

Neighbourhood Learning Centres

BACKGROUND

British Columbia's public schools have always played a vital role in our communities. From the early days of the one-room schoolhouse through to today's sophisticated learning models, schools have continued to serve as natural centres of activity in neighbourhoods.

During the 1970s, the Province and its partners in the education system began work to formalize and build on the role of the school in serving the community. Schools were encouraged to offer, or simply host in their facilities, programs and services that complemented their mandate to teach the provincial curriculum. Since that time, dozens of schools across B.C. have been designated as Community Schools, and many continue to offer a wide range of community services. This approach is consistent with a growing body of research showing that, when families are engaged in students' learning and have the support of strong communities, student achievement improves.

Today, the focus on schools as community assets has been revitalized. As student enrolment continues to decline, schools are being encouraged to use their space to accommodate a wider range of services for students, families and the community.

VISION

All schools in B.C. are Neighbourhood Learning Centres, inviting places where people of all ages can access education, health services, recreation and culture seven days a week, twelve months a year – places that promote the wellbeing of children, families and the entire community.

MISSION

Promote strong school-community partnerships that use school facilities to better meet the needs of children, youth, families and the whole community.

APPROACH

There is no "one size fits all" approach to developing Neighbourhood Learning Centres. Government offers a framework for planning, but each NLC will be developed locally through a collaborative approach that reflects the unique needs, assets and potentials of each school and community.

Goals

- Expand the use of school facilities to accommodate a range of programs, services and activities for children, families, seniors and all community members, seven days a week, year-round.
- Enhance students' academic achievement and overall wellbeing by engaging parents and the wider community more directly in the life of every school.
- Build strong partnerships among schools, families and the wider community, including Aboriginal peoples and other cultural groups.
- Provide opportunities for schools, families and communities to engage in collaborative planning to determine which services and programs best meet their needs.
- Increase collaboration among school districts, school personnel, service providers and other community partners in the public, non-profit, volunteer, and private sectors.
- Reduce barriers to services, maximizing accessibility for vulnerable children and families.

THE NLC APPROACH IN ACTION

Many B.C. schools are already planning or operating Neighbourhood Learning Centres. For example:

- In Boundary, School District, eight Family Centres are located close to schools, providing family, community and health support services. They are working with multiple ministries and many community partners to build everything from dental treatment programs to family activity nights.
- Renovations currently underway at South Okanagan Secondary School will provide space for a daycare centre, a community counselling centre, an adult learning centre, and, in partnership with the community, renovations to the existing community performance space.
- Revelstoke is developing two Neighbourhood Learning Centres – one in its secondary school and one in its elementary school. Special features will include an early learning hub, a community theatre, and coordinated health services for vulnerable teens.

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT NLCs?

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