data is grouped according to the structure of Element Map created for RCS. Some of the key findings are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

Generally, there was no disagreement with RCS's mission statement. Everyone felt that it captured all the key objectives of a Christian school. Similarly, there was consensus that Christian values are well integrated into all the subjects.

With regard to the facilities, most of the comments were positive and, generally, people are happy with what is in-place today. At the same time, everyone is aware of the lack of space at the elementary and secondary campuses. There were also concerns about the IT infrastructure at RCS. Some interviewees expressed a need for better reliability so that lessons were not disrupted and additional tools could be deployed.

Within a school context, it is no surprise that a lot of the comments and feedback were regarding teachers or the educational programs offered by RCS. The consensus on the teachers was that they are great and dedicated to their work. When it comes to the programs, the general view was that they have been improving over the years. However, there are still areas that can be further refined.

Overall, the comments about the Board and administrative staff were positive, especially for encouraging change. However, there are a number of areas where further improvement can be made. Lastly, even though parents are involved with their children's education, there is a need for more parents to help out in the various voluntary opportunities around the school. There is also a need to stay connected with RCS alumni.

Table 10 Summary of the Interview Data

The numbers in brackets indicate the frequency of interviewees who mentioned an item.

	Things that have worked well	Things that can be improved	Long-term changes
Mission Statement, Christian perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good attempts to integrate Christian worldview in all subjects [7]</li> <li>• Good balance of academic and Christian values [6]</li> <li>• Glad to see that RCS provides education to all students, including those who have special needs [2]</li> <li>• Educating students in conjunction with families &amp; churches [2]</li> <li>• Friday Chapels give meaning to why RCS exists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further expose students to different parts of our city; this can help them to build their characters</li> </ul>	

	Things that have worked well	Things that can be improved	Long-term changes
<b>Environment – Facilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good facilities at all the campuses [8]</li> <li>• Atrium at the Secondary school encourages students to socialize [2]</li> <li>• Good equipment on elementary and Middle school playgrounds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Space constraints, especially in elementary and Secondary schools [8]</li> <li>• Staggered Secondary school timetable not ideal [3]</li> <li>• Security and safety of the school surroundings must not be compromised [2]</li> <li>• Middle school gymnasium is becoming worn out, needs a refresh</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a “one-campus” concept [15]; with one person opposed this idea</li> <li>• Need to have a dedicated chapel rather than using the gymnasium or multipurpose hall – it is a way to show where our priorities are [2]</li> </ul>
<b>Environment – Tools</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT infrastructure needs to be reliable and consistent [4]</li> <li>• Use of technical tools must be balanced with non-technical ones; provide opportunity for students to learn via hands-on/touch</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better use of high-tech tools, and at the same time adjust pedagogy to maximize learning [6]</li> </ul>



	<b>Things that have worked well</b>	<b>Things that can be improved</b>	<b>Long-term changes</b>
<b>Programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic programs are getting better; the school seems to be committed to be better (e.g., having more AP classes, special needs program) [7]</li> <li>• Athletic programs improved with the new Secondary school facility [4]</li> <li>• Glad that RCS does not combine grades [2]</li> <li>• RCS achieving consistent FSA ranking, and yet did not over-prepare students for it [2]</li> <li>• Transition from grade 5 to 6 was done nicely</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secondary school programs can be further improved; Offer more AP classes [4]</li> <li>• Offer more variety in programs (similar to those found in some public schools) [4]</li> <li>• Have clearer visions for the programs, such as the honours classes [2]</li> <li>• Offer supporting skills, such as public speaking, computer [2]</li> <li>• Ensure programs can produce well-rounded students; felt current programs are too academically focused [2]</li> <li>• Ensure that programs are kept “current”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a coordinator role to oversee K-12 programs to create better consistency; smooth out the requirements [8]</li> <li>• Introduce distance learning, and theme-based learning</li> <li>• Pick the best element from various pedagogies</li> <li>• Ensure that we have a good understanding of what Christian education is in the 21<sup>st</sup> century</li> </ul>

	<b>Things that have worked well</b>	<b>Things that can be improved</b>	<b>Long-term changes</b>
<b>Teachers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seen to be working well as a team; very dedicated [11]</li> <li>• Attempt to understand each student – their strengths and weaknesses [10]</li> <li>• Support each other – share and prayer together; good culture at the campuses [9]</li> <li>• Have a good balance of experienced/mature and younger teachers [5]</li> <li>• Responsive, and inform parents of issues right away [2]</li> <li>• Willing to learn and improve [2]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure adequate professional development and training sessions are provided [2]</li> <li>• Have better coordination at among teachers at the Secondary school with regard to assignments [2]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being able to attract new and younger teachers</li> <li>• Have an integrated teaching concept, especially at the Secondary school</li> </ul>

	<b>Things that have worked well</b>	<b>Things that can be improved</b>	<b>Long-term changes</b>
<b>Parents &amp; Community Involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents generally care about their child's education [7]</li> <li>• Parents putting in the time in helping around school [6]</li> <li>• Good relationship among teachers and parents [4]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get more parents to involve with the school [7]</li> <li>• AGMs can be better run; encourage more members to come to the AGM [3]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create more community events and outreach opportunities; organize sessions to educate parents; might even want to invite pastors [2]</li> <li>• Create better connection with alumni and current families</li> </ul>
<b>Board &amp; Administrative Staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage teachers/staff to try different things in classrooms; supports change [9]</li> <li>• Emphasize the need for professional development [5]</li> <li>• Board moving towards a governance model [5]</li> <li>• Provide opportunity to move into different, and leadership role [3]</li> <li>• Able to hire and retain quality teachers who are passionate about Christian education [3]</li> <li>• Show appreciation to the staff [3]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve Board effectiveness; sometime can be slow to respond [6]</li> <li>• Communicate clear direction from the Board and admin staff [2]</li> <li>• Involve more teachers on major decisions to gain buy-in</li> <li>• Increase financial aids</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a stronger RCS brand and identity [3]</li> <li>• Review Ed Committee's scope; allow more autonomy for teachers to perform their job [2]</li> </ul>

## **4.2 Assessment**

The assessment brings together the comments and feedback from the interviews and the actionable items. The interview data provides specific examples to support each of the actionable items. They serve as valuable insights for the Board in prioritizing their strategic goals for the next several years. Each of the actionable items is described in detail in the sections below.

### **4.2.1 Ensure there is an appropriate mission statement**

The mission statement for RCS, as presented in Section 2.2, seems to be well accepted by everyone. All those participants, who were asked to comment on the appropriateness of the mission statement, agreed that it contained the right objectives for a Christian school. Clearly, they felt comfortable having the school built on values that are familiar to them. There is also a strong connection between the mission statement and the desired learning outcomes. What students learn from a school should be directly rooted in its core values. Ultimately, the performance of a school will be measured on how well they manage to achieve the objectives set out in its mission statement.

In addition to the mission statement, RCS has defined vision statements for its campuses. The Elementary school has the following:

- Foster authentic faith;
- Build a foundation for life-long learning;
- Encourage respect and care for others and God’s creation;
- Nurture an understanding of God’s love for every student and their place in God’s eternal story.

The Middle school chose a verse from the Bible as its vision:

To equip and guide our students to discover and develop their abilities and unique gifts, encouraging them to “love the Lord their God with passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence... and to love their neighbors as well as they do themselves” (Luke 10:27)

However, the Secondary school has yet to come up with its vision statement. Having a vision statement is important as it is a "... framework for your strategic planning." (Ward, n.d.) Vision statements should be time sensitive. Otherwise it would be difficult to gauge if the vision

has been reached. Only then can proper strategic planning take place.

In regards to Christian education, a number of interviewees indicated that there is a good balance between teaching Christian values and academic lessons. Some participants also noted the RCS' emphasis on integrating the Christian worldview into all the subjects. This is part of offering proper Christian education, which is not just having a Bible class. Another key component is the chapel time on Friday mornings. It allows all students and teachers on a campus to get together as one large community.

#### **4.2.2 Hire and retain quality teachers**

Great teachers will definitely have a positive impact on the students and, indirectly, on the reputation of a school. Defining what makes a great teacher is easy. There is a great deal of literature on this topic. A simple search on Google results in thousands of relevant hits. The top hit is an article from GreatSchools website (GreatSchools, 2008), which lists the following characteristics:

- Great teachers set high expectations for all students;
- Great teachers have clear, written-out objectives;
- Great teachers are prepared and organized;
- Great teachers engage students and get them to look at issues in a variety of ways;
- Great teachers form strong relationships with their students and show that they care about them as people;
- Great teachers are masters of their subject matter;
- Great teachers communicate frequently with parents.

However, knowing what to look for in a teacher is just half of the answer. It is just as important to be able to encourage those individuals to become part of the school. One of the key factors is salary compensation. Unfortunately, the pay scale for teachers in independent schools is typically not as attractive as in the public school system. Peter Froese, the Executive Director for FISA, once indicated that, "Independent schools generally pay a bit less than public schools, but try to keep up in order to attract good teachers" (Steffenhagen, 2012b). Although RCS follows the pay scale set out by SCSBC, it has made adjustments (an increase of 5% on average over 4 years) to offset the high cost of living in Vancouver. RCS might face the risk of losing great teachers to schools in other cities and provinces if it did not do so.

Other than monetary compensation, organizational culture plays an important role. Teachers prefer to work in an environment that is friendly, supportive and encourages open communication. This has led the Board and administration team at RCS to pay attention to the working conditions and put in an effort to improve the work place. The improvements that this brought to the school have been twofold: teachers and staff not only communicate regularly but also support one another through prayers and teachers work closely as a team in the preparation of class materials. Almost a dozen interviewees said that the dedication teachers have shown has made RCS a great school. When there is a healthy working environment, teachers and students can all benefit. Furthermore, it reduces the likelihood of teachers leaving RCS.

There are some indications that the culture and atmosphere in each of the three campuses are different. A few interviewees mentioned that teachers and staff at the Elementary school seem to be a close-knit group, while those at the Middle school display less cohesiveness and the secondary campus has the least. This could be a result of the nature of the classes at each of the campuses. In the Elementary school, typically a teacher looks after all subjects in his or her class and they work together as a team to plan their lessons. On the other hand, the Secondary school teachers specialize in one subject and they tend to work as individuals.

RCS seems to have a good mix of experienced and younger teachers. The former bring years of teaching experience and act as mentors to the latter group. The younger teachers bring fresh ideas and energy to RCS. A common attitude among the teachers, young and veteran, is that they are all willing to learn and improve. The school supports them with sufficient professional development opportunities throughout the year. As the education landscape changes rapidly, training has become a critical part of the process.

#### **4.2.3 Enhance teacher-student interaction**

Two of the characteristics of great teachers mentioned in the previous section have to do with how they interact with students – “engage students and get them to look at issues in a variety of ways” and “form strong relationships with their students and show that they care about them as people”. This, of course, is true for teachers in both public and private schools. Being able to engage students has a profound influence on how well the students learn. Teachers can create an ideal learning experience with appropriate tools and by using delivery methods that engage students in each of the subjects. The window of opportunity to capture the attention of a child is small. It is important to get things done right at the outset.

Caring for students cannot be taken for granted. When a teacher puts students' well being first, it is out of his or her love for them. A reviewer of the book, "Teacher as an Act of Love" wrote "When relationships of caring and trust are in place, pedagogy and curriculum are much more likely to achieve the results that reformers demand. Without those relationships, there is no perfect system, no foolproof textbook or software, no scripted curriculum that will yield the broad and lasting effects we all want for our youngest citizens." (Cohen, 2010)

Many of the interviewees felt that the teachers at RCS truly care about their students. The teachers made every attempt to understand each student's strengths and weaknesses. The students were never "just a number" in the school. The teachers are also responsive to parents' inquiries and provide regular updates on their children's progress.

#### **4.2.4 Increase the quality of educational programs**

One obvious way for a school to improve on the quality of its learning outcome is to continuously improve on the programs it has to offer. As society evolves, so do the educational needs of the students. Therefore our educational programs must be updated. One interviewee stressed that it is important to ensure students are getting "current" education today so that they can be successful tomorrow. Another interviewee commented that it is crucial for RCS to have a good understanding of what Christian education is all about in the 21st century. These are the typical responses from parents. A similar result was reached in the 2003 Feasibility Study, where the majority of the parents indicated that "quality of academics" was their primary concern (Ebbbers, 2003).

A number of interviewees did recognize that the programs offered by RCS have improved over the last few years, notably the Advance Placement (AP) program offered at the Secondary school. The number of AP subjects has increased to five. There are also enough students to properly offer labs sessions. The athletic teams at RCS have also performed well in the last several years. RCS is also known for its Educational Support Services. There are dedicated teachers and staff looking after students with special learning needs in all three campuses. One interviewee noted that teachers and staff seem committed to making the various programs better every year.

On the other hand, there were four interviewees who felt that the secondary programs could be further refined; for instance, by defining a proper vision for the honour's program. All classes and programs should have a clear purpose instead of just because some parents demanded them. Other interviewees also point to the fact that the public education system has a wider

variety of subjects (e.g., cooking, mechanics, and IB). In the past, this had been one of the main reasons why families pull out of RCS after their children completed grade 7. In the last few years, this has become less of an issue due to the AP classes at the Secondary school and the creation of the Middle school.

A few interviewees mentioned that it was a great idea to allow grades 6 to 8 to have their own space in the Middle school. Students in these grades have outgrown the elementary school system but have yet to adapt to the high school environment. They tend to have wide variations in their physical and mental development. This group of students can benefit from a somewhat sheltered environment that encourages them to develop and grow. The Middle school at RCS provides these students with the opportunity to adapt and prepare for high school.

Another group of interviewees felt that RCS might be too focused on the academic aspects of a student's education. They felt that it would be more important for students to receive a well-balanced education, in which they get to learn valuable soft skills. Soft skills include communication, leadership, critical thinking and problem solving skills as well as ethical and moral guidance. One of the interviewees mentioned that students would be better off learning how to prepare and give engaging presentations than doing more homework assignments. The debate about whether there is too much or too little focus on academic programs is not easy to resolve. It largely depends on the make up of the parents. Currently, the majority of the families in RCS are Asian. Given that Asian cultures believe that only with strong academics can one be successful, there is little doubt that this has influenced the types of programs offered at RCS.

#### **4.2.5 Employ proper high-tech and traditional tools**

In addition to having the right kinds of programs and knowledgeable teachers conducting the lessons, proper tools can enhance the learning experience. The tools can be simple visual aids for the elementary classes to something more high-tech, such as tablets or smart boards, for the higher grades. There is little doubt that technology will play an important role in education. Information is readily available on the Internet and this has given students the opportunity to gain a much broader view than what was capable just through textbooks. Therefore, schools must have proper equipment and infrastructure to facilitate these new forms of learning.

Most of the interviewees recognized the need for RCS to provide up to date high-tech tools in the classrooms. Six of the interviewees specifically mentioned that they would like to see more use of technology-driven equipment. They, however, mentioned that the teaching methodology must be adapted to those technologies. Another interviewee argued that although



there are many teaching methods – project-based and challenge-based learning just to name a few – no one method can fit all scenarios. Therefore, teachers should evaluate and pick the best method and tools to conduct each unit of their lessons. It is important that high-tech tools be readily accessible and easy for teachers to use with minimal overhead in terms of skills required and time expended. For instance, a less than desirable approach to deploy laptops and projectors is to require teachers to locate and bring a projector to the classroom and set it up. A better configuration would be to ceiling mount projectors in the classroom and enable any laptop to be connected easily via cables.

To support the high-tech tools, proper IT infrastructure must be in-place. It has to handle increasing number of users and devices. IT has become such an important part of any organization that any interruption will cripple its daily functions. Recently, one of the servers at RCS was out of service for five days. This incident caused RCS to lose email access and made communication with students and parents difficult. Three of the interviewees have pointed to this incident and asked for better and more reliable infrastructure as the school moves forward. They also mentioned sporadic and less than reliable Internet connections in different parts of the campuses. A couple of interviewees stated that the IT budget has not kept up with the demand. A closer review of the IT needs is required to ensure RCS can provide new and appropriate tools.

As schools ponder bringing in and deploying the right high-tech tools in classrooms, they must not neglect the need for traditional tools. According to one interviewee, “old-fashion” tools still have their place in enhancing students’ overall learning experience. The participant indicated that students could benefit from touching and examining real objects associated with the topic being taught. The bottom line is to have a well-balanced set of tools and equipment that can achieve the desirable learning outcomes.

#### **4.2.6 Ensure availability of proper facilities**

To deliver any kind of quality program requires the support of appropriate facilities. Thus, schools must always monitor and evaluate whether their facilities are being utilized effectively; if they are not, change must be made. RCS has completed a number of changes in the last several years. The most significant has been the addition of the Secondary campus. Most interviewees felt that the new campus has great facilities. For instance, the gymnasium is one of the highlights of the building. It supported the development of sports programs and allowed students to enjoy many great games in it. Another interviewee further commented that the atrium provides an ideal place for students to hang out and socialize. However, the gymnasium at the

Middle campus seemed to be worn out. One interviewee suggested that the school should have a plan to refresh this facility soon.

The playgrounds at the Elementary and Middle campuses were also noted as being a great area for students to play after spending time in classrooms. One interviewee was delighted by the newly installed playground equipment at the Elementary school and hoped to see more “strength building” bars.

The shortage of space has become a concern for RCS in the last few years. The rapid increase in enrolment has resulted in a long wait list to get into the kindergarten and grade 1. Turning away new families looking for Christian education due to a lack of space is never good publicity for RCS. It may result in those families never returning to the school. At the Secondary school, students and teachers have to cope with a staggered timetable, where some grades have to start earlier while others stay later. This inconveniences the students and parents. These are not ideal solutions and would not be sustainable over the long haul.

### **One Campus**

One possible option to diminish the space issue at RCS is to have “One Campus”. This involves building a bigger campus in close proximity to the other two campuses. Not only will this allow the school to continue to grow but also creates the opportunity to manage the separate schools more effectively. In addition, some of the core services, such as the special needs program, could be shared among the campuses. All interviewees except for one supported this “One Campus” concept. Everyone, however, is aware of the need to keep the three schools as separate entities. Each group of students (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12) requires different teaching styles to maximize their learning.

Implementing the “One Campus” concept has its challenges. Tremendous effort will be required in its planning and execution. Probably the simplest option would be to relocate the Elementary campus closer to the Middle and Secondary campuses. However, the challenge is to find an appropriate site for the new building and to ensure there is enough space to accommodate a playing field. Although RCS does have additional unused property east of the Secondary campus, most of that is zoned agricultural and is in the ALR. Therefore, it is not currently available for use. The only other space available, north of the Secondary campus, is quite limited. It is probably only large enough for a new classroom building. Another concern is that RCS has just recently completed the Secondary campus and hence carries a large amount of debt. It would be difficult to take on more loans or start another capital fundraising campaign.

Other options are available, such as selling off all the existing properties and purchasing a single larger site on which to relocate all three campuses. It may also be possible to conduct a property swap with the Conference so that the elementary campus could be relocated right next to the Middle school. There are likely other alternatives but all of them will require further analysis and consideration from the Board and administration team.

#### **4.2.7 Increase effectiveness of the Board and administration team**

For many years, the RCS Board was very much involved in the daily operations of the school. This could be attributed to its relatively small size and the fact that the role of Superintendent had yet to be created. The Superintendent acts as the Chief Executive Officer of the school and reports to the Board. The Superintendent is responsible for all three campuses; the Principals of all three schools report to the Superintendent (see the partial organizational chart in Appendix D). One of the Superintendent's mandates is to implement Board policies and directions.

With the creation of a Superintendent position in 2011, the Board was freed up to focus on governance decision making, such as setting standards and policies as well as planning strategic directions for the school. Half-a-dozen interviewees believed that this would help better prepare RCS for the future. However, all transitions take time. While the Board is making adjustments, some rough edges have appeared. A few interviewees commented on the lack of response to their queries from the Board. At times, a seemingly straightforward decision can take months.

The make up of the Board is something that requires careful consideration. At times, the Board at RCS has been too homogenous. For instance, during the construction of the new Secondary campus, over 50% of the Board members were in the construction or property business. There must be sufficient diversity to properly facilitate discussions and decision-making. Board members with different backgrounds and skill-sets would provide this capability. Unfortunately, finding parents who are willing to serve on the Board seems to be a challenge. One of the reasons might be due to the huge amount of time commitment expected from each of the trustees. To encourage more people to participate, the Board must streamline its decision-making processes.

The Board and administration team are known to be very supportive of the teachers. They constantly encourage the teachers to try different instructional methods. Some teachers were also given the opportunity to take on leadership roles and help to improve the school. According to

three interviewees, RCS provides regular professional development and training to help teachers enhance their professions, which would indirectly lead to better outcomes for RCS.

It is clear that the Board and administration team appreciate the effort from the teachers and support staff. However, a couple of comments suggested that when making major decisions, the Board should involve more people and give them an opportunity to voice their opinions. Furthermore, this would become a forum to improve communication among Board members, administrative staff and teachers.

#### **4.2.8 Increase parent involvement in education and the community**

It is obvious that parents of RCS students are concerned about their children's education. Not only do they want their children to have the best but also the right kind of education. Half-a-dozen comments from the interviews suggest that parents pay a lot of attention to their children's performance in school. Some have put in much effort helping with school projects.

There seems to be a close relationship between parents and teachers. Parents are working with teachers to ensure learning continues at home. As well, teachers have provided timely feedback to parents on their child's progress. Throughout the year, there are several parent-teacher meetings to facilitate communication and relationship building. Parents not only help out inside classrooms but also volunteer their time around the school. Many of the interviewees recognized the dedication of some of the parents to the school.

As RCS became larger and the number of families grew to more than 600, the need for more parents to volunteer around the school also grew. However, only a small percentage of parents are directly involved through voluntary roles. Furthermore, the turn out at the Annual General Meetings (AGM) has been poor. Typically, only about 10% of the families are society members and attend the two AGMs held in June and November each year. Some suggested that, to encourage better attendance, the AGMs could be better organized. Parents can also participate in many committees and working groups at RCS; these provide a forum for them to share their knowledge to make the school a better place. Ultimately, building strong relationships with parents is one of the key success factors for RCS to be sustainable in the long run.

#### **4.2.9 Improve on the sustainability of the school**

A school's primary objective is to provide quality education to its students. In particular, for RCS, it is to ensure that students get a well-balanced education with a firm foundation in Christian values. However, the business aspects of a school cannot be neglected. As an

independent school, RCS only receives 50% of its funding from the government (cf. Section 1.2). The remainder of its operating budget comes from the tuition paid by its members. Unfortunately, government funding could shift anytime. Therefore, it is important for an independent school to be prepared and find ways to sustain its business. It must be able to attract new families to use the services it offers. Competition is all around – mainly from the public schools, but that could also come from other independent schools. To remain competitive, RCS must continue to look for ways to differentiate its offerings from other alternatives.

The RCS brand has grown in the last few years, propelled by the high FSA ranking since 2005/06. Furthermore, with the opening of the new Secondary campus, RCS has attracted many new families. So far, little explicit marketing has been required; instead the school relied mostly on word of mouth. However, the Board and administration team recognize the need to better manage the RCS brand. Three interviewees commented on the potential benefits to students of having a stronger RCS identity, which could extend beyond graduation from grade 12.

Recently, RCS hired a new Business Development Director to spearhead the effort to build better relationships with the current families as well as the alumni. She is looking to organize more community events and information sessions that can bring families together. One of the conclusions drawn in the 2003 Feasibility Study was “... RCS lacks that multi-generational community which gives long term support to the school and helps the school weather the ups and downs of change.” (Ebbers, 2003) Now, nine years later, one would hope that this is no longer a concern. A strong sense of community can become a source of support for RCS to rely on in the future for enrolment, fundraising and reputation building.

### **4.3 Past Strategic Initiatives Once Again**

Now with the assessment in mind it is useful to revisit the past initiatives (see Section 2.5) undertaken by RCS. Learning from our past can be beneficial as it gives insights into why certain things were successful while others failed. This Chapter concludes with a brief analysis of RCS’s past strategic plans and visions.

The four vision statements defined in 2005-06 (cf. Chapter 2.5.1) are listed here for convenience. The note in parenthesis indicates how they are related to the elements in the Element Map.

- Families connected (outcome);
- Students are challenged (outcome);

- Staff members are valued (teacher, staff);
- Lives changed (outcome).

Similarly, the results from the 2009 Board Visioning (cf. Chapter 2.5.2) effort are given below with their relationship to the Element Map.

- Being the independent school of choice in Richmond (sustainability);
- Being the employer of choice (teacher);
- Able to impact the community (outcome);
- Able to raise the leaders of tomorrow (outcome);
- Increase enrolment (sustainability).

It is clear that most of the visionary items were closely related to the learning outcomes. Perhaps they were the simplest to define. The other goals focused on the teachers and sustainability of the school. The Board and administration team are aware of the importance of having dedicated quality teachers and they have made that a priority in the last several years. Consequently, RCS has become a school that can attract and retain great teachers. However, as discussed earlier, there are other actionable items that are just as important for improving the desired learning outcomes. They must not be neglected. It is true that there have been various improvements at RCS over the last few years even though none were listed as visionary or strategic goals (e.g., educational programs). Just imagine how much better these improvements could have been if they had been explicitly recognized and given appropriate emphasis. It is hoped that the analysis presented in this report will spark some discussions and provide fresh ideas to identify new directions for RCS.

## **5: Conclusion**

### **5.1 Upcoming Presentation**

The research and analysis compiled in this report will be presented to the RCS Board of Trustees and several personnel from the administrative team sometime in April 2012. Principals and Vice Principals from all three campuses as well as the Superintendent are expected to attend the presentation. The presentation is expected to last for an hour.

There are four objectives for the presentation. The first is to present a summary of the data gathered from the interviews. Everyone is looking forward to finding out what the stakeholders have to say about RCS. The second is to introduce the Element Map and the methods used in the analysis. The framework should be useful to the school in other kinds of planning as well. The third objective is to present and discuss the list of actionable items. These items are intended to help the Board in its upcoming strategic planning sessions. Finally, the fourth objective is to give everyone a chance to provide feedback on the analysis as well as any other parts of this report.

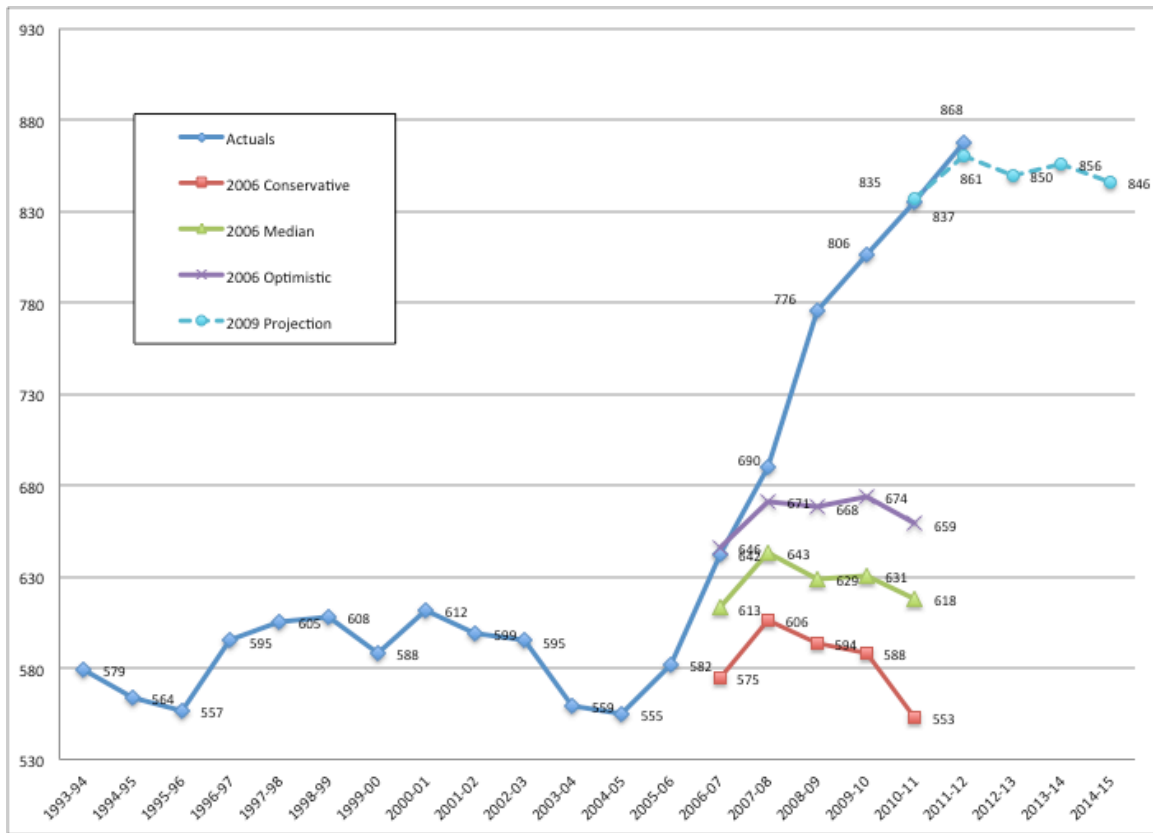
The summary of the interviewee comments and feedback will be distributed to the attendees prior to the start of the presentation. The handout will contain the information as shown in Table 10. A brief discussion of the data will follow. This will lead into the presentation of the research and analysis in this report. A set of slides has been prepared to provide the necessary visual aids to assist the audience with the material in the presentation. For reference, the slides are included in Appendix G. The structure is expected to be semi-formal. Attendees will be encouraged to ask questions during the presentation. There will be another opportunity to ask questions or provide feedback at the end of the presentation. The reaction from the attendees and their feedback will be captured as additional data for future planning.

### **5.2 Projections**

Predicting what RCS will look like in a few years will be a challenging undertaking. There are too many factors that could affect the success of the school to make this a simple task. Furthermore, the shifts in education in North America cannot be ignored. Looking at some past projections will reinforce the point that any sort of projection may not be much of use. In 2006,

just before RCS started the construction of the new Secondary campus, an enrolment projection was put together. The enrolment projection was intended to help with financial planning for the school given the addition of a new campus. It consisted of best, expected and worst case scenarios. The best-case estimate for 2010/2011 called for 659 students. The actual enrolment turned out to be 835. A more recent projection, done in 2009, estimated the enrolment at 837 and 861 for 2010/11 and 2011/12, respectively (Figure 7 presents the actual vs. forecast enrolment). The actual enrolment for 2011/12 was 868 students, excluding the preschool classes. The projection forecasts a drop in enrolment over next few years. However, that seems unlikely given the huge demand that RCS had experienced earlier in the year.

Figure 7 Projection of Student Enrolment



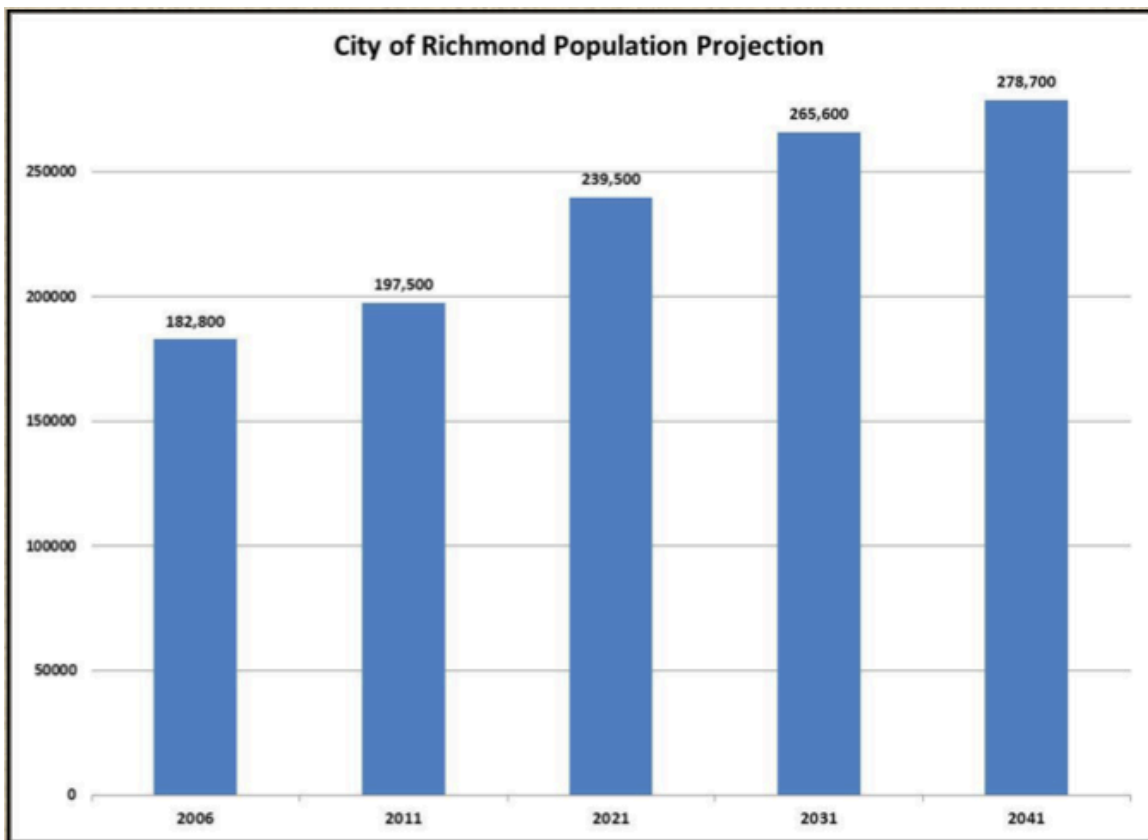
Source: Chart created based on enrolment data provided by RCS.



In lieu of an overly fixed forward enrolment projection, it would be more beneficial to identify key success elements and continuously monitor them as they evolve. This way, the Board and administration team will be able to make decisions based on things under its control. When these elements begin to shift, the team would be ready to make the necessary adjustments. The aim is to maintain flexibility over the next few years as education evolves into something new.

Rather than a broad enrolment projection, it may be wise to use reliable figures to create an open-ended range of possibilities. There are several readily available sources that RCS can refer to for statistical projections -- Statistics Canada, City of Richmond and the Ministry of Education. For instance, in a report released by the Richmond School District, Richmond is projected to "... add 42,000 more people between 2011 and 2021. The city's total population will be approximately 280,000 by 2041." (Richmond School District, 2011). This projection is shown in Figure 8.

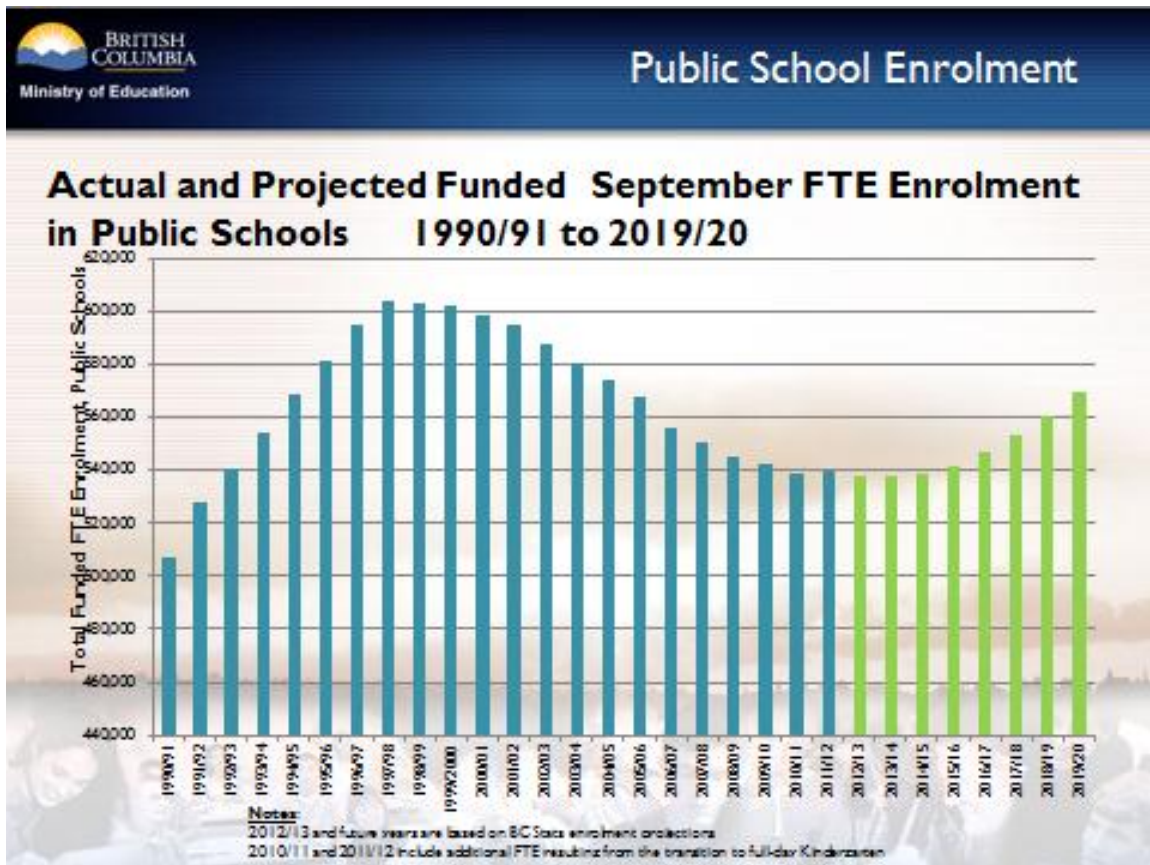
Figure 8 City of Richmond Population Projection



Source: (Richmond School District, 2011)

Another projection released by the Ministry of Education (SCSBC, 2012) indicated that public school enrolment is expected to rise starting in 2014/15 after continuously falling for the last 15 years because "... the echo boom of [the] large enrolment in the 1990's is projected to begin again in 2014-15. Therefore, within three years the number of school aged children in the province is projected to increase again, albeit at a slower pace than the previous generation" (see Figure 9 for the chart).

Figure 9 Actual and Projected September Enrolment in Public Schools



Source: (SCSBC, 2012)

### **5.3 Future Work**

This report provides preliminary input, including actionable items, for RCS to consider in its upcoming strategic planning sessions. These ideas and insights are reflective of the key stakeholders of the school. The intention is to get discussions regarding new directions for RCS in motion. While in itself, no discussion is an answer to all problems, good discussions are important for developing an all inclusive Strategic Plan for RCS.

There is no doubt that a Strategic Plan is required to move RCS forward. Such a plan is an excellent communication tool for everyone, including Board members, staff, teachers, parents and potential families, to understand what RCS has set out to accomplish. Just as the French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupery, once said, “A goal without a plan is just a wish.” Therefore, the next step is for the Board and administration team to determine where RCS should best focus its effort. It is time to put a plan in place.

## **Appendices**

## **Appendix A: Richmond Christian School Association Constitution**

### **THE RICHMOND CHRISTIAN SCHOOL ASSOCIATION**

#### **CONSTITUTION**

(UNOFFICIAL VERSION - FOR INFORMATION ONLY)

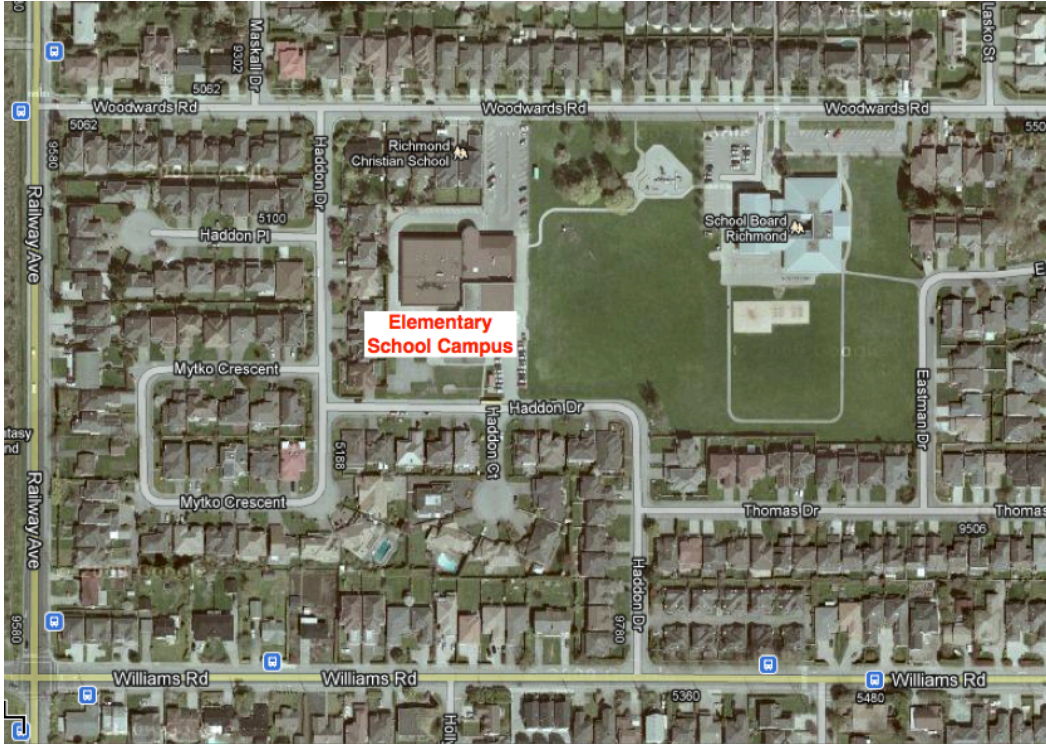
1. The name of the Society is the “RICHMOND CHRISTIAN SCHOOL ASSOCIATION”.
2. The purpose of the Society is to establish, maintain and conduct a school or schools and to provide for the education of the pupils of such school or schools in accordance with the basic principles set forth in Article 4 hereof, so that such pupils as children of God may occupy their places worthily in Society, Church and State.
3. The operations of the Society are to be chiefly carried on in the Municipality of Richmond, in the Province of British Columbia. This provision is alterable.
4. The basis of the Society is the infallible Word of God as interpreted in the Reformed Creeds. The Association is committed to the following fundamental principles:
  - a) LIFE. That since human life in its entirety is religion, God summons us to serve Him everywhere and requires that we educate our children in the fear of the Lord.
  - b) BIBLE. That the Bible is the written Word of God, the Truth that enlightens our understanding, the power that directs our lives and the infallible authority that governs all our activities, including the education of our children. In revealing that the world in its origin, gracious preservation and ultimate restoration is the work of God and that the glorification of His name is the purpose of creation, the Scriptures provide us with the key to the knowledge of God, ourselves and the world.
  - c) GOD AND CREATION. That since God who created all things by His Word and Spirit constantly reveals His wisdom and power in the cosmos and exercises His dominion everywhere, we can rightly understand the world only in its relation to the Triune God.
  - d) MAN. That man was created in the image of God to enjoy covenantal fellowship with his Creator, and was instructed to exercise dominion over the world in strict and loving obedience to God, to interpret all reality in accordance with His design and law, and to reflect in his person and works the excellences of his Maker.
  - e) SIN. That man, by disobeying God's law and forsaking his office, estranged himself from God and his neighbour, and brought God's curse upon the creation. As a result, fallen man has become blind to the true meaning of life and misuses and represses the knowledge of God, which confronts him in creation and in Scripture.
  - f) CHRIST. That the Christ of the Scriptures, The Word of God incarnate, reconciles the world to God, redeems our life in its entirety, restores our fellowship with God

and the neighbour and renews our mind to know rightly God, ourselves and the world in which we live.

- g) THE KINGDOM OF GOD. That the kingdom of God established the rule of Jesus Christ over all things and makes education and science possible and meaningful. Since we must subject every thought in obedience to Christ, we therefore reject every attempt to withdraw any aspect of life from the divine commandment to love the Lord with all our heart and mind.
  - h) PURPOSE OF EDUCATION. That the purpose of Christian Education is to direct and guide the child to commit his heart to Christ, the Truth, to attain to understanding wisdom and righteousness, and to perform his competent and responsible services to the Lord.
  - i) PARENTS. That God has given parents the responsibility to nurture and educate their children. In order to fulfill their educational task, parents should establish schools in harmony with the character of a Christian Home.
  - j) THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL. That the school established and controlled by an Association of Christian believers in accordance with legitimate standards and provisions, possesses the freedom to function in the field of education in complete and voluntary submission to the Kingship of Christ.
5. No member of the Society shall derive any pecuniary benefit from membership in the Society either by way of profits, dividends, or capital distribution, but this provision shall not apply to any principle or interest payable in respect of any monies secured to any member by way of a Mortgage or any issue of Debentures, or in respect of any loan made by any member to the Society, or to any member of the Society insofar as he may act as an employee of or in any professional capacity for the Society, which members shall be entitled to receive reasonable remuneration for his services.
6. In the event of the Society being wound up or dissolved for any cause, its assets shall be realized and the surplus, after paying all of its liabilities, shall be donated to such Christian educational cause or organization as the directors may determine.
7. The provision of Clauses 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 hereof are unalterable.

## Appendix B: Richmond Christian School Campuses

### Elementary Campus



### Middle and Secondary Campuses



## **Appendix C: Governance Structure**

Richmond Christian School is controlled and operated by the Richmond Christian School Association. This Association is made up of parents and guardians of children attending the school. Through their membership in the association, they provide input in the decision making process that defines school's policies, direction and future plans.

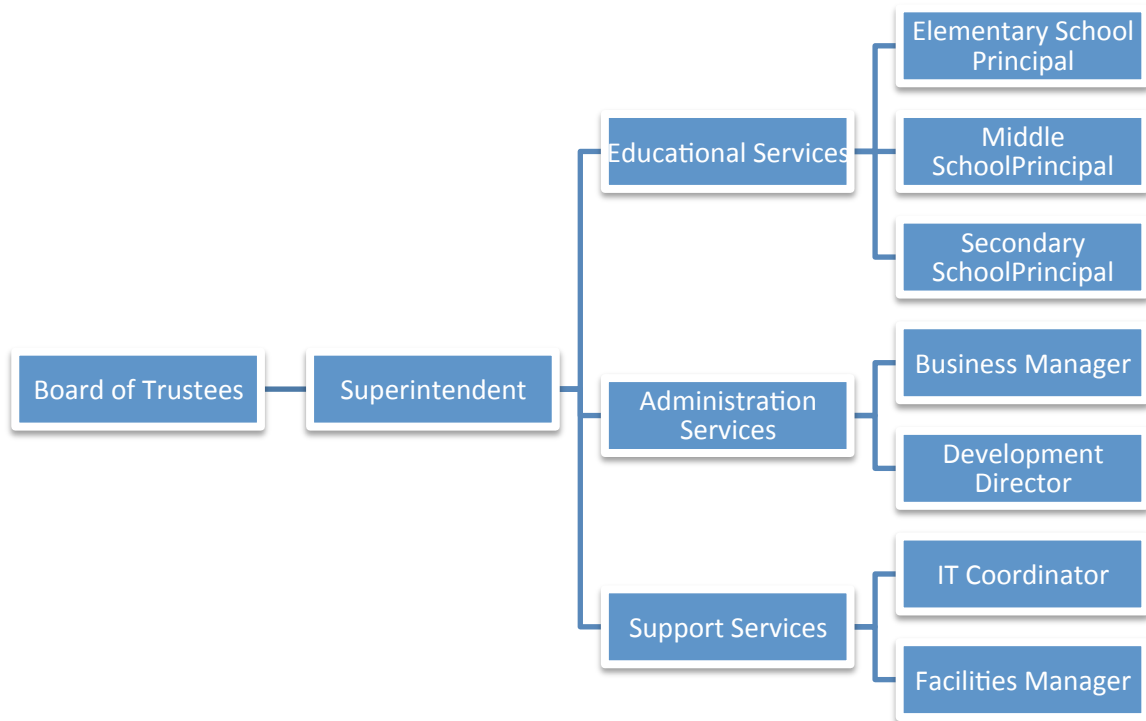
The association members elect a board of trustees. The board exists as a corporate body and therefore individual trustees have no power. Board trustees provide vision and direction, determine school policies, hire teachers and staff and establish a sound financial plan for operating the school. Some board members will also act as chairs of committees that oversee various aspects of the school's operation. These committees elicit help from staff, parents and guardians who become their "eyes and ears". Currently, there are nine trustees who serve at the board level to ensure the vision and mission of Richmond Christian School are expressed (Richmond Christian School, n.d.d).

RCS has the following committees:

- Elementary, Middle, and Secondary school Education Committees;
- Member Relations Committee;
- Building and Maintenance Committee;
- Information Technology Committee;
- Employee Relations Committee;
- Finance Committee;
- Development Committee;
- Policy Committee;
- Risk Management Committee;
- Joint Committee.



## Appendix D: Partial RCS Organizational Structure



*Source: Richmond Christian School*

## Appendix E: Fraser Institute’s School Report Cards for RCS

Figure 10 RCS 2010/11 FSA Report Card – Grades 4, and 7

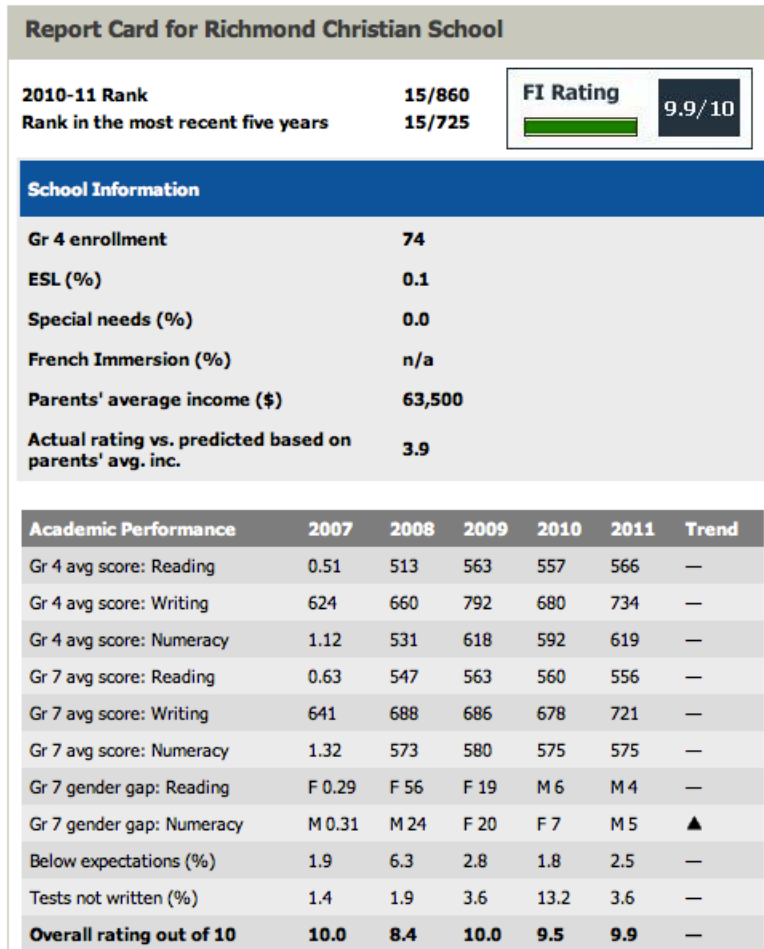
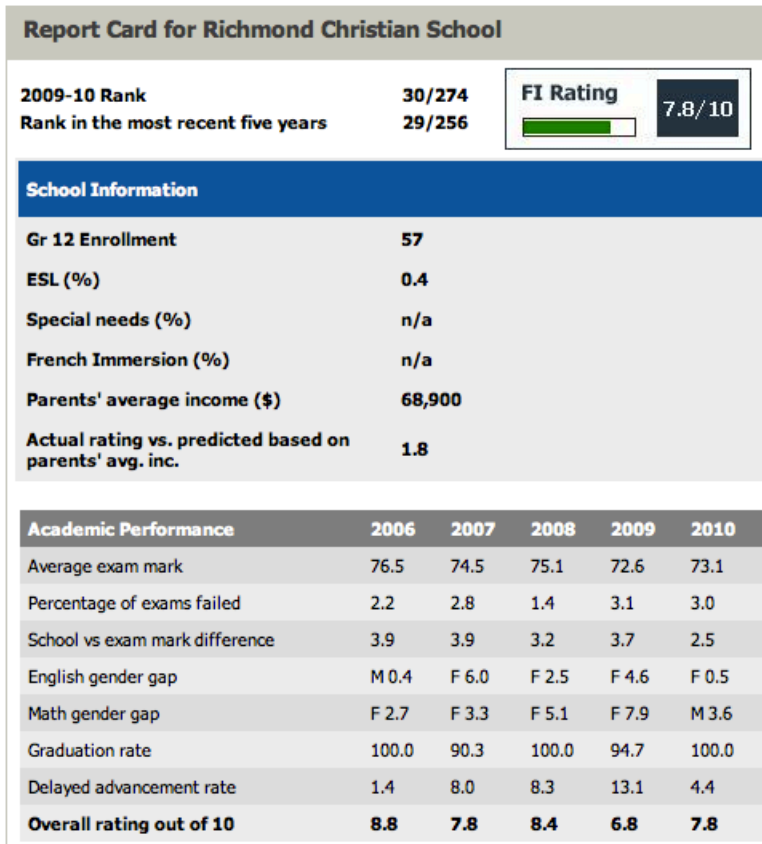


Figure 11 RCS 2009/10 FSA Report Card – Grade 12




# Appendix F: Interview Questionnaire

<p>Interviewee Name: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>How long have you been with RCS: _____</p> <p>Role:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Board Member</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Staff</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Teacher</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Parent</p> <p>Any comments regarding the RCS' Mission Statement and Values?</p>	<p>Q1. What have worked well for you so far?</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr style="background-color: #cccccc;"> <th style="text-align: center;">Criteria</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Comments</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Christian Values</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Environment - tools, facilities</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Quality of Programs</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Quality of Teachers, Staff</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Effectiveness of Board, Admin Staff</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Parent Involvement</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other: _____</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Criteria	Comments	Christian Values		Environment - tools, facilities		Quality of Programs		Quality of Teachers, Staff		Effectiveness of Board, Admin Staff		Parent Involvement		Other: _____	
Criteria	Comments																
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Environment - tools, facilities																	
Quality of Programs																	
Quality of Teachers, Staff																	
Effectiveness of Board, Admin Staff																	
Parent Involvement																	
Other: _____																	

<p>Q2. What could be further improved upon?</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr style="background-color: #cccccc;"> <th style="text-align: center;">Criteria</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Comments</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Christian Values</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Environment - tools, facilities</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Quality of Programs</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Quality of Teachers, Staff</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Effectiveness of Board, Admin Staff</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Parent Involvement</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other: _____</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Criteria	Comments	Christian Values		Environment - tools, facilities		Quality of Programs		Quality of Teachers, Staff		Effectiveness of Board, Admin Staff		Parent Involvement		Other: _____		<p>Q3. Over the next five years, what would you like to see changed/added/removed?</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr style="background-color: #cccccc;"> <th style="text-align: center;">Criteria</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Comments</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Christian Values</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Environment - tools, facilities</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Quality of Programs</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Quality of Teachers, Staff</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Effectiveness of Board, Admin Staff</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Parent Involvement</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other: _____</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Criteria	Comments	Christian Values		Environment - tools, facilities		Quality of Programs		Quality of Teachers, Staff		Effectiveness of Board, Admin Staff		Parent Involvement		Other: _____	
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# Appendix G: Presentation Slides




Preliminary Input for Strategic Planning

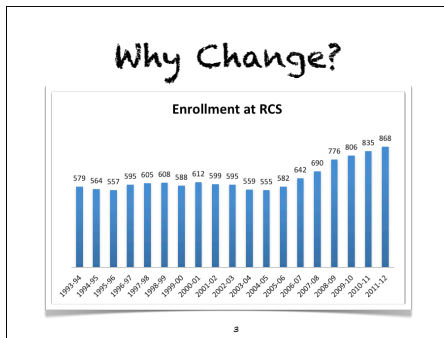
Presented By: Simon Tang

1

## One day in December

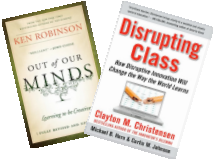


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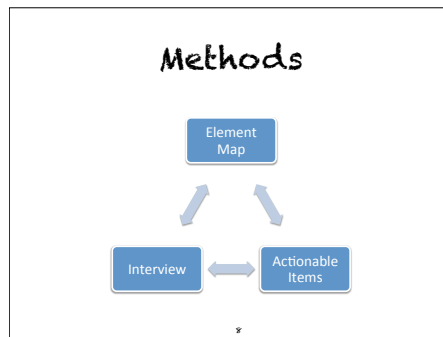
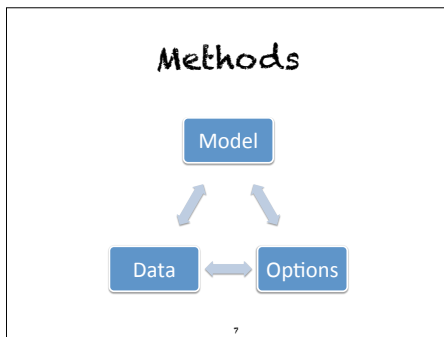
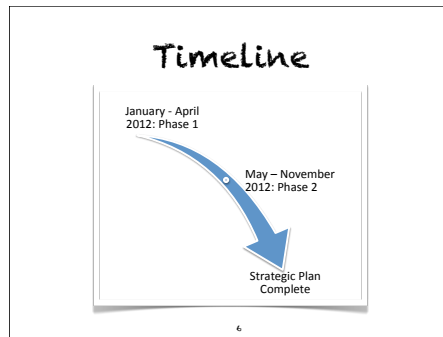
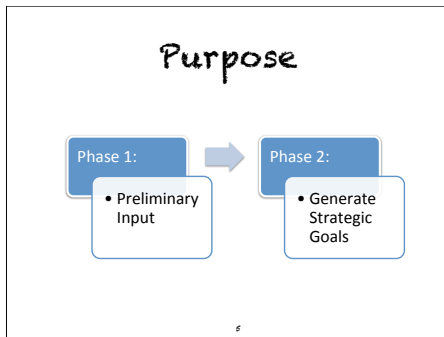


## Why Change?

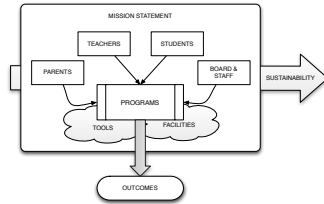
- Society
- Technology
- Pedagogy



4



## Element Map



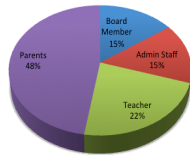
9

## Interview

- To better understand the current state of RCS through inputs from key stakeholders.
- To identify the stakeholders' areas of interest and concern.
- To obtain specific examples of things that has worked well in RCS and those that can be further improved upon.

10

## Interview Participants



11

## Interview Questions

1. What has worked well for you so far?
2. What could be improved further?
3. Over the next five years, what would you like to see changed/added/removed?

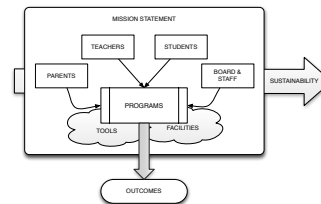
12

## Actionable Items

- Something that can be actioned upon
- Something that RCS has sufficient control or influence to make changes
- The goal is to help improve on the outcomes

13

## Actionable Items



14

## Item 1

Ensure there is an appropriate mission statement

15

## Item 2

Hire and retain quality teachers

16

### Item 3

Enhance teacher-student interaction

17

### Item 4

Improve on the quality of educational programs

18

### Item 5

Employ proper high-tech and traditional tools

19

### Item 6

Ensure availability of proper facilities

20

### Item 7

Increase effectiveness of the Board and administrative staff

21

### Item 8

Increase parent involvement in education and the community

22

### Item 9

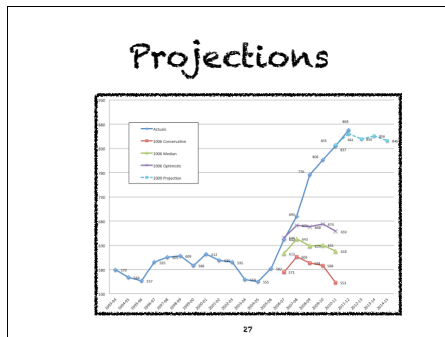
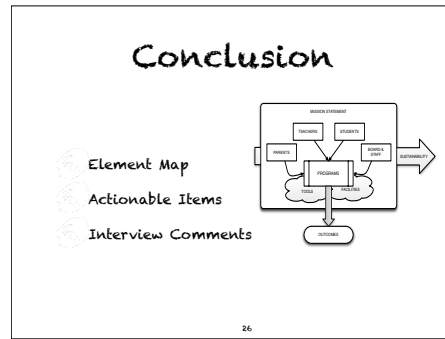
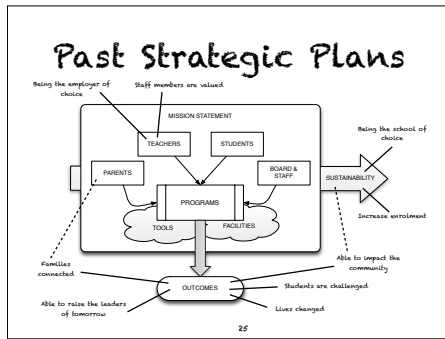
Improve on the sustainability of the school

23

### Past Strategic Plans

- 2005/06
  - Families connected
  - Students are challenged
  - Staff members are valued
  - Lives changed
- 2009
  - Being the school of choice
  - Being the employer of choice
  - Able to impact the community
  - Able to raise the leaders of tomorrow
  - Increase enrolment

24



Thank You!  
Q&A

28



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