New Horizons Charter School hosted this facilitated session in order to better engage parents, teachers, board members, administration and students into having input to their education plan. In the past there had been informal input from interested parents and staff, and a session specifically about visioning. During this session the process engaged participants to gather their feedback and input on successes and challenges as well as developing strategies towards each of the three charter goals:

1. **Student learning is improved**
2. **Students will benefit from opportunities for positive interaction**
3. **Students emotional needs are supported**

Results

Goal #1: Student Learning is Improved

1. What is New Horizons doing well in Goal #1?

- Having IPP's and discussions between parents and teachers
- Designated IPP time
- Teachers are developing and using goals for students, and students know what they are
- Math acceleration
- Improving communication
- Students are not limited in their reading (they are not kept at an arbitrary level)
- Independent studies projects
- Putting projects back in the classroom
- Less homework coming home
- Access to outside resources
- Project based learning
- The Homework Club

- Flexibility for students who are in extra-curricular activities
- Homework being sent home for initialing by parents
- Good progress is being made by students
- The way students are assessed
- The variety of options for learning
- Use of technologies

2. Where are we encountering challenges and struggles in Goal #1?
- It is very difficult to measure Outcome #1 b. (Students will become creative risk takers academically)
- There are IPP challenges for parents – not knowing about student progress, and not having enough time to learn about the process
- Some student assessments are being undertaken too early in the school year (especially in Div. 1)
- The mechanisms for giving and getting feedback to and from teachers is unclear
- There is not enough feedback to students from teachers
- There is not enough feedback to parents from teachers
- French is difficult to present in project based learning mode
- How math is taught in the current curriculum
- Regarding EPAL, it is difficult for parents to relate to how to interpret this (understanding a student's movement in the ranking – not enough range in the ranking)
- Parents don't know how a student is doing when students don't bring projects home
- There is a wide range of teacher's rules and practices, especially related to learning differentiation
- There are math textbook challenges (many are very old)
- There is not enough in the sciences in the early grades
- There is not enough technology

3. What are some strategies to build on what is working, and overcome the challenges in Goal #1?

Note: bracketed # after each strategy represents result of strategy prioritization: higher number = higher priority

Goal #1 Header Cards	Brainstormed Stickies
Expand and enrich programs (5)	• Art displayed school-wide to create healthy, inspiring learning environment • Opportunities to expand exposure in other areas like science fair and L.A. contests, but with other subjects • Alberta government to provide NHS exemption with math text and strategies used. Consider Spectrum Math, Singapore Math Challenge, Math You Can See • Possible acceleration in subjects in addition to math • Student population growth may enhance the ability to deliver a broader spectrum of options/extra-curricular activities • Options to expand and learn other languages like Spanish can help comprehension of French and expand linguistic knowledge • PBL / Creative Learning opportunities through partnership with Francophone school • Academic grouping rather than age/grade • Exchange program • Provide instruction for test/exam taking (strategies for test, anxiety, organization, etc.) • Enhance Junior High curriculum with options or outside resources (if we can't offer band, can we have guest speakers or go to a symphony instead) • Junior High options – if not enough funding/interest, have guest expert speakers (i.e. stocks, woodworker, architecture, band, etc.) • Utilizing parents at a Parents Day, where multiple parents visit and present to students on their work or skills interests • Programs like I.S. to target students interests to engage them (i.e. PBL techniques like science fair for elementary, etc.) • Expansion of performing arts, athletics, culinary sciences, visual arts • Extra-curricular activities are positive resources for learning • Condense core subjects in order to have enrichment in the afternoon (i.e. athletic, drama enrichment)
Provide better feedback related to assignments and performance (3)	• More information given to parents about new initiatives (i.e. project based learning) • Improved communication on expectations with respect to homework • General information on grading/evaluation/assignments

	• More consistent feedback to parents (blogs, newsletters, more detailed agenda notes) • There is lots of great testing, but need more timely communication regarding how the student did (we seem to have to chase down the information) • Report card tutorials – how is my child doing?
Provide teacher enrichment (2)	• Consistent training for teachers to ensure methods are equal, consistent, and inclusive of all students • Clearly identify gifted student teaching criteria for new hires • More volunteers (students, parents) and assistants in the classroom, and more resources to support teachers and student learning • Recommendations for voluntary homework in areas for improvement • Teacher support via counsellors (strategies for students) • PD support for teachers (i.e. PBL, and mindfulness)
Provide better physical resources	• More technology available, from fund raising activities • Modern school technology to keep up with current times (no floppy discs) • Gym equipment – enhance physical experience – go over game rules – boundaries
Provide Student Orientation	• Mentorship by older students with similar interests (Sueña? Club project) • New student/teacher/parent induction
Provide Teacher evaluation	• General teacher evaluation form • Teacher evaluation – allow parent surveys for their feedback

4. **Which are the top three strategies that will give us the biggest impact in reaching Goal #1?**

1. **Expand and enrich programs**
2. **Provide better feedback related to assignments and performance**
3. **Provide teacher enrichment**

Goal #2: Students will Benefit From Opportunities for Positive Interaction

1. What is New Horizons doing well in Goal #2?

- House Teams
- Lunch hour clubs
- Cross grade buddies
- Interaction between grades for extracurricular activities
- Group work
- Individual coaching
- Athletic Teams
- School Counsellor
- Developing IPPs
- The school has done well developing a safe and caring environment – there is more acceptance for a wide range of social skills in students (from staff and peers)
- Children support each other, especially those that are struggling
- Children are able to learn at the level they're at
- The Vice Principal does a good job encouraging diverse opinions and discussion
- Social contract
- Tutor Program – promoting cross-grade buddies
- There are an increasing number of student leaders emerging in the school i.e. Rubiks Cube
- Student Council/special days for students
- A greater awareness of bullying exists in the school
- Pep rallies
- Jr. high Investigations seminars for Grades 4-9
    - Demonstrations
    - IS Fairs
- Inspire and Create Activities
- Christmas concerts showcase student talents

2. Where are we encountering challenges and struggles in Goal #2?

- Playground
    - Kids struggle with play and being able to approach each other equally and openly
    - Suggest more supervision and conflict resolution
- Kids often spend their time with the same social groups in cliques – can be difficult to step outside those groups due to comfort, and because established friends may not understand or favourably interpret them seeking out others
- May need more preparation for continuing beyond to high school to prepare for interaction and much greater size of school/students

- Challenge meeting the social needs of students for one on one support with 24 kids in a classroom and 200+ in the school
- Difficult for parents to provide guidance to kids – they might like to be involved more so they can help
- More communication back to the parents and follow up would be useful
- Parents might notice issues in their children, but don't always know what is normal
- The Board may not know what parents want
- The school may not always be able to support those who really excel in special interest areas, and areas other than math
- More resources could help
- The social contract could have more visibility/enforcement
- Need a good mentor program
- Behaviour management
    - channeling introverts/extraverts and other personalities
    - not using carrots and sticks
    - one on one teacher attention needed to overcome social anxieties
- Adding high school to the school might spread resources too thin
- Might consider early intervention/testing for social anxiety/challenges
- Consider some differentiation between junior high and elementary to recognize junior high level responsibilities

3. What are some strategies to build on what is working, and overcome the challenges in Goal #2?

Goal #2 Header Cards	Brainstormed Stickies
Engage in Consistent Communication - **Teacher to student** - **Teacher to parents** - **Students to teachers**	- Active communication when there are issues and follow-up - Reporting on social growth (i.e. report cards or other communication) - Provide inter-grade communication - One-on-one with teacher for student needs

Ensure higher level learning resources for parents, students and teachers	- Additional in-services to support teachers
	- Resources
	    - Library
	    - Support group
	    - Parent info session at beginning of year
	- Higher level learning materials
	- Provide flexible resources for projects
	- Accelerated programs for other subjects – same time,

	school wide • Unique ability groupings

Apply social skills to unstructured time	• Playground/structure area for Grades 7-9
	• Older students more involved in interacting with younger students on the playground, modelling positive behaviour, and assisting in conflict resolution
	• Social skills on/with playground games that are structured
	• Use recess as social learning opportunity
	• Coaching on appropriate play practices for kids and parents (yearly)
	• Offer more things like track and field
	    ○ Multiple ages
	    ○ All activity focused
	• Instruction for lower level problem solving

Enable in-school parent involvement to support kids socially	• More parent supervision • Parents day • Opportunity for parent involvement • Increased parent involvement for extracurricular activities • Invite parents to attend in school assemblies and activities as observers • More time to talk parent to teacher • More time for parent-teacher interviews
Use external services proactively and effectively	• Expanded counsellor time • Increase contract time for counsellor, including time for group discussion on the light/dark side of being gifted • Behaviour management that gets to the root of the misbehaviour instead of focusing on punishment • More collaboration with U of A, family services, group referrals, programs, etc. or with self-regulation • Transition information for students elementary – jr. high – high school
Develop and shape a culture of social acceptance	• Integrate social contract deeper into school social fabric • Clarity on anti-bullying policy and procedures for issues • Kids make banner for NHS social contract • Lessons for social interaction at the start of the year • Girl empowerment activities

Notes:

- In analyzing and discussing the strategy headers, it was noted that the strategies with themes of "communication" and "parent involvement" could be broader reaching that just for this Goal with respect to social development.
- A further comment was made about needing to further refine the expected outcomes from parent involvement and communication to be sure that efforts on those fronts are targeted appropriately

4. **Which are the top three strategies that will give us the biggest impact in reaching the Goal #2?**

    1. Develop and shape a culture of social acceptance
    2. Apply social skills to unstructured time
    3. *Ensure effective and proactive use of resources and services for social development*
        (note: this is a combination of row 2 and 5)

Goal #3: Students Emotional Needs are Supported

1. What is New Horizons doing well in Goal #3?

- Cross grade buddies
- IC events – creative problem solving events
- Students are tolerant of each other and their uniqueness
- Small community (the school community) we all know each other parents/students/staff
- Access to psychologists- twice a week
- Recess club
- Independent studies (IPPS) individual program plan
- Student would like a psychologist option to develop strategies – new idea
- Coaching specific to the child and their needs
- Allowance for individual learning styles
- Allowing student to learn/practice mindfulness
- When students get emotional, other students see it and respond or ask about it a positive way
- Teachers and staff respond well to students needs to calm – allowing breaks and walk away or quiet time
- Teachers connect the emotional needs in the reports to the parents – provide feedback
- Daily agendas – is a great tool to do this reporting (could be used as a two way communications tool) some said the email may have replaced this tool and that's okay as well- if something happens at school, the teachers do write in the "daily agenda"

2. Where are we encountering challenges and struggles in Goal #3?

- Some grades only have one class so the student progresses through the grades together from k – 9 seen as limiting the development of friendships and work partners
- Develop and maintaining IPPs for both the parents and teachers – time consuming
- Could be more proactive approaches to emotional considerations before they become a major concern
- Understanding the challenges of integrating into the school and orientating into the "culture" of the school for both the new student and the parent (referred to when a student comes into the school mid-way through the school year)
- Time might get in the way to ask the students what's wrong
- "High needs" emotional support for some students
- Attention to 'physical' needs or capacity however this might be since there wasn't a gym here before
- The interpretation of the child's emotional needs and concerns – there was a discussion that children should be taught "emotional vocabulary" so they are able to express their emotions – however some also commented that kids might not have the desire to talk about or share their emotions
- Motivation, mental focus is difficult –mental discipline

3. What are some strategies to build on what is working, and overcome the challenges in Goal #3?

Goal #3 Header cards:	Improve greater peer support and networks	Increase effective strategies for emotional resiliency (the what and the how of it)	Create accountability and ownership	Create effective orientation and educational transition for students and parents
Brainstormed stickies:	Gender policy –it should be more around awareness and inclusion rather than accommodation

Increase student involvement in the school community for greater social resiliency and school citizenship

Students should stay with the same class –not split classes

More assistance in the classroom to address communication and reactive needs (could be teacher aides or volunteer parents) – consistent

Bring counsellor more often for children and/or have peer support

Have 2 classes so students can have support in other rooms (working in collaboration) split classes | Teach and learn emotional assets and building blocks to build emotional capacity

Use movies/TV reality TV and other forms of media as a tool to emotionally coach students

Teach mindfulness

"inside out" is a movie that is being used to identify/teach emotions

Use books (this is in the younger grades) and scenarios as teaching aids to express emotions

Make available emotional literacy – resources for parents and students

Part of the curriculum should be devoted to teaching Emotional intelligence (EQ) time and resources allotted

Talking about emotion- appreciate how behavior affects others (done though-out the year) | Technology & electronic awareness and safety use to create responsible use

More voice for student feedback (inside classroom and ideas) – student counsel expanded

Parent education about the proven emotional effects of too much screen time(limit)

Physical activity like sports teams and intermural sports

Consider a policy to limit electronics in school – teach self-discipline

Containing screen time to games – some can help teach but some don't | Public forums to speak to common concerns, behavior issues etc

Create fact sheets FAQs – is this normal behavior? Quick reference – possibly on website

Provide seminars to students to help them adapt for those transitions

Example - Jr to Sr

High school mentors from other schools

"check ins" early on with new parents and students – how's it going |

4. **Which are the top three strategies that will give us the biggest impact in reaching goal #3?**

❖ **Improve greater peer support and networks**
❖ **Increase effective strategies for emotional resiliency (the what and the how of it)**
❖ **Create accountability and ownership**

Reflection Worksheets Collected at End

1. **What did you like best about this evening's session?**
- Good way to get multiple views and ideas on potential avenues to improve NHS
- Moving around – stayed engaged
- Mixed groups – various stakeholders
- The ability to share ideas with different perspectives – both teachers, students, parents and administration
- Hearing the different perspectives
- External process facilitators
- Parental and student involvement
- It was nice to hear similar ideas and comments from parents
- It was also nice to hear varied opinions
- Our ideas were used well
- Moving around kept us engaged
- Great diversity and representation from different stakeholders
- Well organized and safe to speak
- Loved our initial facilitator – Kristin – so organized and very clear
- Quick and effective
- Mix of students, parents, teachers, administration and board members
- Use of external facilitators
- Well organized
- Facilitators enabled a good level of interaction
- I enjoyed getting to see how the parents and students see the challenges and successes
- Opportunity to voice opinion
- Time to talk about different ideas from a variety of perspectives
- Seeing different perspectives and seeing others' interests
- The opportunity
- Different walks of life
- Feeling like part of the team
- The opportunity to contribute to discussions that will lead to the improvement of our school's developing community
- Collaborating, stakeholder discussion
- I like that all groups were represented (students, parents, teachers, etc)
- I liked how everyone was split into groups and focused on one aspect of a goal at a time. ie strategies to improve the application of goal 1, 2, or 3
- I liked as a student being involved in things like this; different interests/views
- The group format
- Nice mix of perspectives/interests
- I liked that we could go back to our original grouping and different perspectives
- Different perspectives
- You kept the flow going
- Good dynamic mix of people – interests/perspectives
- Student input fantastic
- Teacher involvement
- The collaboration amongst all the stakeholders

2. What did not work so well for you?

- First session (for blue) was not as tightly guided so missed the opportunity to provide much suggestions and not much time to summarize into 3 groups
- More time – did not feel completed
- Did not have enough time
- We need to validate that the strengths and weaknesses actually matched/mapped back to a strategy and that we recognize/acknowledge the items that will not be proceeding with
- More time!
- Redundant at each station, perhaps the same facilitator could walk through each goal
- Nothing. I thought it was great
- Our group put it as the 'other side of the coin' or arguments
- Not finishing
- A bit more time
- Would like to have had a large group final discussion with content obtained
- Felt like there were issues that could have been addressed but because they didn't fall under charter goals they couldn't be/didn't fit in
- Advanced identification of 3 issues being addressed may have provided opportunities for more thoughtful input
- The time in some cases was too short – I didn't always get to contribute
- Sometimes went off on tangents not related to the specific goal we were addressing
- Overall worked – did not find anything that did not work
- Nothing much
- I think we could have had a more organized system of contributing, but in truth it was very inclusive
- Blue group (or part therein) seemed to have an agenda
- I personally found it harder to contribute in a large group – I would have found it easier to contribute in a smaller group setting or with a partially anonymous way to share ideas
- Not good time – would prefer if it didn't end so late; needed more time at each station and over all
- Brevity of individual sessions
- Maybe a scope given beforehand so people can prepare and organize their thoughts
- Some/too much expectation/blame placed on teachers at times
- I really liked the format, I guess more time would be nice, but I think it may not have helped
- I never got a chance to eat dinner
- I don't like how the outcomes/goals are not always measureable
- Subjects for discussion perhaps too broad – hard to narrow down
- Felt somehow 'at fault' because I am a teacher

3. What new insights did you gain? How are we different as a result of having this planning opportunity?

- Perspectives and ideas especially students; improved sense of community
- Liked having point of view from students
- If a strategy plan is executed every three years what was successful in previous plans, what were challenges? For those with challenges, do they need to be reviewed again?
- Is three years enough time to execute plans?
- Do we need to revisit the goals? Have our goals changed or added?
- What I thought were "priorities" perhaps weren't. some things came up that I didn't expect
- More concerns regarding the small school size with regards to social interactions and options/choices for the students at junior high level
- I appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback
- We are different by us having a big heap of ideas to work with
- I am impressed with what NHS did, put together and the opened to ideas (not defensiveness)
- How different and how similar we all are
- I feel way more connected to other parents and more comfortable sharing ideas with them
- Consistency across the 3 separate groups in identifying concerns that relate to multiple focuses
- I gained the insight that parents are passionate about being involved at this school
- Outside viewpoints about our school
- Lots of diverse ideas; opportunity to see things from other perspectives
- How different backgrounds and occupations decided their ideas
- All the different perspectives provided allowed a conclusion to be developed and diverse. This allowed us to show ourselves what our true goals are
- Loosely unified approach to improve the school
- I liked that the conversations were calm, frank and fruitful
- I gained insight into the views of other groups of people ie teachers and parents, not just students
- Other peoples' (???)
- Useful to combine everyone's thoughts
- More well-rounded perspective of what all stakeholders think
- I think I was surprised at the number of strategies
- Learning a bit more about the functioning of the school (daughter only in kindergarten)
- We have a lot of data to work with – the challenge will be to set priorities
- We do a lot of great things!
- Better perspective on what the parents think

4. What are some of the next steps in your mind?

- Summarizing and implementing
- Follow up session to 'close the loop' before the education plan is approved
- Publicly share the key strategies including items raised in question #2
- Looking closer at the categories – what seems to be most reflective of the larger school community
- I am interested in reviewing the education plan to come
- Developing real strategies for helping make these goals a reality
- The next key step would be narrowing it down to 7-10 ideas for each
- Reviewing material (after it has been summarized)
- Prioritize key areas to start working on and implementing
- Draft up the material, ship it around to all parents for information purposes
- Include a summary of the process undertaken
- Seeing summary of thoughts, seeing what happens with items that don't end up on the education plan, but that were brought up – please keep on file for staff/admin as key points/concerns
- Develop actions to address identified strategies
- This needs to filter by means of survey of the major plans
- Take the key strategies and move towards actions
- Merge goals and move ideas to appropriate categories between rooms
- What our priorities will be later on, and how they will change depending on certain goals and ideas
- The next steps will dictate the success of this endeavor. Tasks and timelines must be created and collated in a plan in a timely manner. It is critical to share said plan with participants. Make this 100+ hours of in-mind support count!
- I think we need to continue to create strategies to integrate our goals and then come up with ideas to implement them
- Draft plan; short term/long term goals; implementation
- Assembling the education plan from the goals identified
- Some of the key next steps are applying our contributions and ideas into the school community
- Combining some of the struggles identified for administration to work on
- More collaboration like this in the future
- I liked the ideas and would like this to be somehow shared with all NHS stakeholders
- More discussion about the realities of strategy implementation
- Re-do our goals/outcomes so that they can be effectively measured
- Collection of ideas – common threads
- Results taken to staff for more in depth discussion