



December 20, 2011

Q&A

The North Vancouver School District Learning Centre and Community Learning Program at Balmoral School

Overview

At the November 15, 2011 public meeting of the North Vancouver Board of Education, the Board approved Balmoral school as the location for the newly developed Community Learning Program. The Program is a component of an organization of learning services under the umbrella of the North Vancouver School District Learning Centre (DLC). Beginning in September 2012, the DLC will provide specialized support for students in Grades 9 – 12 with diverse learning needs. An implementation plan is being prepared that will include the involvement of school-based staff and administrators, partner agencies, community members and representatives of the neighbouring school Parent Advisory Councils.

The site location represents a change in the school community from a Junior Secondary school presently serving approximately 650 students in Grades 8 – 10 to a school serving a more diverse student population of approximately 225, including vulnerable and at-risk students with a range of social, emotional, and educational needs.

The announcement of the location has raised some questions and concerns in the community. While the Board is confident that the location can be the centre of a thriving program, the change in focus for the facility requires an approach that keeps staff, students, parents and community members well-informed.

We will continue to provide current, accurate information as the design and operation of the North Vancouver School District Learning Centre is finalized, and implementation proceeds.

Q&A

What is the purpose of the Community Learning Program?

The Community Learning Program is being created to provide an enhanced educational foundation to support student achievement, foster social/emotional learning and enable alternate pathways to graduation. The program will also retain and incorporate the best practices in alternate program delivery with a focus on 21st Century learning, personalized learning, and multiple pathways for success.



What students will be served by the Community Learning Program?

Students will attend the CLP from each of our Secondary schools across the School District, including Keith Lynn Alternate Secondary School and the Youth Learning Centre. The school-aged (up to 19 years of age) student population is expected to be between 200 and 250 students in Grades 9 through 12, ages 14 to 19.

With the expansion of the Choices program to all secondary schools, the total enrolment is expected to decline to approximately 175 students within two years. In future, the program will serve approximately 1 – 2% of the School District's Secondary student population. This is consistent with the Alternate Education School Programs Policy of the Ministry of Education.

What does “diverse learning needs” and ‘at-risk’ really mean?

For some students, there are unique social, emotional, or life circumstances which can create challenges with respect to their ability to learn and participate. Their lives may involve the support of additional services provided by other local and provincial agencies. Staff in all our schools have extensive connections with these agencies to provide appropriate “wrap around” support for students both in and out of school. Creating a supportive environment with our partner agencies to minimize student anxiety around attending school, reduce the risk of school avoidance, and help students remove barriers to their academic success is a priority for our School District as we work to address the social and emotional needs of all learners. Without these additional wrap around supports and services, these students are “at-risk” of faltering within our education system, and possibly withdrawing from school altogether.

In every school community, particularly secondary schools, a range of student needs and behaviours can be found. This is true of any school, regardless of socio-economics, demographics or location. As educators and citizens, we believe that school is the best possible place for young people to establish themselves on a positive path towards their life goals. We cannot separate schools from the wider social context in which they operate. From the neighborhood settings in which our schools are situated, to their central purpose in educating students and preparing them for life as productive members of society, schools need the recognition and support of the whole community.

All schools and programs work hard to develop strong and respectful relationships with their surrounding neighbourhoods. Maintaining open and constructive community relations is a shared responsibility, and mutually beneficial to both students and the community as a whole.

What supports are provided to students in our Secondary schools?

Each of our Secondary schools supports vulnerable and at-risk students through the provision of learning services, counseling, and other school-based programs. The new Choices program is presently offered at Sutherland Secondary and will be expanding to Seycove Secondary in January 2012, Argyle Secondary in April 2012, and all remaining secondary schools for full implementation by September 2012.

The Choices program will enhance the school-based supports available to students with diverse learning needs. A centralized service is still required for a small proportion of our students who need specialized support and attention. It allows us to offer a higher level of service to students more efficiently, by partnering with community agencies and creating central access to their resources.



How will the Choices Program support the district's new Community Learning Program?

The Choices program provides additional support and intervention for students who may be struggling with their studies, attendance, and/or social and emotional issues. The intention of the program is to provide early intervention to enable all students to remain within their home school. When additional support is needed, students may transition to the Community Learning Program. Re-entry to their home school will be supported through the District Resource Team and the school-based Choices program.

How long has the School District been working on consolidating its alternate programs?

The potential for the consolidation and relocation of alternate programs was initially discussed in the context of the Towards the Future for Schools consultation process of 2008. The School District also engaged in a broad community consultation process titled, Restructuring 2010, which examined the potential consolidation of the alternate programs into a single location. Subsequent to this process, the Board of Education approved the consolidation of alternate programs through the creation of a new Community Learning Program in April 2010.

Following the Board decision on consolidation (April 2010), a Community Learning Program Committee developed recommendations to provide an organizational structure and framework for supporting the individual learning needs of at-risk students in the North Vancouver School District. The Committee's primary focus was the creation of a newly-designed alternate program. Its recommendations included the provision of enhanced supports to improve learning conditions for all students whether they are attending an alternate program or a regular school. This recommendation included all students in North Vancouver having equal access to resources, facilities and program options. Regular updates were provided through the Public Meetings of the Board of Education and posted to the website.

(<http://www.nvسد44.bc.ca/en/sitecore/content/Updates/CommunityLearningProgram.aspx>)

In the development of the CLP program, what consultation or expert advice was obtained regarding the co-location of students with diagnosed anxiety issues with students with behavioural challenges?

Considerable research and site visitation were completed with the examination of best practices in British Columbia and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. Additionally, our alternate programs have been regularly reviewed over the years, by outside consultants who have provided recommendations for improvements to our programs for the benefit of our students. No concerns have been identified regarding the inclusion of these students in the same facility.

Consultation has also been ongoing with our community partners who provide many of the support services to our students. The Community Learning Program has been designed to personalize the learning environment, interventions and educational experience in order to meet student social, emotional and intellectual needs.

With the introduction of the new Community Learning Program what will happen with the existing Alternate Programs?

The Alternate Programs previously provided at Keith Lynn (including the TASSC Work Experience program) and at the Lucas Centre (the Therapeutic Day Program and the Youth Learning Centre) will be closed on June 30, 2012.



The School District provides other alternate programs that will continue to operate in their present locations. These include: Eslha7an; a learning partnership between the North Vancouver School District and the Squamish First Nations for students of aboriginal descent and located at the Eslha7an Learning Centre: Learning Together; a secondary school program for pregnant and parenting youth located at Sutherland Secondary: the Key Program (formerly Third Step); providing social, emotional and academic learning and outreach for approximately 6 to 8 students who, because of behavioural difficulties and individual needs, are unable to attend other school programs. The Key Program was relocated to a community-based facility in 2010 after five years of co-location within a K to 12 district facility. The relocation of the Key Program enabled increased access to community resources and was not the result of any concern for student safety.

When students are identified as presenting risk to others, what measures are currently taken to address these concerns?

Safety of our students, staff and community members are of paramount importance, as has been demonstrated through our Safe and Caring initiatives. On rare occasions there are students, in any of our schools, who have been identified through our trained Threat Assessment Team as presenting risks to others. Over the years, the proportion of students involved in these processes is no greater in the Alternate Programs than in our regular secondary schools.

Threat Assessments can occur in any school and generally relate to an altercation, or disagreement between two youths that has taken place in the community and may have involved the Justice system. Students may be restricted by court order (no contact), or in exceptional circumstances, removed from school completely in accordance with provisions of the School Act. The school district follows a lower mainland consortium of schools protocol ensuring our students, staff and community members are secure.

Will the population of students attending the CLP have a higher proportion of students involved in the justice system, or who may present risk to younger students?

The population of students who would be attending Balmoral in 2012 are proportionally no different than those attending our other high schools in terms of involvement with the Justice system, or in regards to any risk to elementary students.

If a particular student has been identified to present particular risk to younger students in proximity to the school, what approach would be taken to help address any safety concerns?

If there is a student in any community who presents risk to themselves, or others, the RCMP works with the school district to mitigate and proactively address areas of concern. Concerns that do arise are related to specific incidents, or individuals known to the youth. These situations are addressed in collaboration with parents, when necessary. Ongoing supervision of youth is a shared responsibility of parents, the community and the school district.

What additional district programs or services will be included within the North Vancouver School District Learning Centre?

There are a number of district programs and services that operate out of the Lucas Centre and the Leo Marshall Curriculum Centre (LMCC). These include Distributed Learning (DL), and Continuing Education (CE), providing High School Completion and Adult Education Programs. The Lucas Centre (and LMCC) also provides storage space for curricular resources, materials and specialized equipment used to support our instructional programs.



Students attending the Community Learning Program would be able to 'blend' their program of studies to complete some of their course work through Distributed Learning and/or Work Experience Programs, situated within the NVSD Learning Centre. Some students will only attend the NVSD Learning Centre for a course or two, while other students will have a full course load.

Continuing Education programs are also provided to adults completing their graduation requirements and for those who have already graduated. The extent of these offerings is optional (how many classes, time of day, location, etc.) and will be considered by the Community Advisory Working Group.

Is NVSD44 obliged to provide alternate education services?

The School District has an obligation to provide alternate programs and (and pathways) towards Graduation for each of our students. The CLP is considered as an Alternate Program in accordance with criteria established by the Ministry of Education. As a School District, we are obliged to provide educational programs for our students up to the age of 19. The Alternate Programs are provided in accordance with the policy and criteria established by the Ministry of Education and in accordance with Board Policy.

The Board currently has an agreement with the Ministry of Education regarding the Education Guarantee for non-graduated adults, but has flexibility in the delivery of these services. The extent of adult program offerings provided by the School District is dependent upon Ministry funding. Our Distributed Learning Program (online) provides increased flexibility in meeting our obligations to students.

Why did the Board choose the Balmoral site? Weren't there other options?

Schools and students are part of the community. All schools in the North Vancouver School District operate in residential neighborhoods.

Based on all its available facilities, the School District examined four different location options for the program, with a further consideration to build a new facility at another site. Balmoral emerged as the best possible location for the program, based on a number of factors including:

- relatively central location to serve students from across the School District
- current use as a school with specialized instructional spaces (i.e., science labs, Tech Ed facilities, recreation facilities, foods/textiles facilities)
- available capacity following the September 2012 completion of the merging of Carson Graham Secondary and Balmoral Jr. Secondary school populations into one school community located at Carson Graham
- moderate requirements for renovation and customization to create a new environment
- adequate space to accommodate partnering community agencies and services
- poor condition and lack of specialized instructional areas suitable for secondary students at the Keith Lynn facility; Lucas Centre and Plymouth Elementary School
- secures the long-term retention of Balmoral and supports the future disposition of the Lucas Centre as a surplus property that can generate additional revenue for the School District

The creation of the new program includes a new identity and learning foundation for students. Some renovations within the facility will be scheduled to create a welcoming and positive learning environment for students, staff, parents and the community.



Wasn't the cost of a seismic upgrade one of the reasons for closing Balmoral as a Junior Secondary School? Are these costs being considered in the renovations being planned?

There were many criteria used for the decision to close Balmoral as an operating Junior Secondary School, with the costs associated with a full seismic upgrade being only one of the identified factors. The closure of Balmoral was further supported by the opportunity to consolidate the student population at Carson Graham with the construction of a new school.

The Balmoral facility remains functional for instructional purposes, while recognizing that the seismic risk remains. The renovations are being carefully planned to avoid the need for any structural seismic upgrading. Minor non-structural seismic improvements will be incorporated in the planned renovations.

The school district continues to operate secondary schools with higher seismic risk (Argyle and Handsworth) for which replacement schools have been requested.

Is there potential for the integration of a mainstream Junior Secondary program at Balmoral along with the alternate program, if supported by the demographics?

There are no long range plans for a middle school to be re-established at Balmoral. The School District has identified the replacement of Argyle and Handsworth Secondary schools as priorities. The capacity of these facilities will be determined in the planning phases to accommodate future population. Both Sutherland and Carson Graham schools have also been constructed with provision for potential expansion and the accommodation of additional enrolment.

Demographic analysis is not restricted to the immediate area of Balmoral, but considers the entire region served by the neighbouring Secondary Schools (Handsworth, Carson Graham, Argyle and Sutherland). Enrolment studies conducted by Matrix over the past decade, and most recently in connection with the capital requests for Argyle and Handsworth indicate that there will be sufficient capacity in this area of the school district for at least 25 years. A further factor to consider is the changing delivery of education with students earning credits in the community and through Distributed, or on-line learning. With more 'out-of-school' credit being possible, schools of the future will support a larger number of students.

Was proximity of Braemar Elementary identified as an issue in determining the location of the Community Learning Program?

Proximity to Braemar was identified as a concern related to traffic and traffic management in the area. No concerns were identified related to the students attending the alternate programs and their proximity to Braemar, or to André Piolat.

The Board is aware of traffic management concerns that exist in proximity to Balmoral, Braemar and André Piolat schools and in connection with the cul de sac at the north end of Mahon. The School District is supporting the work being undertaken by the District of North Vancouver to examine the traffic issues along Mahon Drive and neighboring streets. Consultation with the public through the District of North Vancouver regarding these traffic studies is ongoing and open to input from members of the public.

It's important to note that with the completion of Carson Graham Secondary, the number of students attending Balmoral will be significantly reduced from 650 to approximately 225 students. This will result in a reduction in



the traffic volume along Mahon Avenue. Still, the number of parents who drive their children to the schools in this area will remain a challenge and focus of the DNV's traffic study.

Were consultations held with students and parents of students of the Alternate Programs?

Consultation has been ongoing with the Alternate School communities since January, 2010. Numerous meetings were held with small groups and with larger groups. Regular updates to parents were provided throughout the process.

Why were the neighbouring schools and the local community not consulted on the location of the Community Learning Program?

The focus of consultation has been with the parents, students and staff of the alternate programs that are closing, effective June 30, 2012. With the 2012/2013 school year approaching and discussion of five possible options, it was necessary to establish the location prior to engaging in discussions related to the operation of the Learning Centre.

The school is retaining its core purpose as an educational facility serving students. In designing a successful program, efforts have focused on the expertise and knowledge of educational professionals, student support workers, parent and student input. The Community Learning Program Committee was tasked not only with the design of the new program, but also to identify facility and location requirements to support it. The Committee's recommendation that the facility would be housed in a building providing specialized instructional spaces and capacity for additional community-based services, as well as good access to public transportation was accepted and incorporated into the work of the Community Learning Program's Design and Implementation Working Team, which considered the various options and recommended the Balmoral location.

In regards to the residential community near Balmoral, at the time of the closure discussions, there was the potential for the sale, disposition, or redevelopment of the Balmoral school site. Each of these options would have resulted in rezoning processes that have consultation requirements established by the Municipality. As Balmoral is now being retained for continued as an educational facility, no broad community consultation process was required.

Information meetings and discussions have been taking place at the public meetings of the Finance and Facilities Standing Committee related to the Strategic Land Retention and Disposition plan. Within this context, the future use of the Balmoral School site has been considered since 2010.

How is the new Community Learning Program going to affect traffic in the neighborhood? How many students or adults will be driving to Balmoral?

The number of student drivers has been reduced in all secondary school locations since the introduction of the graduated licensing program. Parents continue to drive their children to school, regardless of their age. Approximately one in ten, or about twenty student drivers may be expected to drive to Balmoral for the Community Learning Program. Additionally, the School District is aware that the adult program offerings currently provided at the Lucas Centre contribute to increased traffic and demands for parking.



Will students be permitted to park in the Balmoral parking lot? Has there been consultation with the District on how to manage student parking, especially in view of Braemar now having walk-in access only?

Parking arrangements for students have not yet been determined. Traffic management will be discussed with the Community Advisory Working Group and the District of North Vancouver for consideration in the traffic study being conducted in cooperation with the school district.

Has consideration been given to the installation of speed bumps along Mahon and Evergreen to slow down traffic around the elementary schools?

Traffic management and traffic calming is within the jurisdiction of the District of North Vancouver. The School District provides its support to the measures introduced by the District through its communication with parents and the educational programs provided to students.

What will be the hours of operation of the Community Learning Program and the NVSD Learning Centre?

The hours of operation for the Community Learning Program and the NVSD Learning Centre have not yet been determined. The hours can be flexible to allow different start and end times to the day for students. The 'normal' school operating hours are 8:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. Hours of operation will be discussed with the Community Advisory Working Group.

Is NVSD44 aware of any vandalism or property crime problems in the Lucas Centre neighbourhood and/or connected with students?

The school district works with the RCMP and immediate community (Block Watch) in relation to property issues for all of our schools. These concerns are primarily related to broken windows at schools, particularly during the summer, when schools are not in session.

In discussion with officials we have determined that no increase in vandalism or crime has been associated with the location of our alternate programs, or by students attending these programs. We work closely with the RCMP when any school-related incidents are present in our community.

What role will the District of North Vancouver play in regards to the CLP or the NVSD Learning Centre, if any?

The District of North Vancouver (DNV), as a municipality has no involvement in the operation of Educational Programs. The Board of Education has sole responsibility and mandate in this area as provided in Legislation and the School Act. DNV has responsibility for municipal services including traffic (and management issues), property zoning, etc. These responsibilities are separate from the School District and are ongoing.

Areas for the potential involvement of the DNV could be through the development of Joint Use Agreements related to the use of the 'recreational facilities' (Gym, weight room, etc.). The DNV generally delegates the responsibility for the development of these agreements to the Recreation Commission.

Additional cooperative activities relate to traffic management issues (School District has an educational and communication role with parents) and field and parking lot usage. The School District works in cooperation with the District of North Vancouver, wherever possible.



Where can I learn more and contribute my thoughts on this initiative?

The Board of Education has planned a Public Information Meeting to be held at **Balmoral** Secondary on **January 10, 2012 at 7:00 pm**. This meeting will provide an opportunity for the presentation of information related to the Community Learning Program, the North Vancouver School District Learning Centre, and opportunities for Joint Use of the facility, especially for recreational purposes.

Table groups will be arranged to provide for facilitated discussions, questions and answers with participants. School District staff and trustees will be in attendance and will join in the discussions. Participants will be given opportunities to provide input that will be collated and advanced to the Community Advisory Working Group for further discussion and consideration.

Invited participants will include parents of students currently attending Keith Lynn, the Youth Learning Centre, the Lucas Centre, École André Piolat and Braemar Elementary as well as representatives of the District of North Vancouver and members of the community. All are welcome to attend.

Questions may also be submitted by e-mail to clp@nvسد44.bc.ca. As new questions and answers are prepared, they will be posted to our website at nvسد44.bc.ca > Community Learning Program Update.