

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 22, 2007

TO: Board of Trustees  
FROM: B. Holt, Acting Superintendent  
SUBJECT: Delegation – Newton Community League  
ORIGINATOR: A. Sherwood, Board Secretary

INFORMATION

The Newton Community League has provided the attached information with respect to the presentation they will be making at the Thursday, March 22, 2007 special board meeting.

Ms Gerry Hofs and Mr. Rick Mackay will speak on behalf of the delegation.

AS:mmf

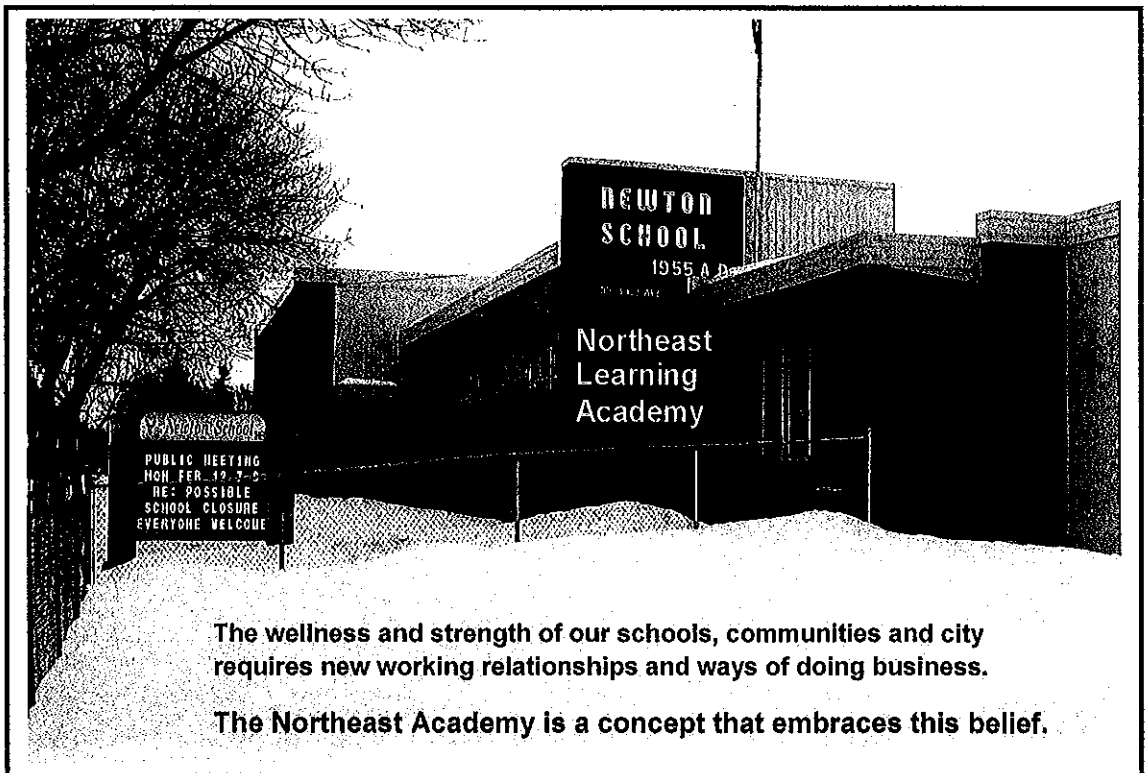
# Northeast Learning Academy

(A viable alternative to school closure)

Submission to  
Edmonton Public School Board

By

Newton Community League  
March 15, 2007



The wellness and strength of our schools, communities and city requires new working relationships and ways of doing business.

The Northeast Academy is a concept that embraces this belief.

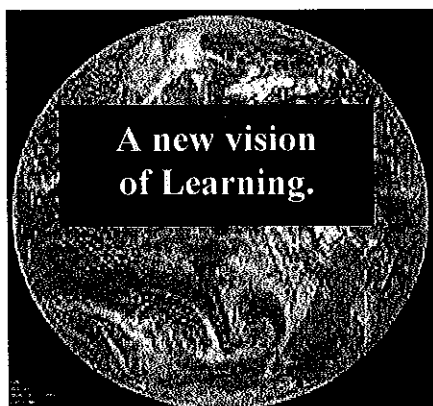
**The Newton Community League would like to thank the following members and persons in our communities for their contributions to the development of this proposal as well as other supportive individuals and groups:**

Gerry Hofs  
Erika Rebus  
Leslie Bryant  
Candace Makowichuk  
Roland Provost  
Connie Jevne  
Linda Laszchuk  
Karren Brown  
Councillor: Janice Melnychuk  
Rick Mackay  
Jeff Sloychuk  
Councillor Ed Gibbons  
Julie Charchun  
Donita Couto  
Ed. Consultant: Don Pomfrey

Corey Martell  
Don Lammie  
Trent Erwin  
Irwin Marcus  
Brenda Hovan  
Bill Krys  
Brian Finley  
Mike Mantyka  
David Johnson  
Gordon Tabachniuk  
Brian Mason, MLA  
Carrie Thuesen  
Brian Staples

We would also like to gratefully acknowledge and thank our Trustee, Dave Colburn, for his support and advice.

# The Northeast Learning Academy



**“In times of change,  
learners inherit the earth,  
while the learned find  
themselves beautifully  
equipped to live in a world  
that no longer exists.”**

Eric Hoffer

## Background

On January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007, the EPSB approved commencement of the formal, provincially mandated school closure process for Newton Elementary School, located at 5523 – 122 Avenue. This process has followed guidelines outlined in the School Act and included a public consultation meeting. On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007, at the conclusion of this process the EPSB will vote on the closure of Newton School. Our expectation is the board will keep an open mind in this matter, will listen to the community and the community will have an opportunity to present solutions other than closure.

Recently the Newton community became aware of a draft report entitled “Northeast Learning Academy”, (NELA) written by Don Pomfrey, a retired principal of Edmonton Public Schools. This report stated “...instead of just closing schools in the northeast area we need to come up with a positive vision that will enhance student’s academic progress throughout their school careers and wellness as an adult.” It spoke to the creation of a new type of school with different priorities, philosophies and practices to better support student learning and needs of the community. The Newton community strongly endorses this concept and a committee has spent many weeks modifying and developing Mr. Pomfrey’s proposal. We believe that not only is the Northeast Learning Academy a viable alternative to closure, but also represents a much needed move forward in bringing schools and communities closer together in the interests of children.

## **Introduction**

Former US Secretary of Education, Richard Riley, stated “the top 10 jobs that will be in demand in 2010 didn’t exist in 2004”. Many people believe today, that we are currently preparing students for jobs that yet don’t exist, using technologies that haven’t been invented, in order to solve problems we don’t even know are problems. In this rapidly changing world, the community of education is facing acute pressure to make education relevant and responsive to the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this world we believe, as a community, that the successful education of our children requires innovation and adaptability.

## **Looking Into the Future**

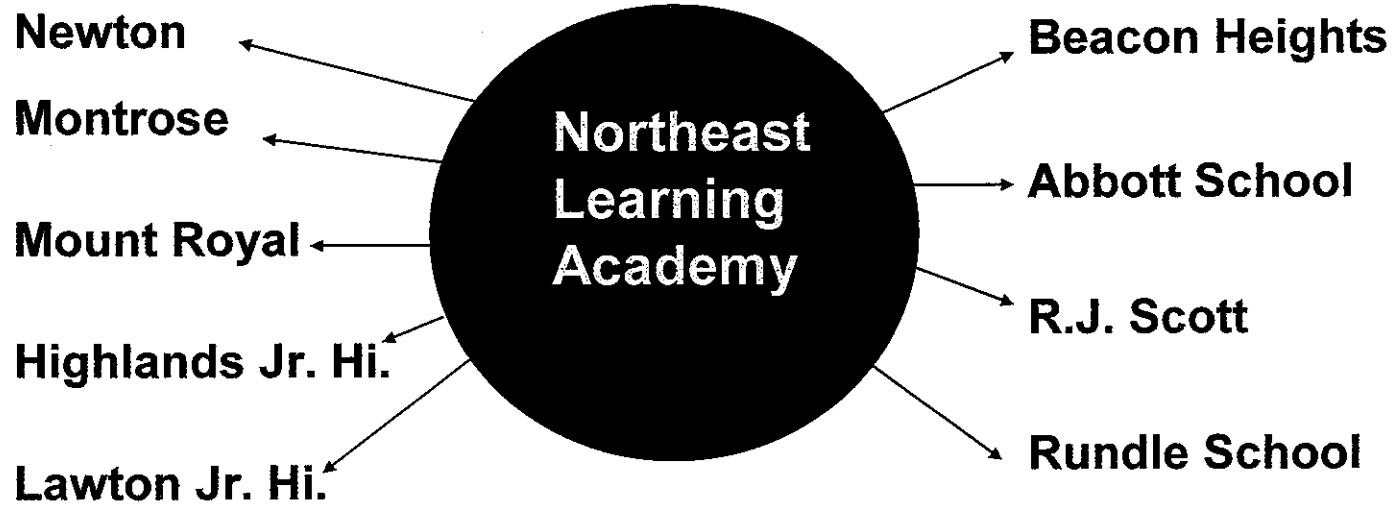
**Our vision is that the Northeast Learning Academy will be a vehicle of change and improvement in education and services to children, families and the community, and will become a learning and resource centre for schools in the northeast sector of the city. It will have some of the attributes of the City Centre Project but will be a distinct district initiative to provide community partnerships and services to schools of the northeast.**

**What will be the key features of the Northeast Learning Academy Program?**

It will be a comprehensive school program in which the organizational and operating practices focus on health, wellness and active living to support and extend learning. Lifelong learning will also be supported by the following pillars:

- **Literacy in multiple forms and levels**
- **Comprehensive focus on health and learning**
- **Family/school/community partnerships**
- **On site integrated services**
- **Strong community involvement**

**Learning and Resource  
Centre**



**Examples of Services to these Schools:**

United Way  
Family Centre  
Capital Health

Children's Services  
Big Brothers Big Sisters

Aboriginal Support Agency ( e.g.. Red Road Healing Society)

## **Literacy**

The importance of literacy can best be expressed by the following excerpt taken from the Canadian Council of Learning report, released in 2007, entitled State of Learning in Canada.

“Literacy today means more than the ability to read and write. To succeed economically and socially, adults need the ability to analyze information, understand abstract ideas and acquire many other complex life skills. High literacy skills are critical to a healthy economy and society. Even small changes in the literacy skills of a population can have a profound effect on a national economy. A 1% rise in literacy levels can result in a 1.5% increase in GDP per capita and a 2.5% improvement in labour productivity. Increased labour productivity was the most important driver of economic growth in most industrialized countries over the past decade.”

Literacy is also important because of its impact on individuals for employment opportunities, income, health and participation in society, which are all significant to their quality of life. In that respect, literacy is a great equalizer.

### **PROMOTING MULTIPLE FORMS/LEVELS OF LITERACY IN A COMMUNITY SETTING**

#### **Multiple Forms/ Levels of Literacy:**

Our goal is to make learning more purposeful, meaningful and engaging by relating literacy learning to students’ daily lives, experiences and interactions with friends, family, school and community. When learning, health, wellness and active living are all tied together we improve student buy in and commitment to lifelong learning.

We have organized our multiple levels of literacy around the Health and Life Skills curricular themes including the following:

Personal Health, Wellness & Active Living Literacy,  
Relationship Literacy  
Possibilities Literacy (Career and Life Roles)  
Citizenship Literacy  
Environmental Literacy

## **Health Literacy**

The Northeast Learning Academy will embrace the “comprehensive school health” policy. This is a whole school approach where learning, health and wellness are addressed by all stakeholders over a long period of time through intense integration, coordination and enhancements to:

1. curriculum and teaching methods
2. social and physical environments
3. family, school, and community partnerships and service

## **Citizenship Literacy:**

Our goal is to stimulate the development of values, skills, and dispositions that will allow students to become responsible, aware and contributing citizens throughout their adult lives. In addition they will learn how to be engaged as a citizen and to work with others. Character education, democratic values, and respect for self and others will be integrated features of core curriculum delivery. Honesty, tolerance and accountability will be other qualities of citizenship developed within the Academy.

“I can make a difference,” is an important belief and value we want to instill in our students.

## **Environmental Literacy:**

Environmental concerns have emerged as the #1 issue in this country, if not the world. The need for students to acquire a sophisticated understanding of environmental issues is indisputable. Students need to be aware and have an understanding of their world, be committed to their environment, able to ask relevant questions, seek answers and improve its wellness. Environmental values will be supported in the Academy by hands on experiential leaning, integrated curriculum delivery of environmental information and real community relationships supporting healthy environmental practices. These values will be further embedded in every day activities and life of the school.



## **Literacy: Reading and Writing**

The importance of conventional literacy, that is the ability to be functionally literate, has been previously identified. Almost 42% of the adult population or 9 million Canadians lack the literacy skills needed to succeed in today's economy...literacy being measured in terms of the ability to find, synthesize and use information from various types of texts and documents. (Canadian Council on Learning). Reading and writing, at age appropriate functional levels, will be an absolute cornerstone of the Academy. We will encourage the placement of reading recovery and literacy specialists. The community will aggressively seek to develop mentorship relationships with community members e.g. seniors to provide reading support for at risk students. The committee feels in particular, that a program focusing on developing writing skills might be a valuable addition to Edmonton Public's rich array of alternative programs.

## **Relationship Literacy:**

The teaching philosophy of Edmonton Public and especially the practices of the City Centre Education Project, have emphasized the importance of creating relationships with students in order to support successful learning. Relationships with students, parents and community are key building blocks to creating engaging purposeful learning. Schools that model and teach principles of relationships will have a long term impact. By involving parents, teachers and community as partners in education, the importance of relationships will be clearly role modeled to students. Students will understand the interconnectedness of life and benefit from the supportive relationships that will surround the academy.

## **Possibilities Literacy**

This literacy focuses on fostering hope and supporting children's dreams. Having dreams is an important aspect in motivating students and encouraging hard work. We will cultivate an environment in which the students will be encouraged to take ownership for their learning. The school will use relationship building, support from community and agency persons, student leadership, goal setting teaching strategies, and student assessment to foster this part of their learning.

## **Lifelong Learning**

The multi-levels of literacy of NELA address areas of learning (health, environment, citizenship etc.) that have lifelong implications. A prioritized focus in these areas will stimulate an understanding and lifelong interest in these crucial challenges of life.

### **INTEGRATED ON SITE SERVICES**

Other than the City Centre Education Project, we believe the concept of integrated on site services is not well developed within Edmonton Public. The value of this support for learning can perhaps be best appreciated by considering the following words by Elizabeth O'Neill, Executive Director, Big Brothers Big Sisters.

"We know that many families and their children need to access a range of services and to do so they must often go to multiple locations and interact with a broad range of rules, regulations and service providers. There can be inconsistent expectations, fragmentation and delivery models that operate within silos that are unable to provide what the family needs in an integrated way. Ironically the most vulnerable families who need the most help are the least likely to navigate the often complex and fragmented way in which some services can be provided."

The United Way, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Children's Services, The Family Centre and Children's Mental Health Services have all expressed strong support for the integrated services aspect of the Academy.

We believe the afore-mentioned organizations would have an interest in being an on site service at the Academy. We see this diverse network of support providing resources for students not only within the Academy but servicing a network of surrounding schools.

### **WHY NEWTON SHOULD BE THE SITE OF THE NORTHEAST LEARNING ACADEMY**

We appreciate and respect the quality of our surrounding communities, but we believe that Newton is an exceptional community, capable of providing the strong community partnership necessary to make the Academy successful.

## THE COMMUNITY

Newton is a mature community with a large percentage of the population being home owners. The Newton Community League, which has been in existence for over 50 years, is active in supporting and encouraging:

- The Newton Community Pre-school for 15 years.
- Seniors' programs and activities for 20 years.
- Children's activities in both Newton and St. Leo schools.
- Participation in the Edmonton Blooming Gardens contest (the community has had 3 winners).
- Community patrols.
- The Pitch-in campaign.

In addition, the Newton Community League commits to the following to develop the Northeast Learning Academy.

- Funding or securing funding for the creation of a Naturescape (an outdoor learning environment) similar to that created by Riverdale School for which it won a provincial award.
- Establishing a parent and community council to support the concept and provide time to make it work.
- Supporting accessible services needed by the school.
- Developing a community mentorship program including a "senior's element" to provide reading and writing assistance to Academy students.
- Purchase a 5 year membership in Ever Active Schools, an organization promoting the healthy, active schools concept.
- The community league will continue to support an on site daycare centre.

## THE SCHOOL

Newton School is the best location for the proposed Academy as:

- Physical space is available in the school to house the envisioned services
- **The school is in the centre of the proposed service area.**
- The upgrade to Newton school is estimated at \$.7 million, Montrose at \$1.1 million for life cycle replacements (pp.17-18 Minutes of February 12, 2007 School Closure Meeting).

- The school is close to the Edmonton Waste Management Centre of Excellence which would facilitate collaboration on Environmental Literacy.

Newton Community has demonstrated to the Board its energy, resourcefulness and commitment to learning by significantly and more fully developing the NELA concept over the past few weeks. To fully appreciate the value of this vision, we ask the Board to read the letters of support from important stakeholders in education. (Appendices 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)

**Conclusion:**

**If we can develop this concept to the degree that we have, without resources, and without district support, imagine what we could do with the full support and resources of Edmonton Public Schools!**

**We ask the Board to vote NO to the closure of Newton School on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. We then encourage the administration to create a pilot project at Newton School that will allow this innovative and forward looking approach to learning to become a reality in northeast Edmonton to the benefit of children, families, communities and the district.**

**“BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE IN THE WORLD” - Gandhi**



*Edmonton & Area*  
*Child & Family Services Region 6*

*Regional Office*  
*7<sup>th</sup> Floor Oxbridge Place*  
*9820 - 106 Street*  
*Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2J6*

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March 9, 2007

Rick Mackay  
President Newton Community League  
12303 56 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5W 5G1

Dear Mr. Mackay;

Thank you for your letter dated March 5, 2007 specific to the planned closure of Newton Elementary School and introduction of the "Northeast Learning Academy." Your efforts specific to creation of an integrated and coordinated community based service delivery are to be commended.

The Edmonton and Area Child and Family Services Authority (Region Six) has long been a proponent of integrated community based service delivery. Many examples of integrated on site service delivery systems already exist in the City of Edmonton and other communities that are served by Region Six. We firmly believe in the concept of multi-partner community based service delivery systems.

As I am sure you can appreciate, further detail would be required specific to next steps, infrastructure issues, partnership discussions etc. I would be happy to ensure that we have a Region Six representative, upon invitation, at future meetings to discuss this concept further. As such, should you have any further questions or concerns please contact Region Six Senior Manager Darrell Dancause at 415-2917 as he will be the individual assigned to take part in any future partnership meetings.

Thanks again for you for your efforts.

Sincerely

Gord Johnston  
Chief Executive Officer

cc. Darrell Dancause



*Healthier people in healthier communities*

**Regional Children's Mental Health**

11137 102 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
Canada T5G 2C9  
Office: (780) 413 4980  
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March 12, 2007

Rick Mackay, President  
Newton Community League  
12303 56 Street  
Edmonton, AB T5W 5G1

**RE: Northeast Learning Academy**

Dear Rick,

Thank you for your February 19 letter regarding the proposed Northeast Learning Academy.

The Regional Mental Health Program (RMH) is interested in exploring creative and beneficial ways to best support children and youth with identified mental health needs. Although I am not in a position to comment on the potential closure of the identified school, I believe all partners including the community at large have a significant role to play in facilitating and maximizing our children's developmental potential.

In this context, I will respond to each of your questions in the order in which they were provided.

- Yes, providing an on-site integrated service is a practical consideration from a mental health service delivery perspective. RMH embraces Senator Kirby's vision as described in his 2008 report, *Out of the Shadows*, "What is required is the right blend of institutional and community-based supports and services. The key issue is to ensure that those services are available in the community and that people have access to a seamless continuum of care across their lifespan."

The co-location of services supported with a "basket" of resources/ services to children, youth and families in their community is in keeping with community-based services as outlined. The relationships established with other service providers and a strong Mental Health presence in both the school and community facilitates strengthening of relationships and positive outcomes for children, youth and families.

RMH supports a broader level of service support to defined communities. For example, the co-location of Mental Health services in an identified school or quadrant of the city providing services to a number of schools within that quadrant. In this example, core teams would provide services on site and increase capacity to provide outreach to identified sites.

Benefits of such a model include:

- continuity of care and care providers;
  - reduced time away from school;
  - children receive services in familiar surroundings, with access to and the involvement of their networks of support;
  - efficiencies in terms of the number of staff needed to comprise the team;
  - effective collaboration amongst service providers;
  - better understanding of the nuances and specific needs of the community;
  - development and enhancement of community capacity, i.e. the community and partners are actively engaged in working together to provide support; and,
  - service is provided close to home.
- Currently, through a partnership with the Edmonton School Health Initiative Program (E-SHIP) and Regional Children's Mental Health, psychiatric support is being provided to children with mental health concerns as they transition from hospital programs to community schools. Known as the School Mental Health Consultation and Liaison Service (SMHCLS), delivers service to children in their respective schools. Teams of experienced and qualified mental health therapists assist school personnel by providing transitional support, mental health management within a school setting, help school personnel and care givers navigate the processes of accessing mental health services, and facilitate communication and working relationships between parents, school personnel and other service providers.

Another example of mental health support to students/ schools is the Mental Health Classroom model of service located at Spruce Avenue Community School. Mental health and educational services are provided to children and adolescents grades 1-9 through two Regional Children's Mental Health community classrooms. The students served have severe and complex mental health and educational concerns. In partnership with Edmonton Public Schools, the program provides a long-term educational placement for these students.

- In the models described above, benefits for children and youth are demonstrated through improvements in school attendance, self esteem, learning outcomes, development of friendships and community integration. Family units report positive impacts of the service. As well, parents' ability to attend work and sustain employment is improved.

As expressed in your letter, challenges facing schools today present opportunities to generate community input into education practices and values. Having access to the right service at the right time in the right location is key to a child reaching his or her maximum potential. Exploring service integration and delivery options is a good first step to realizing such an important goal.

Thanks again, Rick, for seeking feedback from RMHP. Feel free to contact me should you require clarification of any of the points made herein.

Sincerely yours,



Brian Malloy, Regional Director  
Child & Adolescent Psychiatry and  
Suburban & Area Clinics

cc Nancy Fraser, Senior Operating Officer





The Family Centre

March 7, 2007

Mr. Rick MacKay  
President, Newton Community League  
12303 - 56 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5W 5G1

Dear Mr. MacKay

Re: The Northeast Learning Academy

Thank you for the opportunity to review the concept of the Learning Academy as developed by members of the Newton Community. You and your colleagues deserve congratulations for vision and foresight. I accept your invitation to explore how The Family Centre could contribute to the success of this new kind of school.

I strongly endorse the principles underlying the concept: prioritized school health, partnerships, on-site integrated services, and strong community involvement. It has been The Family Centre's experience that these principles are fundamental to the success of collaborative initiatives that focus on making schools an integral part of community.

The Family Centre offers a wide range of services, and enjoys sound working relationships with several schools and communities. I look forward to exploring ways to contribute to the Newton initiative.

Sincerely,



Rod Rode  
President and CEO  
The Family Centre



**Big Brothers Big Sisters**  
Edmonton & Area

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Mr. Rick MacKay  
President Newton Community League  
12303 – 56 Street  
Edmonton AB T5W 5G1

Dear Mr. MacKay,

Thank you for your letter and for the draft proposal titled "Northeast Learning Academy."

Before commenting on the proposal I would like to state for the record that Big Brothers Big Sisters Society of Edmonton and Area is not providing any comments on the possible closure of Newton School which forms part of the draft proposal.

As you can appreciate it would be inappropriate for our agency to take any position on school closures and thus my comments relate only to the concept of integrated services for children and their families.

The concept in our view has great merit. We know that many families and their children need to access a range of services and to do so they must often go to multiple locations and interact with a broad range of rules, regulations and service providers. There can be inconsistent expectations, fragmentation and delivery models that operate within silo's that are unable to provide what the family needs in an integrated way. Ironically the most vulnerable families who need the most help are the least likely to navigate the often complex and fragmented way in which some services can be provided.

Over the past eight years we have seen a number of models develop in Edmonton that are clearly child and family focused and as a result have worked to implement more single points of entry, more joint case planning, a more comprehensive approach to



services being made available, co-location in schools and within a collaborative environment.

Partners for Kids and the City Centre School Project are examples of this approach. The partners in this partnership include: United Way, The Family Centre, Edmonton School Lunch Program, City of Edmonton FESS, Region 6 Child and Family Services, the Centre for Family Literacy, Big Brothers Big Sisters Society of Edmonton and Area and eight public schools.

We believe that we must all work harder to provide comprehensive and integrated support to all of our families and their children and in particular our vulnerable children and their families and we would be most pleased to work with any members of our community to achieve this important outcome.

Your draft proposal speaks to the importance of providing services and supports to families and children to help them move towards greater independence while promoting the health and well-being of all family members. Your model focus is not only on education but also on the immediate, preventative and early intervention that can help families avoid reaching a crisis.

Your work is important and we wish you every success in your desire to support families and their children.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth O'Neill  
Executive Director  
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton and Area



adopting an "open school" concept. In addition, having citizens actively and meaningfully engaged in our work will move our agenda forward much more quickly. The initiative partners are also starting to incorporate a resiliency lens or focus on how they work in these schools and communities.

This partnership that includes the schools, children, youth, families, EPSB, The Family Centre, Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Centre for Family Literacy, the Edmonton School Lunch Program, the City of Edmonton Community Services Branch and Region 6 Child and Family Services utilizes an on site integrated service model, an outreach component and strong community involvement. We promote the shared outcome of improved success for children in school.

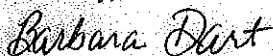
The PFK and CCEP Partners are planning to expand this PFK "philosophy" across the city as resources permit. We believe that schools provide a meeting space and an opportunity to reach children, youth and families as well as offering support in a more holistic way. Schools are, or can be, the "hubs" of communities. However, we also recognize that every school community is different. While there are similar elements across school sites, every school will have differences that may reflect different community needs and different community participation. This will be taken into consideration with any expansion plans.

You ask how United Way would be involved if the Northeast Learning Academy Proposal had the opportunity to be implemented. We are committed to our PFK and CCEP partners and as such are involved in joint decision-making around any expansion plans. Our involvement in terms of monetary resources would depend on our Steering Committee. That being said, I would be more than willing to assist in terms of providing "consultation" to a committee working towards the implementation of the Northeast Learning Academy.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to review the proposal. As you can tell from my comments, United Way strongly believes in this collaborative and integrated way of working with community in order to have better outcomes for children, youth and families. I wish you all the best in your efforts to work with the schools in your community to increase success for children and youth in their academic and social endeavours.

It is very heartening that a community league is taking the initiative to work with schools and community to make a difference. Even if this proposal does not move forward in the way you have envisioned, there is much you can do in acting as a catalyst for working differently in your community.

Sincerely,



Barbara Dart  
Vice President  
Community Building & Investment

cc Gloria Chalmers, Director of Programs  
Edmonton Public School Board