

# Neighbourhood Learning Centres in British Columbia

## A Summary of Models

*Neighbourhood Learning Centre* is an overarching term for schools that offer educational programs and reach out to engage their communities on a year-round basis. Many schools across the province can be described as Neighbourhood Learning Centres, and some have operated with high levels of community engagement and year-round services for decades.

It is recognized that all schools in the province have unique characteristics that have evolved to meet local community needs and interests and that there are varying levels of engagement between schools and their communities. In addition to the models that have operated for years throughout the province, there are new approaches to community engagement and delivery of programs and services that fit the Neighbourhood Learning Centres concept.

There are four generic models that are useful to understand the range and complexity of NLCs. Do not be limited by these four models, consider a fifth model that could be a combination of elements from the first four models. As well, it could be an entirely different model, such as significant working relationship with the local Aboriginal community or a local non-profit agency.

### **Model 1: Community Schools**

This model is based on the community school concept that was developed by the Mott Foundation in Flint, Michigan, in the 1930s and first implemented in BC in 1971. Typically, a full-time coordinator oversees community programs and services for children, youth, and families. Family, community, and student engagement and support are central, with relationships being the key. The school facility is used for a wide variety of purposes after school hours, on weekends, and during school breaks throughout the year. Some activities and programs are integrated with regular day-school academic programs, whereas other programs meet a wide range of community needs and interests for all age levels.

### **Model 2: Hub Community Schools**

Like model 1, the underlying principles of this model are also based on the original community school concept that was developed in Flint, Michigan, in the 1930s and first implemented in BC in 1971. The key difference is that the coordinators work with more than one school, often in geographic proximity, and may have a team of assistants or program support staff with specific expertise.

### **Model 3: Municipality/Community School Partnerships**

This model uses the school facility for a wide variety of programs after school hours, on weekends, and during school breaks throughout the year. Programming for all age levels is based on community interests and needs. Municipal bodies and regional districts are typical funding partners. Compared with models 1 and 2, and particularly if there is no designated staff, this model will generally have less integration between the regular day school programs and the

programs that operate beyond the school day. The findings showed that with designated staff the degree of integration was higher.

#### **Model 4: Community Engaged Schools**

Most one-room rural schools of years past had strong community involvement and were key facilities where people came together. The US literature on community schools refers to these “little red schoolhouses” as the basis of modern community schools. Today, some schools across BC reach beyond their academic mandate to develop strong interactive relationships with their communities. The leadership may come from parents, agencies, school staff or administrators, or, typically, a combination of sources. One strong personality may be a driving force behind new initiatives. These schools may have no formal designation or staffing but function with a high level of community involvement. It is also important to recognize that there are unique and emerging approaches to educational practices and school-community engagement that may not yet be clearly articulated.

#### **Model 5:**

It is important not to be limited by the first four models. A fifth model could be a combination of elements from the first four models. As well, it could be an entirely different model, such as significant working relationship with the local Aboriginal community or a local non-profit agency.