

Neighbourhood Learning Centres

Stages of Development of Schools with High Community Engagement in British Columbia

Feature	Stage 1: Exploring	Stage 2: Emerging	Stage 3: Maturing	Stage 4: Excelling
Summary of key features of each stage	<p>This stage is marked by discontent with the ways that schools operate and by very grandiose thinking, tremendous optimism and magical thinking that if only X were in place, things would be significantly different.</p> <p>This should be encouraged because out of these dreams and desires a shared vision will emerge.</p>	<p>This period is marked by a commitment to jump in and do something. A decision has been made to commence the transformation by introducing some level of services, securing some funding and beginning to develop partnerships. Programs are designed in a strengths-based paradigm based on data from a formal or informal needs assessment. This period is like a roller coaster ride, marked by highs and lows, progress and frustration. Success in this stage requires a commitment to the shared vision, clear goals, good communication processes, clarity of roles and responsibilities, responsiveness to the needs and regular celebration. This period lasts for about 2 years.</p>	<p>This period is marked by steady, intentional progress and the realization that this work requires a tremendous amount of effort. The vision becomes clearer to all; therefore, there is likely broader support for it. Service utilization increases as interventions become timelier, more relevant and of higher quality. Relationships between community organizations and the school are deepened. Administrative and program integration becomes more natural and community-based organizations may become involved in joint planning and funding. Success in this stage requires keeping the vision and programs fresh, tending to relationships, increasing partnerships, continuing to demonstrate added value and attending to sustainability.</p>	<p>Quality programs are implemented that are fully integrated into the fabric of the school. The school culture focuses on addressing the needs of the whole child. Increased parent involvement empowers parents and school staff to become advocates of quality education. Strong relationships are established within the school, community and school district. The school values community program support staff as committed partners and leaders. Success in this stage requires involvement in innovative programming, the development of youth leadership and the use of staff, parents and students to teach others to do this work.</p>

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<p>Programs and Services</p> <p>The array of activities and services offered to augment, enrich and increase the capacity of all members of the community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Awareness of the gaps in services that schools and the community provide and of what is needed to make students, families and the community successful. <input type="checkbox"/> Ideas abound about programs and services that could make a positive difference in the lives of students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Services are introduced in a staggered fashion and may reach only a small portion of the school. They may include after-school programs, parent involvement, wellness services, family activities and adult education. <input type="checkbox"/> Effort is made to ensure that programming reflects community-development and youth-development principles and practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Intentional efforts are made to ground programs in best practice and current research. <input type="checkbox"/> There is a focus on issues that impact quality such as frequency and intensity, timely delivery and impact. <input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary programs are developed and shared. <input type="checkbox"/> Program and services change to respond to the current needs or best practice. <input type="checkbox"/> Data are collected to inform programming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Quality, innovative programs and services impact the child, family and community. <input type="checkbox"/> Widespread awareness exists of where to access community resources and services. <input type="checkbox"/> Staff members are able to speak in an informed manner regarding programs, target groups, operations and impact. <input type="checkbox"/> A broader menu of services is offered.

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<p>Management and Governance</p> <p>The structure and process through which decisions are made and executed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> There is reflection on the type of leadership and processes needed for decision making. <input type="checkbox"/> There is awareness that there needs to be different or enhanced processes in the administration and governance of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A decision is made that the school district, school and/or a community organization will work together to lead the initiative. <input type="checkbox"/> Criteria for this community organization are developed along with a selection process. <input type="checkbox"/> The council or advisory board takes an active role in working with the school, community-based organization and community to create a shared vision and strategic plan, establish decision-making and communication processes and define roles and responsibilities. <input type="checkbox"/> This council or advisory board is included in key leadership structures in the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The council or advisory board works closely with the school's leadership to jointly establish service priorities and target groups. <input type="checkbox"/> Operational issues such as space, services, hours of operation, etc., are established but are revisited periodically. <input type="checkbox"/> Regular meetings between the principal and team or individual that is coordinating the programs and services being offered are critical during early implementation. <input type="checkbox"/> The community organization, council or advisory board and school negotiate and adjust to the differences in their organizational cultures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Strong and regular communication is required between the principal and the staff person or team that is coordinating the programs and services being offered to maintain gains and proactively respond to the emerging needs of the school. <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly scheduled meetings take place to keep stakeholders informed and engaged. <input type="checkbox"/> Many in the school and community know the governance structure and processes.

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<p>Staffing</p> <p>Voluntary and paid personnel used to accomplish the tasks and activities</p> <p>Staff can include principal, teachers, agency personnel, coordinator and assistants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Recognition of some of the technical and soft skills required, as well as the roles and responsibilities. <input type="checkbox"/> There may even be a sense of existing school staff or others who would be perfect for specific positions. <input type="checkbox"/> Some thought is given to operational costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> At least one staff member, is on board at the school. <input type="checkbox"/> S/he remains very visible and accessible to the school staff, parents, students and community. <input type="checkbox"/> Key activities include ensuring effective, clear communications regarding the vision, garnering public support, establishing credibility and trust by delivering on commitments, providing quality services and responding to concerns in a timely manner. <input type="checkbox"/> Begin to coordinate services in school under one umbrella; create opportunities to celebrate the incremental gains and successes of the program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Move towards a full complement of staff. <input type="checkbox"/> Changes in staffing may be needed as the demands of the various positions make clearer the skill sets needed to be most effective. <input type="checkbox"/> Staff can become overextended: everyone needs to stay focused on the vision. <input type="checkbox"/> Staff includes parents, and school personnel whose roles may be very different from what they are during the day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Full complement of competent, dedicated staff in place. Their work is more consistent with their position description. <input type="checkbox"/> Specific staff member runs the program and addresses student, parent, school and staff concerns. <input type="checkbox"/> The person running the program develops partnerships and focuses more on “big picture” developmental and administrative issues. <input type="checkbox"/> All personnel are more attentive and responsive to implications of policy decisions on their work. <input type="checkbox"/> More seasoned staff have strong relationships within the school and community and are able to discern and influence changes in school culture and attitudes at early stages.

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<p>Integration</p> <p>The process of making diverse and separate programs or activities into a coherent, congruent whole</p> <p>These separate programs share one or more core purposes or practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> It might be beneficial for all of the programs and services to work together for children and families. <input type="checkbox"/> Various programs operate in a parallel relationship, without the benefits of collaboration or integration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The challenge of integration begins. This may include integrating the culture and staff of the school with the service providers from multiple organizations. <input type="checkbox"/> Establishing communication and operational protocols and procedures that promote collaborative, productive relationships but still allow each organization to maintain its integrity of purpose is critical. <input type="checkbox"/> Key staff address maximization of space, flexibility in service delivery and maximization of services formally and informally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> There is a certain level of operational mastery at this point. <input type="checkbox"/> Strong alignment exists between school goals and the needs of children and families. <input type="checkbox"/> There is the luxury of revisiting sticky issues of integration that compromise optimal functioning. <input type="checkbox"/> Intentional efforts are made to integrate the day- and after-school curriculum in a complementary way. <input type="checkbox"/> To the extent possible, social support services are delivered through existing or parallel structures within the school, such as school-based and interagency teams. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A seamless alignment exists between family and community services and the targets established for the school. <input type="checkbox"/> There are clear goals, objectives and outcomes towards which all partners are working. <input type="checkbox"/> Day-school and community program personnel work collaboratively to secure services that address unattended priorities and urgent needs in the school. <input type="checkbox"/> The school utilizes these services because it sees congruence between the needs of students, their families and the services.

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<p>Parent Involvement</p> <p>The underlying philosophy that parents are key to student success and can be included in school life at all levels</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Observe the ways that parents have been disengaged from or do not contribute to the school and exploration of ways to expand or develop the latter. <input type="checkbox"/> Recommendations from parents are sometimes solicited but, typically, the discussions on how to become more engaged with the community are held with selected parent leaders with regard to ways to improve the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Parents become more engaged as key partners and are included in the planning and the governance structure. <input type="checkbox"/> Strong outreach to engage parents as advocates of quality education and services for their children, the school and the community. <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible space dedicated to community use, staffed by a skilled parent (not necessarily formally trained) or other professionals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Parents feel more connected and invested in the school and create their own network of supports. <input type="checkbox"/> The school embraces parents as key partners in education. <input type="checkbox"/> Engaged efforts take place to empower parent leaders and expand the cadre of leaders. <input type="checkbox"/> Parent voices are heard in school as volunteers or employees with respect for policy and guidelines. <input type="checkbox"/> The school becomes the engine of change that many parents embrace to improve their quality of life and that of their children through quality education and community development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Parent involvement is at a very advanced level, parents initiate many activities and have a strong presence in the school. <input type="checkbox"/> The community council and/or other parent bodies work closely with the school-to keep parents and the community informed and engaged. <input type="checkbox"/> Selected parents make presentations at site visits and other forums to laud and advocate for services. <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple parent and community leaders in the school work together seamlessly.

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Student Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Students request programs outside of regular school hours. <input type="checkbox"/> Students suggest that it would be beneficial to have certain services within the school building. <input type="checkbox"/> Students participate in fund raising, which benefits the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities are expanded for student involvement in programs and services. <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership development courses are offered. <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities to lead programs for children exist. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Students are involved in visioning, planning and implementing programs and services to promote their well-being. <input type="checkbox"/> Youth leaders have mentors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer and paid positions are available to youth. <input type="checkbox"/> Youth are invited to participate on the board and at committee levels.

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<p>Community Involvement</p> <p>The community acts as guardian, advocate, supporter, partner and recipient of services, and the body that holds schools accountable for student success.</p> <p>Community engagement builds stronger and more vibrant communities and schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> In some cases the community needs to be involved and can benefit from a high level of engagement with the school. <input type="checkbox"/> These ideas can be grandiose if there is no history of real community involvement. This thinking will evolve into more realistic expectations and goals. <input type="checkbox"/> Overall, the sense is that the school can increase student success and make the community proud. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Early on in the initiative key stakeholders such as local government, other public-serving entities, non-profit organizations and informal community leaders are engaged. <input type="checkbox"/> This generates a strong sense of good will and ownership of the school. <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic activities increase community knowledge about and interest in the school. <input type="checkbox"/> It becomes evident that the community can gain from involvement with the school, individually and collectively. <input type="checkbox"/> The community is included in the needs-assessment process (asset mapping), through invitations to open houses and attendance of school-based personnel at community meetings all build a sense of school-community collaboration. <input type="checkbox"/> Increasingly transparent processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> School personnel attend community meetings and stay abreast of community policy and cultural changes that could affect the school. <input type="checkbox"/> The school develops and manages relationships with powerful organizations and continues to maintain good relations with local groups. <input type="checkbox"/> The school encourages parent and youth leaders to become change agents in the community through membership in various organizations. <input type="checkbox"/> The school opens events and celebrations to the public or commits a percentage of services to the community. <input type="checkbox"/> Community residents and agencies become essential members of the advisory council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The school is perceived as an important player that delivers quality services and for whom the well-being of families and the whole community is a priority. <input type="checkbox"/> Community relationships and changing leadership require ongoing attention. <input type="checkbox"/> The school joins in community efforts aligned with school goals and priorities that benefit students, families and the community at large. This may include co-sponsoring health events, co-writing grant applications or participating in political advocacy. <input type="checkbox"/> The school strategically maintains high levels of visibility and partnerships and sees these relationships as reciprocal.

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<p>Partnerships</p> <p>The coming together of two or more organizations with a shared vision and resources to serve the target group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> It would be beneficial to have established, well-resourced institutions with whom to partner and ways to incorporate agency services more directly into the school. <input type="checkbox"/> Individuals, school staff or agencies may identify organizations that are visible and reputable as potential partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Critical work here is to deepen the understanding of and relationship with key influencers in the school system, community and local government and to identify areas of alignment between priorities. <input type="checkbox"/> Equally critical is the development of an open, authentic relationship among the school leadership, staff and parents. <input type="checkbox"/> Begin to formalize partnerships and agreements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining a stable, reciprocal relationship among all all members of the school community is key. <input type="checkbox"/> Community program personnel and agencies respond to arising needs in the school, produce quick wins and solidify their value as partners. <input type="checkbox"/> Needed services are provided through relevant partnerships. <input type="checkbox"/> Regular meetings address issues of space utilization, collaboration, service enhancement and duplication, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Formalized partnerships and agreements are in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Strong partnership that are able to withstand differences of opinion and philosophy but able to refocus on the vision of meeting the needs of students and families are in place. <input type="checkbox"/> The principal includes involved staff members more in discussing issues and mandates from the district office. This dialogue begins at earlier stages and reflects the depth of trust and co-ownership of the challenges.

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<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Assessment of the process and the impact of programs and partnerships on the target population.</p> <p>Includes the systematic collection, analysis and use of data in programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The desired impact of the various programs and services must be determined. The potential of prevention-based programs to improve instructional outcomes and community well-being are widely discussed. <input type="checkbox"/> There is usually a strong sense that if solid evidence-based data were gathered, funding would be accessible and sustainable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Commitment to capturing the process of becoming a school with high community engagement in a formative/process evaluation exists. An ambition to have an outcome evaluation possibly exists. <input type="checkbox"/> Criteria for an evaluator and parameters of the evaluation are established. The design is structured to focus on areas perceived as strengths, as well as to provide new data. <input type="checkbox"/> There is some effort to collect data to determine the correlation between programs and student success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> At minimum, the systematic collection of data such as attendance, service utilization, and other baseline information is required. <input type="checkbox"/> It is critical to move towards a formal evaluation and to discuss the design and length of evaluation, as well as its budget. Developing a hypothesis is helpful to clarify the desired findings. <input type="checkbox"/> It is imperative that the evaluation of the program components includes the synthesis and integration of multiple programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Formative evaluation is complete and outcome evaluation has begun. <input type="checkbox"/> Early data are used to influence programs, policies and procedures. <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant data are shared with the school and community on an ongoing basis to inform and interpret what is occurring in the school.

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<p>Sustainability</p> <p>The process of securing community and organizational support and funding for the long-term continuation of programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion begins to figure out how to establish local partnership support. <input type="checkbox"/> Because this is about children and school success, there is an interest by all parties to become involved in the discussions. <input type="checkbox"/> Optimism prevails in this area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Funding is identified to ensure 3-5 years of development in a highly community-engaged school. <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability will always be an issue; the question is more about urgency and building on successes. <input type="checkbox"/> Attentiveness to funding patterns is required, which might point to areas in which future programs might more readily expand. <input type="checkbox"/> Dialogues with the school and the Board of Education about directing funds to the school are essential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A strong public-engagement campaign is important to inform and create awareness about the school. <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability involves fundraising, the building of a strong constituency and advocates who can speak compellingly about the program. <input type="checkbox"/> It is important to begin to look into how existing funding streams can be used to fund some programs. <input type="checkbox"/> The key activity is determining how partners might be able to secure funding for programs by tapping into specialized funding or targeting non-profits with their expertise and interventions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A comprehensive strategy to maintain and expand programs is developed and implemented. <input type="checkbox"/> A part-time grant writer is considered and engaged. <input type="checkbox"/> Networking for sustainability is ongoing, with site visits for funders, public education opportunities at conferences and local and regional meetings or events. <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple sources of funding have been secured.

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