

Community Learning Program Summary

The primary focus of the Community Learning Program is to best address the needs of students and support student achievement. The process leading to the initiation and development of the Community Learning Program commenced early in the 2009/10 school year, with a continued focus and commitment during the subsequent two school years.

The Community Learning Program will provide an enhanced educational foundation to support student achievement, foster social/emotional learning, and enable alternate pathways to graduation. Current educational research and best practices from the School District's existing alternate programs will be retained, while recommended aspects of programs from other school districts will be incorporated. The program is for students in Grades 9 through 12 and will provide a focus on 21st Century Learning, personalized learning, and multiple pathways for success. The new program is provided in accordance with the BC Ministry of Education Alternate Program Policy.

Through the creation of a new alternate program, the School District is proceeding with the design of the program to meet a broad spectrum of student needs and interests. This will enable the continuation of many of the positive attributes and best practices of existing programs to support students who have struggled in our mainstream secondary schools.

To support students in the Community Learning Program, the facility and location requirements include; specialized instructional spaces; science labs, gymnasium, art/drama rooms, technology labs, and industrial shops; and a central location easily accessible by public transportation. Specialized instructional spaces provide opportunities for elective courses to support student success for graduation or school completion and will foster an improved sense of belonging. Consideration has also been made for the allocation of space to provide for additional community-based 'wrap-around services,' as required by the student population; i.e. youth workers and counselors.

In addition to identifying key aspects and positive attributes of the current alternate programs in North Vancouver and other school districts, the development of the Community Learning Program also examined how mainstream schools could increase their capacity to support the learning and development needs of all students.

The development of the Choices Program, an enhanced school-based support system for secondary students at mainstream secondary school, will provide additional supports to students prior to any transition to the Community Learning Program. The Choices Program commenced in September 2011/12 at Sutherland Secondary School and is now being progressively implemented at all secondary schools. The Choices Program will be in place at all secondary schools by September 2012.

The Community Learning Program will work in concert with the Choices program to address the needs of students presently enrolled in our alternate programs, and to facilitate smooth transitions between the new alternate program and all district schools.

School-based and District-based staff are working closely together to ensure a smooth transition for each of our students by reviewing each student's individual learning plan and making recommendations for placement for the 2012/13 school year.

Choices Program Summary

The Choices program is an integral component of the supports provided to students at the regular secondary school level. Prior to the development and implementation of Choices, there were limited options available within our mainstream secondary schools to support students who were struggling with social and emotional issues. Consequently, students facing these challenges would often be referred to our alternate programs to meet their individual learning, social and emotional needs.

With the implementation of the Choices program at each secondary school, the majority of our students in our mainstream schools will have the requisite supports available to them to achieve success without having to leave their home schools.

Some students who are supported by the Choices program may also require the additional supports provided through the Community Learning Program (please see previous page). The relationship between the Choices program and the Community Learning Program is essential in how the school district will provide supports for at-risk students.

Although the Choices and Community Learning Program may be new for the North Vancouver School District, similar models of supporting at-risk youth are operating effectively within other school districts in the Metro Vancouver area, and in other jurisdictions across North America.

For those students requiring additional supports, the Community Learning Program will be available to them. The Choices program will assist the students enrolling in the Community Learning Program with a seamless transition into and out of their mainstream secondary school.

The Choices program was first introduced as a pilot program at Sutherland Secondary School in September 2011. The success and feedback regarding the Choices pilot program has been well-received. Students, staff and parents alike have reported the positive benefits experienced for the students who have required additional social and emotional support. An outcome that has been achieved is that there are far fewer students transitioning from our pilot Choices program (at Sutherland) to the district alternate programs.

Ongoing monitoring and review of Sutherland's pilot Choices program over the past four months has established the foundation for implementing the Choices program into each of our secondary schools. Seycove Secondary will begin their Choices program in January 2012, followed by Argyle Secondary in April 2012. The remaining secondary schools will initiate their school-based Choices programs in September 2012.

With the regular secondary school Choices programs and the new Community Learning Program in our school district we anticipate improved success in meeting the individual learning needs of our students.