



Framework for Enhancing Student Learning School Plan

Cowichan Valley Open Learning

Our Story

Cowichan Valley Open Learning offers students a variety of educational options to fit the needs of our diverse learners from kindergarten thru to Grade 12. Our Open Learning schools are located throughout the Cowichan Valley, and we give thanks for the opportunity to work and learn on the traditional lands of the Coast Salish peoples, specifically the lands of the Ts'uubaa-asatx, Penelakut, Malahat, and Quw'utsun peoples.

In partnership with community, Open Learning, provides students with an alternative to regular school programs by offering an opportunity to experience success in a safe, nurturing, learning environment that emphasizes equity, social, emotional, and academic development.

At Open Learning we offer an alternate program in our main site in Duncan as well as five satellite sites across the district. Our enrollment for the 2020-21 school year was approximately 360 learners divided between our main site on Nagle Street, Frances Kelsey Open Learning, Cowichan Secondary Open Learning, Chemainus Open Learning, Lake Cowichan Open Learning and Cowichan Valley Alternate School (CVAS), for Grade 8-9, which is located at Providence Farm.

Within the umbrella of Open Learning, is The Grove. The Grove offers blended learning opportunities to students from kindergarten to Grade 9 as well as online learning opportunities for students in kindergarten to Grade 12. Our enrollment for the 2020-21 school year was approximately 360 learners with an additional 380 Grade 10-12 students taking one or more online courses while still attending their neighbourhood school.

As Open Learning continues to support and foster educational choice, September 2021 will see the emergence of two new programs. First, located, at our main site, Cowichan Valley Open Learning Co-Op (CVOLC) will begin a partnership with the Take a Hike Foundation. Take a Hike is a full-time mental health and well-being program empowering vulnerable youth to unlock their full potential and achieve success. Take a Hike will be staffed with a full time CVOLC teacher, a Student Support Worker, and a Mental Health Clinician. Secondly, Open Learning will join in partnership with Adage Dance Studio to begin the Cowichan Valley Dance Academy. This program will be available to students across the district to pair educational programming and dance instruction to students in Grade 8-12.

Our Learners

Our Strengths

The strength of our learners is the ownership each one has over their learning. Each student begins the school year by developing a Student Learning Plan with their teacher. These

individualized plans give focus for the remainder of the school year and, in the case of grade 12 students, a pathway to graduation requirements and/or dual credit opportunities. Students benefit from small class sizes, support from a Student Support Worker, and an environment that is safe and inclusive.

Teachers, administrators, and support staff utilized Professional Learning Community (PLC) times for Ecocycle planning. This helped to emphasize and determine school wide priorities. Staff highlighted the importance of:

- Student choice and determination
- Flexible curriculum
- Focus on equity over equality
- Pod systems where students have more one on one time with fewer teachers.
- Food – All students have access to nutrition throughout the day. As well, students can take small amounts of basic groceries home.
- Student placement through the lens of the School Based Team to determine the “best fit” for kids.
- The Power of Three. Every student has at least three adults who know them well and who are actively involved in their educational plans. This includes teachers, Student Support Workers, Indigenous Support Workers, counsellors, and administration.
- Weekly class review meeting with Pod teachers to review each student and to discuss supports required or notable changes to attendance, social-emotional wellbeing and/or engagement.

Our Stretches

As Open Learning provides alternate school options, due to a variety of reasons, many of our students have barriers to learning that may not have been formally identified. This requires all teachers and support staff to be not only aware of but be able to provide meaningful and accessible accommodations. As students attach themselves to their significant adults, it becomes increasingly important that all adults within Open Learning have the knowledge to support these students both academically and social-emotionally.

During the 2020-2021 school year, in-person attendance was notably down across Open Learning. A higher-than-normal number of students stayed away from school due to the pandemic. Within a cohort system, students were limited in their options for choice and school movement. When in attendance, this impacted engagement of learning.

Reaffirming our commitment to Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Truth and Reconciliation, many of our Indigenous learners struggled to engage in schooling this year. Cultural opportunities throughout the school were limited both in the classroom and within the

school as a whole. Plans to create a more welcoming and visually inclusive environment within the school were placed on hold until we were able to have greater student involvement, voice, and choice.

Our Goals

Based on our stretches and the District's Strategic plan, our goals for the 2021-2022 school year are:

Goal 1: Literacy

- Using Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001) as a starting point, a multi-year literacy plan has been developed to commence in September 2021. Staff will engage in Professional Learning Communities, to delve into key components of reading and to lay the foundations for all teachers to become teachers of reading. Department head positions have been realigned to not only reflect the District's Strategic Plan but to create a shared opportunity to collaborate with one another and to lead this work with staff. Through this work we look forward to ongoing support and collaboration with Corina Fitzner, the Secondary Coordinator of Instruction and Innovation communication, as well as Darlene Crane, the district's Principal of Instruction.

Other actions:

- Continuation of weekly class reviews to identify and support students who require additional services.
- Continuation of weekly School Based Team meetings to support students who require a more in-depth review and action plan to support their learning both in school and within the community.
- Participation in school district professional development related to reading.
- Acquisition and use of relevant materials related to the support of reading instruction (Heggerty, Road to the Code, Equipped for Reading Success).

Measures:

- District reading and writing assessments.
- Grade 10 and 12 Literacy Assessment results
- PM Bench Marks.

Goal 2 – Attendance and Student Engagement

- Attendance – Incentives for students to attend more regularly. Those students who have a higher than 80% attendance per month will have opportunities to attend additional special events and to be recognized within the school community.
- Student Engagement – As we move away from a cohort system, students will once again be invited to select school wide electives. This will create opportunities for

students to increase student-to-student and student-to-teacher connections while increasing their engagement and consequently, attendance.

- Events and opportunities to welcome students and families to the school at the start of the school year, midway point and at the end of the school year.

Measures:

- Attendance data pulled from MyEd
- Student responses from the Ministry's annual Learning Survey.
- Increased community and family involvement
- Number of students and families who attend our Welcome Back BBQ.
- Number of students who are actively engaged in learning at any given point throughout the school day
- Informal check-ins with students.

Goal 3 – Indigenous Re-engagement and Ways of Knowing

- As we work to re-engage all students, and specifically our Indigenous learners, after a year of altered learning, we strive to resume and expand on opportunities for Indigenous Knowledges Sessions and authentic learning opportunities throughout the school. *Nuts 'a' maat shqwaluwun kw tst yayus* "Working together with one heart, one mind, one thought."
- Creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for Indigenous learners and their families. All Indigenous students who enroll at Open Learning are welcomed at first point of contact to our Indigenous Support Worker and Indigenous Support Teacher.
- Participation in whole staff professional development opportunities, both at the school and district level, on Indigenous Ways of knowing and Truth and Reconciliation.

Measure:

- Visual alteration of the school setting to highlight Indigenous culture, art, and technologies.
- Monthly meetings with our school level Indigenous Ed. Staff.
- Indigenous graduation rates

Our story is beyond . . .

Our graduation ceremony encompasses the strong relational bonds and community of care that is Cowichan Valley Open Learning.

Many of our students face food insecurity, poverty, unstable housing, with an inordinate percentage of students who do not live with their biological parents. These same students can find success in our programming when they were previously unable to in a more traditional school setting.

In our graduation ceremony, each student's teachers deliver a small speech on their behalf as they walk the red carpet. Many of the students write their own words. The strong relational bonds between students and their teachers and the safety that students feel to acknowledge their struggles at the ceremony are very evident. Often, students thank their teachers and acknowledge them as the biggest reason they were able to graduate. Students noted anxiety, large class sizes and "the feeling of being lost" as key reasons for lack of success in more traditional school settings.

Our graduating class has a high number of Indigenous learners, students graduating on an Adult Dogwood and students with identified learning disabilities.

One story that stood out in our graduation ceremony is the story of "Marissa." Marissa attended the graduation ceremony with no other family members present than her young daughter. She arrived in a taxi that she was not able to pay for upon arrival. While others had family members taking photos, Marissa stood solitary. During the school year, Marissa worked long hours to be able to support her daughter. This same drive and determination to meet the graduation requirements helped her to attend this event. What became evident as her teacher read a speech about her, was the positive relationship between student and teacher and the culture of care inherent in our programming. Marissa was not only able to excel and graduate but is now enrolled in a dual credit program for September 2021. Her career goal is to complete the post-secondary education that she needs to be an Indigenous Support Worker and return to schools to support others.