

North Coast Distance Education School


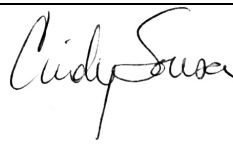
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SCHOOL PLANNING COUNCIL REPORT TO THE SUPERINTENDENT

SCHOOL GROWTH PLAN 2011/12

(08298009)

NCDES (DRAFT)

		
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MISSION STATEMENT AND SCHOOL PROFILE

School Mission Statement: NCDES

“Supporting All Learners”

Our formal mission is to provide successful learning experiences for students through access to programs and support, using appropriate technologies, in order to achieve their educational goals and the goals set out by the Ministry of Education. As a staff, one of our key values is to “develop and nurture respectful relationships with students, parents, other agencies and each other.” A key notion that we communicate to our students and parents is that “our only success is your success.”

The North Coast Distance Education School provides support to distributed learners from Haida Gwaii to the Bulkley Valley. Our key clients include home-based learners from Kindergarten to Grade 12, school-based learners (Grades 10-12) who cannot find a full program at their school, Aboriginal students in adult learning centers, and independent adults upgrading their educational attainments. With recent changes in Ministry policies in Distributed Learning, we have found ourselves in a very dynamic and changing environment.

District 82 Guiding Principles:

1. We make our schools accessible to all students and provide equitable opportunities for successful experiences.
2. We treat each individual with respect and dignity, in a healthy, safe and nurturing environment.
3. We provide educational opportunities that allow all students to develop their maximum emotional, intellectual, social and physical skills.
4. We are accountable for the quality of our education.
5. We are committed to open and timely communication.
6. We promote lifelong learning to enable our students to succeed in a changing society.
7. We share the responsibility for the education of students with the community.
8. We foster positive relationships among all groups and individuals based on trust, honesty and fairness

OVERVIEW

GOAL 1: We will improve completion rates in grades 10 – 12 (including both school-aged students and adults) in all subject areas (30% over years).

OBJECTIVE: Improve student course completion rates in grades 10 – 12 by 10% per year (increased online presence, support & engagement)

EVIDENCE: Continued tracking of course completion rates

GOAL 2: We will improve Aboriginal student completion rates to 50% (both school-aged students and adults) in all subject areas over 5 years

OBJECTIVE: Build and strengthen relationships with aboriginal partners, communities, and students by increasing regional presence and work with partners to develop aboriginal online presence (web and content) as well as paper materials, as required.

EVIDENCE: Continued tracking of Aboriginal student completion rates

GOAL 3: We will increase student engagement in K – 7

OBJECTIVE: Increase contacts and opportunities for engaging interactions (with teacher and other students as well as content)

EVIDENCE: Continue to track registration data and “contact” data (student – teacher and student – student contact: emails, phone calls, online discussion posts/blogs, Elluminate online class attendance, home-visits, school community-based activities, group/project work, and assignment submissions

NOTE ON COURSE COMPLETION DATA:

It is also worthwhile to note that school-aged students in grades 10-12 and adult students are enrolled on a “continuous entry” model and generally have 1 year from their active date in a course to complete (though students can take as long as they need to complete a course). They may or may not fall within a “typical” Sept – June school year.

ANALYZING DATA IN A CONTINUOUS ENROLMENT ENVIRONMENT

It is difficult to take an accurate snapshot of completion rates when students can begin and end a course on any day of the year. This method should provide us with valid information, and if used consistently, also provide a reliable measure of trends.

Premise: It is unreasonable to expect students to complete a course in three months, so the course completion snapshot will be taken four months after the student began the course. Therefore, enrollments during this period will be considered as “starts” to a course (March 1, 2009 to July 1, 2010). Only “starts” after March 1, 2009 are included in the July 1, 2010 completion data.

GOAL 1: We will improve overall completion rates in grades 10 – 12 (including both school-aged students and adults) in all subject area (30% over 3 years).

OBJECTIVE: Improve student course completion rates in grades 10 – 12 by 10% per year by increasing online presence, support & engagement, improving course design to include flexible options that encourage 21st Century skills development, provide more teacher-student and student-student interaction and communication, and provide access to ongoing progress/reports & feedback to students, parents and counsellors online in Moodle.

RATIONALE: We know that unless students engage in their work, they cannot attain any higher-order outcomes. This group of students continues to struggle with poor course completion results. This challenge continues from previous years and has contributed to NCDES re-thinking the course delivery model for these students. Since 2007, we have tracked course completion rates for various cohort groups for both paper and online courses, and our data indicates that students meet with better success (as indicated by course completion) when engaged in an online course delivery that is teacher supported and provides for ongoing teacher-student and student-student interaction.

EVIDENCE: Continued tracking of course completion rates (see Appendix A)

Who are we most worried about?

We are concerned about school-aged secondary and adult students who do not complete their distributed learning courses. While 97% of our K – 7 students completed their program in 2009/10, only 51% of our students in grades 10 – 12 successfully completed the same year, and only about 21% of all adult students completed.

How did we identify this group? Why are we worried about them?

We track course completion rates by course, by school, by method of delivery, by aboriginal status, and by grade. We believe that engagement is a pre-condition of academic success (as indicated by course completion). The introduction of a grade 8/9 teacher-supported paper model helped bring grade 8/9 completion rates from 43% in 2007/08 to 56% in 2008/09 (for paper-based courses), and 63% in 09/10.

When we introduced a teacher-supported online Grade 8/9 program in 2008, we saw an increase in student success (as indicated by course completion) from 45% in 2007/08 to 86% in 2008/09. In 2009/10, course completion rates for the teacher-supported Grade 8/9 online courses held at 81%. (See Appendix A)

What do we intend to do about this?

We know that students do better when they experience a balance of cognitive, social and teaching presence and that students do better when they have regular supportive interactions with both their teachers and their peers. The best way for independent learners to experience this in distributed learning is by using online teaching. We have seen the results of this in our own course delivery. (See Appendix A)

Consequently, our actions will include the following:

- Increase online presence by transitioning from our traditional, paper-based course delivery model (supported by markers) to teacher-supported online course delivery model using Moodle as our course management system.
- Increase student – teacher and student – student communication and interaction (email, phone, online environments and classrooms, and face to face)
- Provide regular and ongoing staff development opportunities that focus on assessment for learning, effective online course design and 21st Century skills
- Support teachers' use of Moodle as our course/content delivery platform
- Support teachers' use of Web 2.0 technologies – blogs, wikis and social networking applications/tools, as well as video-conferencing tools, Moodle and Elluminate & Skype
- Increase the use of embedded teachers to deliver engaging program options (using such tools as email, video conferencing and the online Moodle environment)

How do we intend to evaluate our progress in meeting this goal?

We will continue to collect completion rate information by various cohorts.

GOAL 2: We will improve Aboriginal completion rates to 50% (both school-aged students and adults) in all subject areas over 5 years.

OBJECTIVE: Build and strengthen relationships with aboriginal partners, communities, and students by increasing regional presence and work with partners to develop aboriginal online presence (web and content) as well as paper, as required.

RATIONALE: We know that nearly half of our overall student population is aboriginal and that our aboriginal students struggle to meet with success in our current paper-based correspondence model of course delivery. We have witnessed some success with our aboriginal adult students working at adult learning centres with teachers and support staff on site, and where programs are suited to the needs of the learners and are culturally relevant. We feel that our programs, courses and web presence should better reflect our aboriginal student population, including culturally relevant materials and content, and that NCDES needs to continue to work with its aboriginal partners to develop programming that better meets the needs of our aboriginal student population.

EVIDENCE: Continued tracking of Aboriginal student completion rates (see Appendix A & B)

Who are we most worried about?

Aboriginal students (Grades 10-12 and Adults)

How did we identify this group? Why are we worried about them?

We track aboriginal student course completion rates by grade, gender, school and facility. Our completion data from 2009/10 indicates that only 13% of our overall aboriginal student population successfully completed the courses in which they had registered. This includes school-aged 10-12 students as well as adults (both on and off reserves). (See Appendix A & B)

What do we intend to do about this?

We know that students need to engage with one another and their teacher, as well as the content, to meet with success. We further realize that our web presence and courses must include culturally relevant content and materials to better engage our aboriginal student population.

Consequently, our actions will include the following:

- Transition from paper correspondence/marker model to a more engaging online, teacher-supported model
- Improve overall web presence and course design, but more specifically, focus on including aboriginal content and a FN presence in our online environment
- Develop a “regional” presence and network of aboriginal educators
- Facilitate ongoing communication (via Elluminate or other online video-conferencing) amongst partner groups in aboriginal education and host annual Aboriginal Education Partners Conference

How do we intend to evaluate our progress in meeting this goal?

We will continue to collect aboriginal student completion rate data.

GOAL 3: We will increase student engagement in K – 7

OBJECTIVE: Increase contacts and opportunities for engaging interactions (with teacher and other students as well as content) and provide further subsidies to families for teacher-approved resources and activities that are part of a student’s “Learning Plan”

RATIONALE: We know that engagement is key to learning success and that students benefit from student – teacher and student – student interaction. To better meet student need, we must provide opportunities for such engagement. Furthermore, we have conducted informal exit interviews and have received feedback from some families that our courses (paper-based Open School materials) are challenging to work through and that our competition provides parents with financial support (subsidies) to seek out learning resources (approved by the teacher and part of the student’s learning plan) that enrich the student’s program and provide choice and more personalized learning options.

EVIDENCE: Continue to track registration data and “contact” data (student – teacher and student – student contact: emails, phone calls, online discussion posts/blogs, Elluminate online class attendance, home-visits, school community-based activities, group/project work, and assignment submissions).

Who are we most worried about?

K – 7 student

How did we identify this group? Why are we worried about them?

Although our K – 7 student population completion rates are consistently high (see Appendix A), we have seen a dramatic decrease in enrollment in our K – 7 program over the past 3 years (from 48.5 in 2008/09 to 28 in 2010/11).

What do we intend to do about this?

We are increasing opportunities for engagement and more personalized learning via online classrooms in Moodle, Elluminate and/or Skype, teacher websites and blogs, increasingly individualized programming including providing increased subsidies for parents and students to purchase resources and services (approved by the teacher and part of the student's learning plan).

Consequently, our actions will include the following:

- Increase student – teacher and student – student communication and interaction using such tools as email, video-conferencing and the online classroom environments (blogs, posts, etc.), as well as phone and face-to-face “visits” and community-based “family interaction events”
- Provide regular and ongoing staff development opportunities that focus on assessment for learning, effective online course design and 21st Century skills
- Increase subsidies to families for services and resources to offer engaging and more personalized program options/choices
- Support teachers’ use of Web 2.0 technologies – blogs, wikis and social networking applications/tools, as well as video-conferencing tools, Moodle and Elluminate & Skype

How do we intend to evaluate our progress in meeting this goal?

We will continue to collect registration (and withdrawal) data and “contact” data

APPENDIX A

Evidence: The Completion Rate Matrix

The 2006/07 school-year represents our baseline data. This data set should be consistent with the information provided to the Ministry in the regular *Achievement Data Collections*. In 2007/08 we began to gather data differentiating the type of course the school-aged student (8-12) receives: paper-based or online. Our data consistently indicates substantially higher completion rates for those school-aged students enrolled in teacher supported online courses. We have not seen the same results for our adult groups; however, it is worth noting that very few adults take online courses and further data is needed. We will continue to gather data on adult success in online courses.

	06/07	07/08		08/09		09/10		10/11	
	Baseline	Paper	Online	Paper	Online	Paper	Online	Paper	Online
Full Grade K – 7	84	77		92		97			
Full Grade 8 & 9	41	43	45	56	86	63	81		
In-School 8 & 9	47	59	N/A	59	N/A	N/A	N/A		
10 -12	49	44	77	48	89	51	72		
All Adults	37	39	N/A	30	N/A	22	19		
Non-Grad Adults	24	31	N/A	17	N/A	20	21		
Grad Adults	*	17	N/A	39	N/A	30	14		
Aboriginal 10-12 & Adults	50	50	N/A	37	N/A	13	N/A		

Appendix B

Evidence: Aboriginal Student Completion Rates

While 48% of North Coast Distance Education School's overall student population is of aboriginal descent, this group represents overall completion rates of only 13%. It is clear that we are not currently meeting the needs of our aboriginal student population and we will track improvements in completion rates for this group annually over the next 5 years, to determine if the supports and program changes we are putting in place are supporting student success or need to be adjusted to better meet student need.

In order to improve our completion rates, we have undertaken the following strategies:

- Transitioning from paper correspondence/marker model to a more engaging online, teacher-supported model (working with individuals and facilities to ensure technology is in place or paper alternative options are made available, as needed)
- Improving overall web presence and course design, but more specifically, focusing on including aboriginal content and a FN presence in our online environment
- Developing a "regional" presence and network of aboriginal educators, working together to improve engagement and opportunities for aboriginal learners (including program options that provide equivalency opportunities for culturally relevant programming at facilities)
- Facilitate ongoing meetings (via Elluminate or other online video conferencing) amongst partner groups in aboriginal education, in an effort to work collaboratively to develop programs for all aboriginal students and partners in region, and host annual Aboriginal Education Partners Conference

Appendix C

Community Consultation & Communication

In our context, parental involvement is, of necessity, very high. Teachers actually visit the homes of their students in the fall (and again in the spring), setting goals and discussing the program, as well as specific needs of individual learners.

Throughout the year, teachers contact parents and students regularly by various means: they return marked work/assignments with detailed feedback, they telephone students and parents both to congratulate them and to express concerns and provide support. Moreover, they email students and parents and maintain online bulletin boards and spaces for sharing like blogs, the Recess Room or the Parent's Café.

Additionally, our website, newsletters and letters to parents and students, helps to inform and update our families, and our DL Satisfaction Survey for parents and students provides us with a great deal of useful input from our key stakeholders. We also host activities in various communities in the spring to bring our families together.

In an attempt to provide students (in 10-12 especially) further opportunities for communication, teachers in 2011/12 will use Moodle to provide students and parents, as well as counsellors at other schools, ongoing access to content and online progress reports/report cards, and students will have access to discussion threads and posts within their courses to communicate not only with their teacher(s), but with their peers, as well.

Key Partnerships

One of the key aspects of our educational environment is our work in partnership with various stakeholders. These are the most important ones:

Coast Mountains School District

CMSD is our most important partner — providing the majority of our students, as well as acting as the Board of Education responsible for our delivery of educational programs. In partnership with CMSD, NCDES is able to provide embedded teachers to offer more dynamic, interactive educational environment for our students and provide options for students through DL and video-conferencing. We hope to continue to develop programs that meet all students' needs, providing opportunities for choice and flexibility in graduation programs and further development of 21st Century skills.

Regional Day Schools

The secondary schools in Haida Gwaii, Prince Rupert, Terrace, Kitimat, Hazelton, Stewart and the Bulkley Valley continue to use our services extensively, traditionally as a service provider of correspondence courses. As NCDES transitions from that paper-based, marker model to an online delivery model, we will continue to provide these students with quality graduation program options and increased support. In 2010/11 students at Caledonia Sr. Secondary and Hazelton Secondary engaged in Grad Transitions courses through DL (all Grade 11 & 12 students). This program is expanding to include Mount Elizabeth Secondary in 2011/12.

LearnNowBC

LearnNowBC is a Ministry initiative. Although the Ministry had hoped this site would become a registration portal, that function has not been beneficial to NCDES, as most of our registrations come from our local “geographic region”, spanning 5 school districts. LNBC does offer several student services such as online Provincial Exam prep and tutoring services, as well as access to the DL Satisfaction Survey. We post information about the services offered through LNBC on our website and our teachers refer students to the services offered on the LNBC site (per our DL Agreement with the ministry).

D.E. Consortium & BCLN

The D.E. Consortium is comprised of a group of former Distance Education schools and has had a significant role, historically, in our operation. This group is responsible for some in-service and curriculum development, as well as the maintenance and preferred pricing of several software solutions that have been critical to our operation, chief among them being SIRSDE, our student information system. As we move to BCeSIS, the consortium is working with other provincial bodies to find solutions to the unique needs of the DL environment. The consortium continues to manage and support new initiatives like online content sharing and management, but to better enable our transition to an online course delivery model, NCDES has joined the BC Learning Network, a consortium of 32 school districts in BC. The BCLN provides DL schools opportunities for content sharing, Moodle hosting services and a student management system (SMS) that will replace SIRSDE (May 2012).

Aboriginal/ABE Programs

We support the work of several Aboriginal Adult Education programs, where we have experienced varying degrees of success. In 2010/11, we saw an increase in school-aged students working at these facilities. NCDES hosts annual conferences for our aboriginal educator partners, often in a different village each year. We currently support programs in the following villages:

Kitwanga (Gitwangak)	Kitsumkalum (Na Aksa Gila Kyew)
Kitkatla (Lach Klan)	Kincolith (Gingolx Adult Learning Centre)
Kitselas (Wabsuwilaks'm Gitselasu)	Fort St. James (Tl'azten Secondary)