

Quality Review Report
British Columbia Ministry of Education
School District No. 57 (Prince George)
Centre for Learning Alternatives (CLA) Programs
February 2016

Introduction

The Ministry of Education's Quality Review (QR) builds on prior work including the development of Distributed Learning (DL) Standards, Continuing Education (CE) Practices, Alternate (Alt) and DL policy, research on the use of educational technologies, and field-based action research on emerging instructional practice in Distributed Learning, Alternate and Continuing Education environments. The ultimate goal of the Quality Review process is to foster improved quality in DL, CE and Alt program practices and to ensure effective implementation of Ministry standards. The Quality Review process is a collaborative project of the Ministry and DL, CE and Alt educators that uses quantitative and qualitative data to analyze instructional and leadership practices as well as student achievement and satisfaction.

The Quality Review process comprises the following steps:

1. Ministry staff consults with DL/CE/Alt schools to support implementation of the QR process and the guiding Standards;
2. DL/CE/Alt school program staff complete an internal review, supported by a self-reflection document developed by the various DL/CE/Alt communities and provided by the Ministry;
3. In consultation with DL/CE/Alt educators, Ministry staff selects several DL/CE/Alt school programs to undergo an external site visit;
4. For selected DL/CE/Alt schools, documentation (such as achievement data, satisfaction survey results, school and/or district plans, etc.) is collated, analyzed and shared among the participating school staff and Ministry;
5. An external team visits the school to provide validation of internal review observations;
6. A Quality Review report based on collected data and observations from the external visit is presented to the participating school; and
7. New and emerging practices observed at the DL/CE/Alt school(s) are shared with other educators of similar programs through presentations at DL/CE/Alt administrator meetings and conferences.

The intent of the QR process is to provide DL/CE/Alt schools with the knowledge to continue the journey toward program improvement, course development, and quality instructional and leadership practices.

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Context

- School District 57 (Prince George) is in the central region of the Province. The district covers 52,000 square kilometers around the Fraser and Nechako Rivers. It includes the three communities of Mackenzie, McBride and Valemount, as well as surrounding rural and remote settlements. It serves a region with a significant population of Aboriginal students.
- The district enrolls approximately 12,577 students (February 2016) in 40 schools: 31 Elementary Schools, 8 Secondary Schools and one Centre for Learning Alternatives (CLA). The CLA and the school district administration offices are located close to each other in Prince George.
- Prince George is a district that has experienced declining enrollment for many years. The decline in enrollments correlates with an overall provincial decline of school-age students in recent years, but has been felt particularly acutely in the resource-based community of Prince George. Twenty-two school closures occurred between 2001 and 2011. Most of these were neighbourhood elementary schools; however, two secondary schools were also affected.
- The Centre for Learning Alternatives (CLA) was moved into one of the closing junior secondary schools in 2010. Prior to this, the programs were in separate locations around the city. The CLA currently operates out of a well-adapted center that is modern and provides appropriate spaces for learning.
- The CLA is made up of well-established programs that have been providing alternatives to students for decades. Seven programs operate at the CLA site, while an additional five programs have remained in an outreach model under the CLA umbrella. Program staff working in outreach locations attends the CLA for meetings, Pro-D and other events. School events such as graduation, year-end socials, and other special events also draw outreach students to the CLA.
- The CLA has three program strands: Alternate Education, with ten programs; CIDES, a K-12 Distributed Learning/Distance Education program, one of the original nine regional correspondence schools; and Adult & Continuing Education. Four of the Alternate programs are at outreach locations within the city: YAPS, Intersect, TMAP and TAPS. The Summit Alternate program is “in the Hart”, a smaller community north of Prince George but within the school district.
- The CLA offers a Continuing Education program for Adult students. It also offers a Distributed Learning/Distance Education program for K-12 including non-graduated and graduated adults. Both of these programs are located at the CLA. DL active criteria apply to school-age DL students and all Adult students.
- The CLA partners with community agencies so that learners who are in unique circumstances have access to additional supports for educational, social and/or emotional needs.
- The CLA also provides educational service in partnership with programs administered by community organizations:
 - Prince George Regional Correctional Centre (BC Corrections)
 - Baldy Hughes Therapeutic Community & Farm (BC New Hope Recovery Society)
- The district has additional Alternate programs connected to its high schools. These programs are not under the CLA umbrella and are under the governance of the school administration where the programs are located.

Learner Community

Alternate

- The CLA Alternate programs follow the traditional school calendar year, but offer additional intake to students within the ten-month school year. Intake to all programs occurs quarterly within the school year as students follow independent, self-paced studies customized to their needs and achievement levels. Self-paced work is a big draw to students in the Alternate programs, although the staff would like to explore more direct instruction with students in some academic areas of study.
- According to the CLA staff, a significant number of students live in a climate of hardship, leading to higher numbers of at risk youth who cannot meet with success in mainstream education settings. The demand for Alternate school placement remains very strong.
- The following CLA enrollment data was reported on the Sept 1701 in 2015 (year in progress):
 - Alternate Programs: 349.5 total FTE for all programs; 360 total headcount for all programs. Enrollments are steady and wait lists are required as programs are typically full by the end of September and following mid-year intakes.
 - 170 of those learners were identify as Aboriginal Ancestry (~47%)
 - 133 of those learners were identified as SPED all categories (~37%), with the highest instances in H, D and Q designations.
- In 2015-16, the Alternate program enrollment capacity was as follows:
 - Connections - 15
 - Storefront I and II - 30 + 30
 - Concept Ed - 60
 - Team - 60
 - YAP (Youth Around Prince) - 30
 - TAPS (Transitional Alternate Program Secondary) - 60
 - Summit - 30
 - TMAP (Teen Moms' Alternate Program) - 50
 - Intersect - 30

Continuing Education (Adults)

- Continuing Education: By headcount, enrollments on the combined September and February counts were 529. Enrollments have declined steadily over the past five years (2010-2015) with 2014 impacted by job action. Enrollments may be showing some recovery and improvement in this school year:

2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016 (IP)
1347	1111	960	774	648	529

- The Adult population uses Continuing Education to complete graduation requirements and to upgrade coursework for college entrance or training programs that will lead to improved employment opportunities. Continuing Education courses are continuous enrollment and offered year round. The use of technology is very limited in course delivery.
- The Continuing Education program has an excellent facility and could support a variety of instructional approaches.
- The Continuing Education program relies heavily on print materials for asynchronous instruction and independent learning.

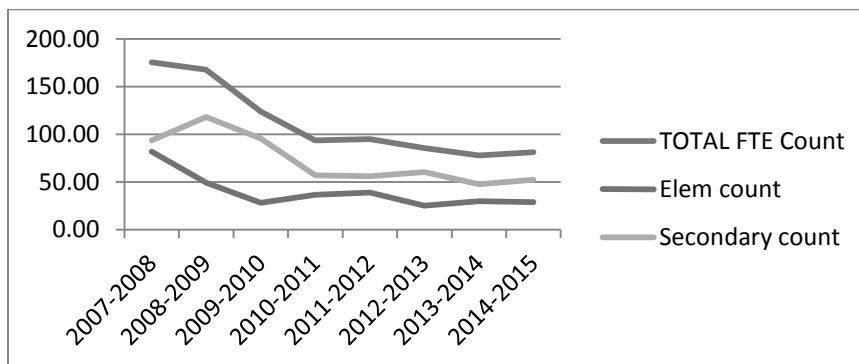
- Aboriginal learners are approximately 1/3 of enrolled students each year. ELL students are not enrolled unless English language competency can be demonstrated.

Distributed Learning (DL/DE)

- Distributed Learning: 69.80 FTE were reported for the Sept/Feb 1701 combined. Headcount for the same period is 325, which reflects the course-based funding for Grades 10-12 and the trend to registration of students for single or part-time coursework. The following annual FTE indicate a significant decline from 2009-2011. A continual, but less dramatic decline continued but appears to have levelled out in the past year:

2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
175.3	167.5	123.8	93.6	94.7	85.4	77.6	88.1	69.8 (inc)

- The following graph represents the declining DL enrollment for the period:



- Declining enrollment at the district level limits the ability of secondary schools to offer low enrolled and specialty courses. The DL/DE program is able to provide some of these courses to students.
- The DL/DE program, while under the umbrella of the CLA, is distinct from the Alternate programs in several ways:
 - At the secondary level, the program serves an increasingly mainstream population of secondary cross-enrolled students, with the highest concentration of cross-enrolled students enrolling from the secondary schools in the catchment's secondary centres (McBride, Mackenzie and Valemount).
 - A broad range of secondary courses is offered, either locally developed or locally adapted, using course resources from the BC Learning Network.
 - Courses offered are within the policy guidelines for DL and are offered as continuous enrollment throughout the year.
 - The program serves students from K-12, via print and online delivery (Moodle), using asynchronous distance education approaches. The print courses are locally developed and used predominately until the middle school grades. While courses are offered online, the use of innovative technology for instruction remains low. Staff cited lack of access and limited bandwidth for remote students, as well as a general lack of demand and interest expressed by students and families. Technology available at the centre was current and was not seen as a barrier to instructional innovation.

Staff Community

- Administration staff: 1.0 FTE Principal and 1.0 FTE Vice-Principal (down from 2.0 FTE VPs in September 2015 due to administrative needs elsewhere in the district).
- The Principal has budget autonomy for the CLA, as is the administrative model for all other schools in the district. The administrative team shares the duties of program leadership and support as well as student and staff management.
- Teacher roles in the CLA Alternate programs emphasize mentorship and support, which students find more helpful than traditional instructional approaches.
- The CLA has 26.35 FTE teachers for 2015-16. The FTE are assigned as follows:
 - Alternate Program Teachers – 16.2 FTE
 - Continuing Education Teachers (including a 1.0 FTE advisor) – 5.7 FTE
 - DL/DE Teachers (including a 1.0 FTE advisor) – 4.45 FTE
- The Alternate programs have Education Assistants and Youth Care Workers in support capacities; however, the work of all Alternate staff within programs is highly collaborative and less differentiated in terms of roles. Support staff at the CLA is assigned to programs for a school year. Placements are reviewed and adjusted annually. Once assigned in a given year, support services are program specific and not shared throughout the student population.
- The CLA has 1 Technician and 4 Clerical Staff that support all programs.

School Community

- While the geographic area of the district is large, the educational sites within Prince George and the major centers are relatively close together. The CLA is situated in a central location that students can readily access by public or private transportation. This central facility is proving very beneficial for many of the CLA programs.
- With respect to the outreach programs, each program that does not operate out of the main centre (CLA) has a key community relationship that justifies an off-site location. For example, TAPS is assigned to two portable classrooms on the campus of the College of New Caledonia (CNC). This location affords students the opportunity to become familiar with the post-secondary community while acquiring work experience and related trades. YAPS, a program which targets at-risk street youth, is located in the downtown core where many of these young people gather. Its location is suited to providing a safe haven and easy access for at-risk youth. Homeless youth in Prince George are estimated to be approximately 250 in number this year.
- The administration and staff of the CLA programs work cooperatively with community agencies, seeking to provide the best possible support to every student. Personnel from community agencies are included and consulted when services for students overlap. A positive respect and referral process is evident between CLA staff and community support agencies.
- The instructional approach of the CLA Alternate programs is largely self-paced and personalized. Most academic work undertaken by these most vulnerable students takes place at school. Face-to-face instruction is provided for some activities and course topics. Self-paced learning, primarily in the form of print booklets worked through in sequential fashion, is the predominant instructional approach and is supported by individual tutorials.
- The instructional approach of DL/DE and Continuing Education is also self-paced, however courses are less personalized in terms of learning outcomes and requirements. Fewer

adaptations to program plans are evident. The students in these programs work primarily at home or off-site, following pre-developed curriculum.

- Most DL/DE support is provided at a distance (through telephone or email). The online component of the programs is delivered via Moodle, but print versions of courses are also available and widely used. Online courses have been acquired through the BC Learning Network and adapted by teachers for the use of students in a particular subject/ grade, either online or in print. Markers are still used to support student evaluation.
- Adult student support is largely off-line, with students opting to call or visit the CLA for tutoring assistance. Most of the courses are delivered in print, which appears to reflect the preference of both students and teachers.

District and Provincial Environment

- SD 57 is a small district covering a significant area of central British Columbia.
- The student population of SD 57 is almost exclusively from the catchment region.
- It is estimated that approximately 28% of the learners in SD 57 are Aboriginal; an even higher representation of this population (55%) are enrolled in Alternate programs under the CLA, suggesting that the CLA plays a key role in supporting Aboriginal learners who do not meet with success in the mainstream schools.
- The demand for Alternate programs in the district is strong. Students in the region have a broad range of needs, and frequently are in need of support services in order to meet with educational success.
- The number of Adult students registered through CLA has declined in recent years. The decline in students may be attributed to the following:
 - A decline in the local population, combined with increasing unemployment and pressures of family/work life, may be leading students to postpone educational goals.
 - A lack of awareness of Adult education opportunities due to limited advertising and promotion. Until this year, DL/DE was not permitted to advertise. Young adults who are eligible for graduation programs after high school and non-graduated mature adults in the community may not be aware that tuition-free programs are available to them through CE and DL/DE options.
 - The leadership also expressed great concern for the transient population who are often in need of educational programs but have no means of discovering the educational choices available.
- The number of DL/DE students registered through CLA has declined in recent years. The Quality Review Team sought to understand where these learners had gone and why. According to the staff, a reduction in DL enrollments occurred due to the following:
 - Competition among the numerous DL programs in BC has led to other programs marketing and attracting students outside of home districts.
 - The DL/DE program in Prince George is not seen as a first or best choice for Prince George students. According to staff, some of the key courses are more rigorous than other DL programs. Furthermore, when students experience a significant drop in grade standing (i.e. a course result that is not consistent with other day school courses or previous achievement), the DL course earns a reputation of being too hard. DL data trends indicate many courses offered by CIDES have withdrawal rates in excess of 40%.
 - Referral by some school personnel to other DL/DE programs where the district program has been deemed too rigorous or too difficult to complete (see previous remark).

- In some schools, DL courses have been excluded from honour role, scholarship and other incentives. This practice has been observed in other districts in response to competition over FTE between DL programs and schools.

Student Achievement

Alternate Education:

- School completion rates for students from 2010-2015 were considered. Alternate Programs under the CLA have school completion counts (Evergreen, Regular and Adult Dogwood) of between 60 to 80 students annually. This reflects a graduation rate between 60% and 72% annually. As students are registered at all secondary grades (8-12) in these programs and are largely school age, the school completion rate of students seems consistent with the number of students who are eligible in any given year.

Continuing Education:

- Similar to the alternate programs, of all students registering in adult education courses, approximately 30-50 students registered in the adult continuing education program graduate each year. Students in CE take a higher number of senior courses, and many more students would be working towards and Adult Dogwood rather than a Regular Dogwood or Evergreen Certificate.

Distributed Learning:

Based on the DL student achievement data (SADE) for Prince George School District reported to the Ministry of Education, the following observations can be made:

Data submitted for Distributed Learning, both provincially and at the district level, must be considered with caution as completion rates are affected by factors such as low course enrollment, continuous entry and exit, problematic curriculum, demographics, and distance. Most schools have turned to an internal means of collecting and analyzing their DL program data in order to draw meaningful conclusions. The following is based on SADE data reported to the Ministry only.

- SADE data since 2012 indicates two key trends: a) Many students have been kept on the rolls for very long periods of time. In one instance, a student took 621 days to complete a course that would have been started in 2009-10. b) Based on comparative data to all other districts, the completion rate for DL in SD57 falls within the lowest 10% of completion results of all DL schools in recent years. Sample completion rates are illustrated below. Students in 2014/15 may still be considered to be working on completing their coursework:

Completion Rates	2013/2014	2012/2013	2011/2012	2010/2011	2009/2010
Sample Course A	27.3	19.2	85.7	33.3	10.7
Sample Course B	42.9	20.0	33.3	50.0	11.1
Sample Course C	20.0	53.8	44.4	40.0	13.3
Sample Course D	36.4	28.6	55.6	37.5	10.0
Sample Course E	13.0	15.2	31.0	29.4	13.5

- Historically, variance in completion rates has likely resulted from open-ended course completion dates where students remained registered well in excess of one year. DL data indicates that some students are enrolled in the course in excess of 400 days before completion; several students take more than 800 days to complete.
- Using 2012-13 data, a comparison of the 24 most popular courses provincially was made, allowing two years as a completion window. The highest course completion rates were for A & W Ma 11 (50%) and SC 10 (53%).
- As of Dec 2014, of the 558 students enrolled in all courses, 247 (44.3%) are still active, 140 (25%) withdrew, and 171 (30.6%) completed. This data does not reveal what percentage of the active students may have complete or withdrawn from their courses. Those results are captured in the following year’s data; however, the completion rate of 30.6% suggests that this is the average during a one year snapshot.

Quality Review Findings

- In the months prior to the Quality Review Team external visit, an informal Internal Review was conducted by the CLA. In advance of the External Team visit, the administration shared a summary their review.
- Based on the information provided by administration, it is evident that the CLA staff had an opportunity to reflect upon “Indicators of Success” and discuss these indicators with peers. The internal review is an important first step in beginning a strategic plan to help develop a cohesive vision for the CLA programs within the district and community.
- The External Team visited the CLA from February 8-10, 2016.

Instructional Practice

- The CLA Alternate program staff is dedicated and passionate regarding the well-being and educational progress of students. They effectively communicate and share information with each other so that each student will receive consistent direction and support. Every assigned staff person is involved in the student plan and the delivery of educational activities and support. The staff acquires a very detailed picture of the students’ academic, social and emotional background through the intake process and the educational journey. The academic plan for each student is determined based on needs assessment carried out as part of the intake process. The non-teaching personnel affiliated with the CLA (e.g. Youth Care Workers and Education Assistants), are considered essential members of the team. Through the “wrap around” approach taken by staff, the needs of the students are addressed, thus setting the stage for success in the educational plan. Members of the Quality Review Team were deeply moved by the heartfelt stories relayed by teachers, support staff, parents and students when discussing their work and experience in all the Alternate programs.

- The nature of the CE/Adult student is similar to the DL/DE student in that students are seeking key academic requirements and wish to work from home at their own pace. One particular point of difference, however, is the adult student is frequently less familiar with educational processes and requirements. They may also be lacking some pre-requisites for success – for example, understanding what is required for graduation, retention of previous learning, and dedicated time for learning due to other life responsibilities. Adults require flexibility and this is acknowledged in CE approaches at the CLA.
- The nature of the DL/DE students is markedly different from Alternate and Continuing Education students. Students increasingly choose DL from within a mainstream educational program. While the social and emotional needs of a student may be less prevalent, the experience of DL may be entirely new and therefore support of another kind becomes the most critical requirement. In DL, a detailed student intake process is followed. Intake focuses on suitability of a student for Distributed Learning and what is required of students for success. Evidence of student support is apparent and is triggered by student enquiry. Student support in the absence of contact is less apparent, which is frequently the source of great attrition following registration in DL programs.
- While the staffing ratio for DL and CE reflect a reasonable student-teacher ratio, small programs offering numerous courses leads to broad curricular coverage for each teacher. Teachers are not able to specialize in one or two subjects, but rather must generalize (for example, Humanities, Sciences, Elementary, etc.) In these scenarios, it is not uncommon to have one teacher responsible for over 20 courses, particularly when many of the courses have very low enrollment.
- The DL and CE teachers are small, isolated groups. Networking with other teachers is critical for gathering and sharing ideas about their work. Currently, these programs remain in silos, and even sharing from teacher to teacher within each program is limited in some cases.

Strengths

Alternate:

- Student tracking and support. Intake processes, needs assessments, and exit planning is thorough and consistent in all the programs.
- Connection with community resources and integration of support. The “wrap around” approach to meeting the educational, social and emotional needs of students is excellent. The programs provide of a safe haven for vulnerable students.
- Personalized learning. Each student has a customized plan for success that is supported, revisited and revised while actively registered at the CLA.
- Multiple learning approaches are used. Face-to-face, self-paced and independent, small group sessions, and community-based learning are used to meet student and program goals.
- Focus on removal of barriers to success. All of the programs strive to engage the students from the first day of contact, modifying and adjusting expectations to meet individual needs.
- The centralized model and the outreach model are both highly effective, showing that these two program models have been carefully chosen on an individual program basis, in order to best serve the needs of their target student populations.

Continuing/Adult Learning

- Community educational resource. Young adults who are ineligible for high school as well as adults who have been away from school are offered a supportive environment for learning.

- An alternative to college. Offering of a tuition free service to adults who cannot afford college fees for upgrading or further education.
- The twelve month model. Continuous enrollment provides year-round access to courses; course may be completed any day of the year.
- Maximum flexibility for students. Self-paced learning offers the most flexible approach for adult learners with other life commitments.

Distributed Learning/Distance Education:

- Cross-enrollment registrations from the smaller communities: DL is able to offer courses that some high schools can't offer. The relationship with Kelly Road Secondary School is very positive.
- The twelve month model. Continuous enrollment provides year-round access to courses; course may be completed any day of the year.
- Maximum flexibility for students. Self-paced learning offers the most flexible approach for adult learners with other life commitments.
- Distance is not a barrier. Students who reside in remote areas have access to a wide array of secondary level courses.

Challenges

- Communication and collaboration of staff could be improved. Staff working at the CLA is prone to remaining within their programs and find it difficult to share ideas, resources and curricular work. Staff in outreach locations wish that they had more contact with the administration as well as colleagues at the CLA.
- The curricular materials used by all programs are in need of updating and revision. The learning resources and courses have been gathered and assembled from various sources. In some cases, teachers modify pre-existing courses. In other cases, teachers offer courses "as is", with the hope that time will be found to make improvements. Much of the material is print-based, even in the DL program where online learning has significantly diminished the use of print in recent years in most other districts.
- Staffing seems to be appropriate for all programs. One concern is the broad subject loads for secondary teachers. While offering a great array of courses seems desirable to meet the needs of students, numerous course offerings (with students in different places in their studies) create a tremendous amount of tracking and communication for each teacher. This can become a burden when teachers must also handle administrative tasks pertaining to registrations, technical matters pertaining to course delivery, and communications and reporting pertaining to student progress throughout the enrollment period of each student. Another concern is that outreach program staff is prone to carrying all support requirements, from technical to clerical to administrative, if the support resources are not responsive or not formally allocated. Some outreach locations, TAPS, in particular, experience difficulties with network reliability and infrastructure. This limits innovative instructional strategies that the teachers would like to implement.
- Low integration of technology in curriculum is evident. While this was not raised as a major issue by parents or students, staff would like to see more technology available to all students, citing anecdotal evidence that most students are now comfortable with mobile technology and social media. In addition, students need more engaging online content embedded in their learning activities.

- Registration and activation of DL and CE students. Upon registration, students must complete a substantive assignment prior to becoming an active student. This period (from registration to activation) is a time of great attrition. Students who run into problems and have not established a connection are likely to seek another provider. Both programs seem to lack a formal means of contacting these students in a timely fashion to ensure they are progressing to active status and remain actively engaged.

Leadership Practice

- The district leadership team is in a period of great change. The interim Superintendent and an Assistant Superintendent are currently both Acting roles. The CLA, along with other district schools, will remain in a holding pattern until new senior leadership is appointed. The timeline for filling these positions is unknown.
- The school leadership team consists of a Principal and one full time Vice-Principal. The Principal is in his sixth year in this role. In September, a full time Vice-Principal was transferred out of the CLA to another assignment. That position has not been filled as of this writing. Since the district leadership team is undergoing change, it is also unknown how the administrative allocation of CLA will be resolved.
- The school administration came to the CLA from day-school settings. The leadership team is experienced and knowledgeable of program requirements, funding policies, curricular changes and school governance.
- Parental involvement is welcomed and encouraged in all the school-aged CLA programs. Not all parents of Alternate students are in a position to participate, yet those who can are deeply involved. Parents of DL students are prone to disconnection since they typically do not see their children as “attending” a DL school, or have another school as the school of record. Nonetheless, parents of full time students are involved, particularly at the elementary level. The CLA has a small Parent Advisory Committee that advocates for students and the programs. Communication with parents of all programs is done through meetings, counselling, outreach visits, regular reporting, telephone calls and email.
- Full staff meetings are held by the administration at the CLA. The agenda of the meetings is program-centered. Within the Alternate programs, additional meetings are held according to program, in some cases daily, and administration will attend these only as needed or requested. These meetings are a valuable means of communicating student issues and interventions, and provide a forum for sharing other critical information and developments. None of the staff object to frequent program meetings. They participate and contribute openly. The DL and CE staff hold their own departmental meetings, but these seem to be arranged infrequently.
- The district model of school autonomy affords school-based leadership with the opportunity to implement internal changes as necessary, within budget allocations and district policies. External changes, such as team building with schools, facility changes, and community program promotion require the support of the district leadership team.

Strengths

- The administrative team brings a great deal of experience and depth to their work, including day school administration, alternate education, adult education and information technology.
- The current size of the administrative team is appropriate for the number and nature of student enrollments. At the same time, the loss of the second VP has been felt at the program level.

Given the number of programs and wide range of services that the CLA supports, two full time administrators may be stretched too thin by general administrative duties to embark on significant program changes (for example, curriculum).

- The administrative team is a highly capable team tasked with coordinating a broad range of services. They have made tremendous progress in the areas of student intake, needs assessment, staffing, information management and data collection in recent years. With the district leadership now changing, they are positive and hopeful about the future of the CLA and how it can support students in the future. In recent years, extensive work has been done in the management of student information and data, improving record keeping and data on all levels. The administration would like to move on improvement and development of instructional practice going forward.

Challenges

- One of the greatest challenges for this administrative team lies in the lack of awareness in the schools and communities concerning the programs and services of CLA. Students frequently find the CLA by chance. Students are either uninformed or misinformed regarding the available options, or do not recognize the programs as part of their educational alternative and choice. In the past, the district did not permit the CLA to advertise programs to students or staff. A recent change to this has already yielded a positive trend in enrollments in CE.
- Programs defined as “alternate” have a history of marginalization within mainstream schooling options. Typically, alternate programs serve marginalized youth and adults who have not met with educational success. Overcoming the stigma of the alternate school is a continual challenge in education. This is ongoing work, and the district is committed to supporting all programs and schools through equal and intensive student support.
- Implementing technology into pre-existing programs requires tremendous effort by all staff. Central to such an implementation is a core vision for the role of technology to enhance teaching and learning, and how technology will be integrated. Professional development, collaboration, sharing, and support across programs is necessary.
- The language of inclusion: A number of programs are organized under the CLA Alternate umbrella. Many of them describe students as those who “can no longer be accommodated in the mainstream school system.” This type of description is reflective of old views, where alternates were destinations for students exiting the first choice of traditional school. While alternate schools and programs frequently meet this need, they also offer choice. Changing the language may help to improve the notion of choice while debunking the myth of school of last resort.
- The CLA is listed under programs and schools on the district website. The district has a number of programs under the heading of Choice. Including a link to the DL program under the Choice listings would send a message that the local district DL program is considered a choice in the district when seeking other educational options. This could also be done for Alternate programs with open entry.

Summary

- The Quality Review Team would like to thank School District 57 (Prince George) and the staff of the CLA for their hospitality and for embracing the process of a Quality Review. The administration of the programs is commended for their professional attention and leadership of

their staff through the process. The welcoming approach of the administration was greatly appreciated by the External Team during the site visit.

- The singular impression of the Quality Review team was that staff is highly dedicated and committed to providing the best education and support possible for students. The experience with all staff, students and community members during the site visits was both engaging and candid. During the site visit, Quality Review Team members conducted over 50 interviews with teachers, students, parents, support staff, community support workers and administrators. The passion expressed by representatives of all stakeholder groups reflects the important contribution that these programs are making within the educational community of School District 57 (Prince George). These programs are truly life-changing, even life-saving, for many at-risk youth in the district.
- The visit of any external team to a district adds extra work for all. It can also make staff feel quite apprehensive. The CLA Principal worked with the Quality Review Team to develop an in-depth schedule that would lead to the greatest program insights. As a result, Quality Review team members were able to have very meaningful conversations with a broad base of staff, students, parents and support personnel. The Administration tended to all of our requests while keeping the business of the school minimally disrupted during our visit. We greatly appreciated the trust, flexibility and candour of participating members of the school community during this Quality Review. We enjoyed the visit immensely and left with a very rich view of the good work being done at the CLA.
- The Quality Review Team was very moved by the caring and committed attitudes of the Alternate program staff. The staff presence is very strong, interdisciplinary and “hands on”. The CLA program is leading edge in terms of engaging alternative students via a flexible, blended model (face-to-face open area classroom combined with self-directed independent learning). Every day, students attend the school according to program requirements and needs. Learning is highly personalized, relevant, experiential and supported by ensuring the care of each learner.
- Programs such as DL and Continuing Education serve a highly diverse clientele including students learning at home, alternate students, distance students, in-school mainstream youth, and adult students. These programs are also an “alternative”, meaning they are programs of choice for many. The draw for students is course flexibility, credentialed courses and non-intimidating settings. In CE, the Adults who attend the centre feel grateful and supported. In DL, computer mediated asynchronous communication takes the place of much of the face-to-face requirements, but the contact with students, parents and other stakeholders is nonetheless as consistent. This speaks to the nature of the instructional delivery method as well as the nature of those who choose to enrol in DL.
- School District 57 (Prince George) has historically supported the CLA program and the educational alternatives it provides to youth who have not met with success in the traditional school settings. Awareness of programs and accessibility to them are also important for educational choice and lifelong learning.

List of Recommendations

1. That the district continues to sustain the current program management model of the CLA. The move of several scattered programs to a central, modern facility in 2010 was a bold but ultimately effective decision. At the same time, programs with close and important ties to outreach locations were not forced to move from key community locations eg. Teen Moms/Daycare, TAPS/Community College, YAPS/Downtown Core. The CLA is exemplary in its

blend of centralized and outreach service. Identifying CLA offerings as programs of choice may help enhance its image in the Prince George educational community.

2. That the leadership and programs consider a curriculum development review schedule and strategy for course renewal for all alternate, adult and distributed learning programs. Separate program structures and approaches can be counterproductive for sharing expertise, sharing and co-developing curriculum, sharing student support resources, sharing technology infrastructure and creating synergy and efficiencies in teacher professional development. Most of the teachers noted that the existing curricular materials are in need of improvement. With the forthcoming curricular changes, the opportunity to begin this process is timely and will afford teachers the opportunity to move away from less engaging “marker models” of instruction. The CLA will benefit by bringing together the tremendous expertise from across programs for curricular development. Team building through curricular development will discourage the “silo” approach that often arises when networking is absent. Professional development, collaboration, sharing, and support across programs is necessary.
3. With respect to Recommendation 2, that the district and programs seek a means to both introduce and support online learning options in DL through instructional design, developmental support and team building. While the majority of students and staff of the CLA did not express a need for this, it is widely recognized that access and use of technology will lead to greater preparation of youth and adults in further studies as well as employment. With the availability of free or low cost open source courses and resources, the benefits will far outweigh the costs, and the improved course offerings will be of tremendous interest to cross-enrolled students within the district catchment secondary schools. Courses not offered in district classrooms due to low enrollment or high degree of specialization may be provided through DL, thus expanding student course choice for both graduating and upgrading students locally.
4. That the district and programs consider expanding services and support to adults learners throughout their registration period. While a decline in Graduated Adults has been observed provincially under the current limits on fundable course registrations, the Non-Graduated Adult population is unaffected by this. The completion rate of Adult students is very low, suggesting that students are not meeting critical success at the outset or within the course experience. Unknown barriers can result in students dropping out. Support models that only respond to students who approach the school do not help those who may be having the greatest difficulty getting started.
5. With respect to Recommendation 4, that the district and program review the intake and attrition rates of Adult students. Currently, students lacking in English skills are turned away from Continuing Education. The Quality Review Team saw a missed opportunity for CE to provide ELL and digital literacy services to the community, particularly given the excellent facility that the CLA has to offer. Once students are registered, having students complete an exit survey may help identify problem curriculum, confusing instructions, lack of contact and other factors that are barriers to their success.
6. That SD57 work to develop a shared vision of the role and function of CLA within the District. From this vision flows the decision on how to best provide for the needs of diverse learners in the region. The Centre for Learning Alternatives is a powerful name and reflects the broad range and quality of services the schools can provide when synergy is generated from a centralized

facility. Continuing to work towards inclusiveness enhances instructional practice while maximizing the resources and skills of dedicated staff throughout the district. Acknowledging and promoting programs within the CLA as programs of choice will further help the programs grow.

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