

Education Committee
Public Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, June 14, 2023 – 6:00 pm
via Zoom

<https://sd38.zoom.us/j/62866744965>

Passcode: 6000

The Richmond Board of Education acknowledges and thanks the First Peoples of the hə́ŋqəmiḥə́m language group on whose traditional and unceded territories we teach, learn and live.

- 1. Adopt Agenda**
- 2. Approve Minutes**
Public minutes from meeting held May 17, 2023 attached.
- 3. Secondary Collaboration and Personal Learning Time 2022-2023 Report attached.**
Jane MacMillan, Assistant Superintendent
- 4. Alternate Program Review Report attached.**
Rav Johal, Director of Instruction
- 5. Next Meeting Date – Wednesday, September 20, 2023, at 6:00 pm.**
- 6. Adjournment**

Education Committee Public Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 17, 2023 – 6:00 pm
Via Zoom

Present:

Chairperson
Vice Chairperson
Trustee Alternate
Trustee
Assistant Superintendent
District Administrator
Teacher Consultant
Teacher Consultant
President, Richmond Teachers' Association
Pro-D Officer, Richmond Teachers' Association
Past President, Richmond District Parents' Association
Member, Richmond Association of School Administrators
Member, Richmond Association of School Administrators
Executive Assistant (Recording Secretary)

H. Larson
D. Yang
R. Belleza
D. Tablotney
J. MacMillan
B. Douglas
S. Musani
S. Daly
L. Baverstock
J. Cho
D. McFie
A. Pikkarainen
L. Leung
S. Khan

Regrets:

Trustee Member

A. Wong

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.

The Richmond Board of Education acknowledged and thanked the First Peoples of the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm language group on whose traditional and unceded territories we teach, learn and live.

1. Adopt Agenda

The agenda was adopted as circulated.

2. Approve Minutes

The minutes of the public meeting held Wednesday, April 19, 2023, were approved as circulated.

3. Moving Forward with Assessment and Reporting

Assistant Superintendent MacMillan introduced District Administrator for Curriculum and Assessment, Brooke Douglas, Teacher Consultant, Shaheen Musani, and Teacher Consultant, Shannon Daly. They provided a brief overview on student learning and reporting, and informed the committee that the reporting order, which will go in effect as of July 1, 2023, is a directive order from the Ministry of Education and Childcare which outlines the Reporting Policy for all K-12 students in BC school districts. An overview of reporting from the last 5 years was provided, as well as information around what will remain the same and what changes will be coming from the new

reporting order. Changes in assessments such as the proficiency scale and descriptive feedback was discussed, and how students, parents and staff will be supported by the Ministry and the district. Trustee and stakeholders questions regarding self-assessment, replacement curriculum, and the supports that are in place for implementation with families who have language barriers were answered.

4. Next Meeting Date – Wednesday, June 14, 2023 at 6:00 pm.

5. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:07 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Heather Larson
Chairperson, Education Committee*

Report to the Education Committee Public

Date: June 14, 2023

From: Jane MacMillan, Assistant Superintendent

Subject: Secondary Collaboration and Personal Learning Time 2022-2023

The following report to the Education Committee is for information only. No further action on the part of the Board is required at this time.

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this report to provide background and information about collaboration time and personal learning time in our secondary schools during the 2022-2023 school year.

STRATEGIC PLAN REFERENCE:

Priority 1: Inspired Learners

- Goal 1: Learners have increased capacity to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing world.
 - II. Support educators to deepen their understanding and effective implementation of the curriculum.
 - III. Design and offer a variety of learning options to meet the evolving and diverse needs of learners.
 - VI. Provide tools, technologies and practices to increase learner engagement and agency.

COLLABORATION TIME (CT): OVERVIEW

Secondary schools in Richmond have had collaboration time for the purpose of deepening student learning and professional practice for over ten years. Every secondary school has collaboration time for staff. The table in the following pages provides an overview of collaboration time for 2022-2023, including examples and focus areas of staff engagement over the past year.

PERSONAL LEARNING TIME (PLT): OVERVIEW

Personal Learning Time (PLT) was implemented for the first time in the 2021-2022 school year in eight secondary schools. Prior to the pandemic approximately four schools had organized their learning to include PLT. As of the 2022-2023 school year, all ten secondary schools have PLT. The table in the following pages provides an overview of PLT for 2022-2023 including examples of supports and reflections to guide focus areas for growth and refinement for the coming year.

CONCLUSION:

All secondary schools engaged in a great deal of collaboration and learning together this year to continue to develop and enhance safe, caring, and quality learning experiences for students. Educators value collaborative inquiry and working together in a variety of formats to make a difference for student learning, whether it is in a specific time called Collaboration Time or meeting together at other times of

the day and year. Personal Learning Time has provided important opportunities for student supports beyond regular classroom instruction. Schools continue to reflect upon refinement and enhancement to collaboration and personal learning time opportunities to further enhance strong and positive learning experiences for all staff and students.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Jane MacMillan
Assistant Superintendent*

Collaboration Time			
School Name	Topics/Focus Area Examples	Actions/Examples	Reflections/Next Steps
Boyd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MYP review preparation • Professional Standards discussion (standard #9) • English First People's 12 preparation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare documents and submissions for MYP review • Small group discussions re: Professional Standard #9 • Preparation of materials and reviewing of text for teaching EFP 12 next year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MYP Review starts May 29-31 • Discussion about BCCT Professional Standard #9 will continue to build familiarity • EFP 12 will be taught next year - staff continue to work together reading and discussing texts and curriculum
Burnett	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proficiency and communicating student learning • Indigenous Ways of Knowing • Championing Students/ Student voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curricular and cross-curricular groups explored topics including designing learning statements in student friendly language, incorporating student reflection in conferences and assessments • <i>Wayi Wah!</i> Study Group – a group of 8 – 10 staff worked through Jo Chrona's book to look for ways to better incorporate First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL) • Looking at current practice for how they access student perspectives and agency. What are the curricular and extracurricular opportunities for students to find success? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing learning maps and aligning with Informal Learning Updates • Teacher student conferences – looking more closely at how we include student voice in the assessment and reporting process • Continued learning on Indigenous content and FPPL • Planning for more inclusion of FPPL in all curricular areas. • Looking at what we celebrate (academic and athletic awards) and how we can extend to different ways we can recognize students' strengths
Cambie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation Grant • Learning Maps • MS Teams Classroom • First Peoples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment, growth in understanding in working with proficiency scales • Working for greater student accessibility via language with Learning Maps. • Cross curricular planning among teachers. • Conversations about shifting from Portal to MS Teams Classroom • Teachers, Librarian/DRC staff, gathering resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language still needs refinement. Continued work with Learning Maps as they need to continuously be updates while being used • Continued focus for various departments • Shift for staff to Teams platform in September • Continued planning for courses next year
MacNeill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 8 ADST and Fine Arts – developing common proficiency scales • Career Life Exploration (CLE) 8-12 Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing/refining proficiency scale assessments throughout the year. Final action: the year-end reflection co-created by the team • Gathering data from Gr 9 - 12 re: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of reflections for next steps for 2023/24 school year • Analyze data gathered through

	<p>Review & Data Collection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELL • Department Collaboration 	<p>experiences with the current CE/CLE/CLC delivery models & other data sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of ELL supports, resources and reporting • Department collaboration re: proficiency scales, alignment, review and setting department goals 	<p>student focus groups in Gr 9, 11 and 12 Advisories and make any recommended changes for program delivery in 2023/2024 school year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligning departmental assessment practices and supports; purchasing of new diverse texts across departments
McMath Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting Order • SEL (supporting anxious students) • Indigenous Focus: • Truth & Reconciliation • English First Peoples 12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of proficiency: development of consistent language, application, revision of lessons, etc. • Supporting Anxious Students Group (Teachers, Admin, Counselors, Learning Support) to discuss practical ideas and insights in supporting students • Review actions and procedures for identifying students and different levels of support available • Explore strategies, actions to help individual students and whole classes • Whole school and departments: consideration of how to decolonize classrooms, curriculum, reporting • Development/application of territorial acknowledgements, student reflections, land-based learning, proficiency scales • Teachers joint-planning for new course • Methods of application and delivery of content/ material for authenticity • Development of overview/background/ history of First Peoples in BC (and Canada) for students for context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision to assessment practices; development and application of consistent language • Continued review, development, and application 2023-24 • Continuation of ongoing support • Enhanced process for identifying and supporting students • Continuation of workshops, Pro-D, department collaboration • Implementation in 2023-24
McNair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department Goals • Assessment: Proficiency Scales, Interims • Indigenous Focused Grad Requirement • Classroom Fiction Selection Guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing Ed Facilitators with an discussion items to use with departments. Ed Facs report/discuss department conversations at the Ed Fac meetings the week after Collab Time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will continue to provide Ed Facilitators with topics of discussion with departments during Collab and have these school leaders share at monthly meetings.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Needs and Challenges 		
McRoberts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BC Indigenous courses • Assessment • Student IEPs • Supporting student teachers • Innovation grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course planning & related fieldtrips for enrichment • Departments meeting with Learning Services consultant to develop learning maps • Proficiency scales design and FileMaker sessions • Discussing replacement goals and adaptations • Mentorship workshops • Gr. 8 Team collaboration to discuss success strategies to support students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are committed to continual professional development and promoting positive learning environments for their students, responsive to individual student needs and the needs of the student community. • Next Steps: Staff will continue to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ meet and collaborate with colleagues to share and develop resources for the new BC Indigenous courses, and co-plan potential learning opportunities ○ create positive student experiences by providing more visible supports in classrooms and throughout the school ○ Gr. 8 Team will continue to discuss and develop monthly themes/focus to support secondary school transitions for students
RC Palmer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truth & Reconciliation Committee • Library Learning Commons • Social and emotional Learning exploring barriers to participation in PE classes (focus on grade 8-10) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Pro-D Day with a T&R focus on integration as part of our school story • LLC programming, displays, collection development, etc. • Participated in the inquiry grant process • Held regular meetings at lunch and on collaboration days to explore some of the barriers with participation in PE • All grade 8-10 students were surveyed throughout the year. Feedback and survey results were collated and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize an Orange Shirt Day assembly • Continue organizing activities for Orange Shirt Day and Indigenous History Month • Authentically incorporate reconciliation into our school story • Offer a writer's workshop option to support students in developing written communication skills. • Based on the results and subsequent discussion we are looking at ways we can deliver our program that limit such issues as "fear of failure", "fear of being watched", etc.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Connectedness 	<p>analyzed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLC staff /counselors have been meeting regularly to discuss and explore: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relationships ○ Connection activities within the school ○ Inviting community groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit Palmer Pride with our students, staff and parents. As we look to the next school year, we look towards building on our school story of connectedness but more specifically focusing on Palmer Pride and what it means; look to creating a Palmer Pride Matrix with student /staff collaboration
RSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment Practices • Communicating Student Learning • Curricular Competencies/Planning • Equity and Diversity • Learning Environment Spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing Learning Maps in Social Studies • Defining Proficiency Scales for grades 8-9 in various departments • Discussing Interim Report Format (Interim committee surveyed staff and proposed ideas within departments) • IB Group 4 Project Planning • Science 9 Science Fair Planning • Foods Curriculum Planning • Modern Languages Film Festival Planning • Planning for National Indigenous Day • Applying and Using Reconciliation and innovation Grants • Choosing new EDI texts in English for courses in general and for the new FPE 10 and 12 courses • Using the Learning Spaces Innovation Grant • Improving Outdoor Learning Environment (example, addition of tables and logs, and the planting of the Miyawaki Pocket Forest) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff value Collaboration Time as an opportunity to develop school-wide goals, discuss best practices, implement innovative strategies, and plan events that involve the whole community • Next year we will continue to use Collaboration Time to develop and refine proficiency scales. We will continue to enrich classroom learning around the ministry requirements for First Peoples Learning in English and Socials

SLSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each Collab Day, staff provide our leadership group with the staff involved in collaboration session, description/objectives of CT activity and reflection of session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Proficiency Scales • Planning for field experiences • Generative AI and the implication of its use for both students and teachers • Planning a multi-grade, cross-disciplinary workshop for students to observe the day of Truth and Reconciliation • Discussion for a few the Innovation Grants awarded to our school including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Library Learning Commons ○ Learning Resources spaces • Lifeskills teachers and educational assistant collaboration around social stories for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We plan on implementing the following next year to promote more cross-curricular and intentional collaboration that permeates beyond our designated CT days. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School-wide focus topics ○ Encouragement of interdepartmental collaboration ○ A link between topics covered in Pro-D to collaboration • With transitions upcoming, such as the implementation of the K-12 Student Reporting Policy Framework BC First Peoples 12 and English First Peoples 12, Collaboration Time will continue to provide critical opportunities teachers to share their experiences and chart the road ahead
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Personal Learning Time		
School Name	Overview	Reflections/Next Steps
Boyd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students access teachers for support twice per week for 1-hour Tuesdays/Thursdays Breakfast and Learn club where we supply hot breakfast and student tutoring to students who attend PLT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to keep students attending PLT on Tuesdays and Thursdays to make up missed assessments and assignments Grow the PLT Breakfast and learn program-access more food supplies from Food Bank and Feed-u-cate funds.
Burnett	<p>Guided by our value of student choice and voice, we used PLT for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with teachers for re-assessments One on One student teacher conferences Mini lessons to support learning in classes Open gyms – yoga, personal training, individual and small group games, walks LLC – open library for individual study and small groups project work Multi-purpose Room – space for students to connect or to work collaboratively Make up missed work or labs in various subjects Club meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can we better track student activity? – we used web-based sign up and are reviewing tracking and data to see what students are accessing. Creating more opportunities that are not curricular based but around wellness – arts-based support for mental health, more options for physical health, games clubs that support core competencies Continue to champion student choice and voice as the driver of PLT
Cambie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All areas offer support for students to gain teacher assistance with course work, assignment completion, missed labs, time/place for student collaborative assignments. Extension opportunities in music, science, PE, Art, Drama for fun as well as supporting classroom work. AP courses draw students for deeper study, practice, refinement of learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue these opportunities for 2023/24 Access to technology is appreciated for those who do not have access at home These activities offer time for connection and support student growth and interpersonal relationships
MacNeill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each subject area represented with teachers available for learning/tutorial support for all subject areas Learning Centre was very well used as students sought out resource teachers for additional help. Resource teachers used this as a planned meaningful check in time with students on their caseload Counsellors have used PLT time to connect with large groups as well as offering smaller activities designed to build relationships, support students who have struggles with peer relationships, anxieties, and stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLT offerings related to physical and hands on experiences have been popular Teachers learning space(s) are a welcome spot during PLT to support the grade 12 or grade 11 students as they work to complete assignments and develop their plans for the Capstone projects Most consistent participation has been in the areas of academic support and physical activity. Students have become increasingly more responsible with their PLT choices

McMath Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McMath Care Club during PLT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Club Members volunteer to come early at 7:30am to make breakfast for students who are in need for food. ○ The Care Club has become an inclusive social occasion for various students to connect with each other as they cook and eat. Students can also take food for lunch as well • Students use PLT time to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Retake exams/tests ○ Extra time for projects in science lab and other specialty programs for ADST and Fine Arts ○ The gym and the fitness room is open for students to work out or play games with friends ○ Majority students who attend PLT meet with teachers to get extra help or review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This club is very inclusive, students prepare, eat together. This builds connection and relationships for our students and staff • As part of our Secondary Structure Review process, we included questions to gather information and input about PLT from parents/caregivers, students, and staff; results were overwhelming to keep PLT in its current plan • Data from the survey has been shared with parents and McMath staff. The information from the survey has shown that students use PLT for their learning and using their time that is best for them. The current duration and the timing of PLT is preferred.
McNair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because of bus schedules, all students are participate in Flex Time two days a week after first block– students choose a class from their schedule to attend • We have recently implemented an electronic sign-up so we can track attendance. Both students and parents are pleased with the extra support provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff has recently voted to provide Flex Time five days a week to provide support for our students and to give them the opportunity to seek help and take some ownership of their learning by responsibly choosing a class to attend
McRoberts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The inclusion of PLT in the timetable has been widely appreciated by students, parents, and staff, allowing students to pursue learning and revision with more flexibility, and giving those students for whom mornings are a struggle the opportunity to be more successful in their first class of the day. • Teachers appreciate the extended time to give focused feedback and help to their students and set them up for success prior to class beginning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to monitor and seek feedback regarding PLT to best support students and teachers. • PLT has become an integral part of our semester structure to support student learning and to provide year-long prep time for teachers • The option for students to choose their learning adventure on PLT days has been helpful to support the mental health of our students
RC Palmer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the 2022-23, school year, Palmer incorporated shorter PLT periods on Wednesdays and Thursdays. This was revised from the original PLT model where Palmer PLT was held on Tuesdays and Wednesdays for 120mins. These revisions were made after hearing feedback from the school community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Along with the revisions from the first year of PLT to current day, as a school we also introduced the online PLT booking system this school year to help students and staff with bookings and time management. • We have also heard some common themes around PLT from our students: <p>“PLT allows me to mentally prepare for the day, alleviate stress and be better prepared.”</p>

		<p>“I think PLT time is VERY useful. I feel that giving us time to do extra work or study for classes will help me do better in my classes and I feel like my grades will improve.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are looking to build on the PLT schedule incorporated at the start of 2022-23 school year – same days and same times. With these consistent measures, we look to provide additional opportunities for connections during PLT – we are hoping to slowly introduce club activities during PLT
RSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We continued to see high attendance in our learning resource department, gyms, the library learning commons and in the multipurpose room. Students utilize the opportunity for one-on-one or small group support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLT committee met several times this year to discuss possible changes to the timing of PLT (switching to a different period in the day) and the days of PLT (switching to different days of the week). We continue to survey stakeholder groups and will look to trial opportunities next year with a focus on increasing student participation and engagement during PLT.
SLSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLT staff team and SLSS Admin put together a document outlining the guiding principles for PLT. The principles include giving students choice and ownership of their learning. • Staff mark availability to students using MyWeeklyPlanner or by their own chosen methods. Common spaces in our school are also available. Some staff have opted to note their availability using other means. 	<p>Learning and Next Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibility of Events: Teachers use different methods to share PLT events with students. As there is no centralized system, visibility is variable. • Hot Spots: Popular spots for PLT include the Library Learning Commons, gyms and workout facilities, and common areas including the lounges and wings. • Teachers typically have a usual group of students that attend their spaces regularly. This suggests that there have developed some spaces that in which students feel comfortable. More investigation is needed.

Report to the Education Committee Public

Date: June 14, 2023

From: Jane MacMillan, Assistant Superintendent
Ravinder Johal, Director of Instruction, Student Services & Data Analysis

Subject: **Alternate Program Review Report (Attached)**

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Education Committee recommends the Richmond Board of Education to direct staff to proceed with the recommendations contained in the Alternate Program Review report.

STRATEGIC PLAN REFERENCE:

Two of the Strategic Plan priorities and three associated goals provide an appropriate lens through which to examine the programs, policies, and practices related to the District's alternate programs:

Priority 1: Inspired Learners

Goal 1: Learners have increased capacity to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing world.

Goal 2: The District fosters resilient and healthy life-long learners.

Priority 2: Equity and Inclusion

Goal 1: District learning environments are equitable and inclusive.

The five-year Strategic Plan provides clarity, guidance, and direction to engage in planning for growth, change and improvement.

BACKGROUND:

Within the District, there are several alternate programs which support vulnerable learners who find success in the mainstream education programs elusive for a variety of reasons. These alternate programs were the focus of this review:

- Station Stretch (SS) - a standalone facility comprised of four programs:
 - Horizons (supporting students in Grades 8 through 10)
 - Stretch (supporting students in Grades 9 and 10)
 - Outreach (supporting students in Grades 11 and 12)
 - Streetview (supporting students in Grades 11 and 12)
- Combined Studies (CS) - Grades 11 & 12 (located at Hugh Boyd Secondary)
- Integrated Academics (IA) - Grades 11 & 12 (located at Matthew McNair Secondary)
- Colts Young Parent Program (YPP) - Pregnant & Parenting Youth (located at Richmond Secondary)
- Richmond School Program (RSP) - Grades 1 to 7 (Blundell Elementary)

The district engaged Peter Drescher, Education Consultant, to conduct the review. Mr. Drescher is an Educational Development Consultant, with extensive education experience as a school administrator, Assistant Superintendent, and Deputy Superintendent prior to moving into consultant work. During the past eleven years, his consulting work has included offshore school and independent school inspections, Ministry enrolment audit teams, and Quality Reviews for Provincial Outreach and Resource Programs on behalf of the Ministry's Inclusive Education department. Mr. Drescher has also been contracted with school districts to complete educational program and financial reviews of online schools, continuing education, and various other district programs and services.

The attached report outlines the steps taken in the Richmond School District's Alternate Program Review process, including a detailed profile, summary, and review of each program, perspectives of school administrators, counsellors, and students regarding the programs, as well as general observations and recommendations.

CONCLUSION:

The Richmond School District is committed to enacting change that will improve experiences for all learners. Alternate programs in the Richmond School District work to support some of the District's most vulnerable learners on their pathway to success, and the review has provided an important opportunity to engage in determining next steps to continue to enhance supportive opportunities for students.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Jane MacMillan
Assistant Superintendent*

*Rav Johal
Director of Instruction, Student Services and Data Analysis*

Attachment: Alternate Program Review Report



ALTERNATE PROGRAM REVIEW

PREPARED BY:

PETER B. DRESCHER
EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

MAY 2023

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“Alternate education programs focus on educational, social and emotional issues for students whose needs are not being met in a traditional school program. An alternate education program provides its support through differentiated instruction, specialized program delivery and enhanced counselling services based on students’ needs.”

Policy Statement, BC Ministry of Education

BACKGROUND

The Richmond School District provides educational programs and services to approximately 21,000 students in Grades K-12, operating 37 elementary schools, 10 secondary schools, and a blended and online learning school. Also within the District are several alternate programs which support at-risk, vulnerable learners who find success in the mainstream education programs elusive. It is these alternate programs that are the focus of this review. They are listed below:

1. **Station Stretch (SS)** - A standalone facility comprised of four programs:
 - a. Horizons (Grades 8 through 10)
 - b. Stretch (Grades 9 and 10)
 - c. Outreach (Grades 11 and 12)
 - d. Streetview (Grades 11 and 12)
2. **Combined Studies (CS)** - Grades 11 and 12 (located at Hugh Boyd Secondary)
3. **Integrated Academics (IA)** - Grades 11 and 12 (located at Matthew McNair Secondary)
4. **Colts Young Parent Program (YPP)** - School age and young adults (located at Richmond Secondary)
5. **Richmond School Program (RSP)** - Grades 1 to 7 (located at Blundell Elementary)

It should be noted that the referral process for receiving services from the District’s **Hospital / Homebound (HH)** teacher (based at Station Stretch) is also a part of this review.

SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

The review was undertaken during the two-month period of April and May 2022, with subsequent follow-up in the fall. The review examined, provided commentary, and made recommendations where appropriate on the following areas of interest to the District:

- District policies, procedures, and practices relevant to alternate programs.

- District oversight and direction-setting regarding the staffing and supervision of alternate programs.
- Referral and intake processes for these programs through an equity lens
- Enrolment and staffing.
- Student transitions into and from these programs.
- Recognition and awareness of the various alternate program options throughout the District.
- Curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices implemented in the alternate programs.

During the review the following actions were undertaken:

- A review of various documents pertaining to alternate programs, including but not limited to district policies and procedures, referral forms, District-Based Team terms of reference, and the District's Strategic Plan.
- An examination of the "web presence" for each alternate program.
- Site visits to each program.
- A review of sample Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and Student Learning Plans (SLPs).
- A review of sample teacher planning documents as well as samples of student work
- In-person meetings with district administration and program/school-based administration and staff.
- Virtual meetings with secondary administrators and counsellors in schools that do not host these alternate programs.
- Focus group sessions with a sampling of students from four of the programs (Colts Young Parent Program, Combined Studies, Integrated Academics, and Station Stretch).
- A review of available data regarding the profiles of students enrolled in alternate programs. This included examining the numbers of students with diverse abilities and disabilities, learners of Indigenous ancestry and Children and Youth in the care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

It was evident that the staff in the various programs have a deep sense of caring and compassion for their students. Students were highly complimentary of their teachers and support staff and appreciative of their focus on building positive relationships. Program staff are to be commended for their passion and commitment to helping students overcome their personal, social, emotional, and academic challenges so that they may successfully navigate their learning pathways towards graduation.

GUIDING DOCUMENTS AND DISTRICT OVERSIGHT

STRATEGIC PLAN

The District is in the second year of a five-year Strategic Plan (2020-2025). The Plan is comprised of five strategic priorities, nineteen goals and multiple objectives. Two of the priorities and three associated goals provide an appropriate lens through which to examine the programs, policies, and practices related to the District's alternate programs:

Priority 1: Inspired Learners

Goal 1: Learners have increased capacity to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing world.

Goal 2: The District fosters resilient and healthy life-long learners.

Priority 2: Equity and Inclusion

Goal 1: District learning environments are equitable and inclusive.

The five-year Strategic Plan provides clarity, guidance and direction to schools and programs as they engage in site-level planning for growth and progressive change.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

For the purposes of this review, the following policies and procedures were deemed relevant:

- Policy 102: District Philosophy - Diversity and Inclusion (December 2009)
- Policy 512.6: Special Education (March 1990)
- Policy 512.6.R: Special Education - General Consideration in Special Placement (March 1990)
- Policy 512.6.1: Hospital and Homebound Education (March 1990)
- District-Based Team - Guiding Principles and Referral Process (September 2021)

Interviews with secondary school administrators and counsellors were instructive to the reviewer. In support of inclusion as a policy imperative, there is a general understanding among school administrators and counsellors that they must ensure that all available resources to support students in their neighbourhood school have been exhausted prior to the consideration of an alternate placement. School staff frequently articulated their belief that a sense of belonging in a school community contributes to student success. Staff are highly motivated to retain students at their neighbourhood school.

District policy and procedure statements that support inclusion more explicitly include:

Policy 102 (December 2009) - Diversity and Inclusion

“The Board recognizes the diverse needs, abilities, experiences, and personal circumstances of its students. Consequently, it will provide a continuum of learning services, beginning with inclusive classroom practices, and including ESL support that is intended to enable all students to achieve their personal potential with respect to the curriculum.”

Policy 512.6.R (March 1990) - Special Education: General Consideration in Special Placement:

“Before a child is considered for special placement, it must be demonstrated that, with Support Services support, every effort has been made to meet the child’s educational needs in a regular class setting.”

“From the day a child is placed in a special facility, all efforts will be directed towards his/her successful return to regular programmes.”

District-Based Team Process and Information Backgrounder (September 2021)

“It is expected that School Based Teams will have met several times around a student and will have exhausted available and accessible school and district resources before referring a student to DBT.”

DISTRICT-BASED TEAM

The District-Based Team (DBT) is comprised of a core group of nine professional staff including district administrators, outreach teachers, inclusion support team members, a mental health consultant, a speech-language pathologist, and a school psychologist, all of whom meet on a monthly basis. The DBT adjudicates referrals and makes recommendations for additional supports or some alternative program placements. The Team follows five guiding principles which are:

- 1. Most students with educational, social, emotional, or behavioural issues can be supported in their school.*
- 2. School team members are the key providers of support. They develop positive relationships with students, identify difficulties, and provide accommodations.*
- 3. Schools commit to supporting their students and pursuing available resources through their School-Based Team before considering a referral to District-Based Team.*
- 4. Success for at-risk students requires a team approach which utilizes the skills and expertise of the classroom teacher, as well as other school and district-based staff, parents, and community agencies.*

5. *Rather than directing outcomes, District-Based Team makes recommendations to the school, while also supporting student transitions to alternative programs where appropriate.*

District-Based Team Guiding Principles and Referral Process

At the time of this review, the Horizons component of Station Stretch was the only alternate program to require a student to be referred through the District-Based Team. All other student placement referrals were made directly to each program. This did not however, preclude the DBT from recommending a placement to those programs.

PROGRAM SUPERVISION

While overarching responsibility for alternate programs resides within the Learning Services Department, day-to-day responsibility for each of the individual program's rests with the site-based principal. In the case of Station Stretch, responsibility lies with the District Administrator, Student Services while a Head Teacher is assigned certain on-site duties.

In the case of Integrated Academics, Combined Studies, and the Colts Young Parent Program, site-based school administrators take an "as-needed" role in adjudicating program referrals, leaving the decision-making regarding student referrals primarily to the program staff.

The Director of Instruction, Student Services & Data Analytics coordinates four meetings during the school year with the administration and staff of the various alternate programs. These meetings are organized for the purpose of providing district updates as well as to share ideas and strategies around best practices; it is also an opportunity for program staff to raise issues of common concern.

ALTERNATE PROGRAM PROFILES / SUMMARIES / REVIEWS

STATION STRETCH

Station Stretch is the District's primary standalone "Type Three" alternate program facility, enrolling 65 of the District's 70 fully funded (as of September 30, 2021 enrolment) alternative program students. As per [Ministry Policy](#), Alternate Education Programs "must satisfy certain requirements to be deemed a Type Three facility. If the programs meet those requirements, then their students qualify for 1.0 FTE (full time equivalent) funding to the school district." In addition to verification and evidence of age and attendance, eligibility for full funding also requires that the program will have:

1. *An intake process to facilitate District referrals or self-referral.*
2. *An annually reviewed learning plan for each student, either an official Individualized Education Plan or a Student Learning Plan that clearly defines the objectives for the*

student, additional services provided as required, progress made and any transition plans.

3. *An exit strategy to facilitate the student's transition back into regular school system, continuing education centre, graduation or to work or post-secondary training and education.*
4. *Evidence of additional services as required by the student population (e.g., youth workers, drug and alcohol counsellors, etc.).*

BC Ministry Alternate Education Policy (2009)

All of the students enrolled at Station Stretch have an Individualized Education Plan. A review of these plans indicate that the Type Three funding eligibility requirements are being addressed for each student enrolled there.

Station Stretch has been operational since 1975 and has been at its current location since 1977. Its purpose is to provide an educational opportunity for those students who required a setting other than a neighborhood school in order to experience success. The approximate cost of operating at its current storefront location at 5280 Minoru Boulevard, including lease, custodial, maintenance, and utilities, is approximately \$300,000 per year. The five-year term expires August 31, 2023.

As noted earlier in this report, the Station Stretch site houses four specialized programs:

Horizons

Horizons is designed for Grades 8, 9 and 10 students exhibiting mental health challenges with a view to building safe and meaningful connections between teachers and students. It is rare to have Grade 8 students enrolled. Students can often exhibit chronically poor attendance or a lack of engagement in their learning, leading to challenges in learning success. The goal is to provide educational and therapeutic support to enable students to return to their community school or transition to other programs. It is most common for these students to transition to the Stretch program.

Stretch

Stretch is designed for Grades 9 and 10 students with a focus on academic upgrading as well as behavioural, social, and moderate mental health stabilization. Student engagement is aligned with the redesigned BC curriculum, including a focus on the core competencies, project-based learning, and the use of technology to support learning, as well as social/emotional learning and the chance for students to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways. Students from this program typically transition to mainstream high school programs such as Integrated Academics (Matthew McNair Secondary), Combined Studies (Hugh Boyd Secondary) or Streetview.

Streetview

Streetview is designed to support continuous entry admission for Grades 11 and 12 students who are completing graduation requirements in a personalized setting. Learning is technology-based, self-paced, and allows students to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways.

Outreach

Outreach is designed to serve those students who have demonstrated chronic absenteeism for a variety of reasons, or who find discomfort in mainstream schooling or alternate program settings. These students are typically involved with one or more government or community agencies (e.g., Richmond Mental Health, Touchstone Family Association, Youth Probation, Carlyle Youth Concurrent Disorders Centre, PLEA Community Services, etc.). Students receive 1:1 instruction from two Outreach teachers and/or the Hospital / Homebound teacher (1-2 hours per week). The goal for all Outreach students is to support their transition to a mainstream or alternate secondary program.

Both the Outreach and Streetview programs provide both required and elective courses that allow students to graduate.

Referral / Intake Process

The intake processes vary for each of the programs at Station Stretch:

- Referrals to Horizons are reviewed by the District-Based Team.
- Stretch and Streetview referrals are reviewed by the Head Teacher with input from the site social worker and resource teacher with support from the District Administrator, Student Services as needed.
- Outreach referrals are managed by the two Outreach teachers with support from the District Administrator, Student Services as needed.

It should be noted that some program staff, high school administrators and counsellors have expressed concerns about the shortcomings of the referral process, which are further detailed under Administrator/Counsellor Perspectives (pp. 19-21).

Enrolment / Staffing

The table below compares Station Stretch enrolment from September 30, 2021, to April 30, 2022.

Program	September 30, 2021	April 30, 2022
Horizons 8-10	10	8
Stretch 9-10	27	30
Streetview 11-12	7	12
Outreach	30	35
Total	74	85

The program is currently staffed as follows:

- 2.5 FTE Outreach Teachers
- 6.0 FTE Horizons / Stretch / Streetview teachers
- 0.5 FTE Learning Resource Teacher
- 4.0 FTE Youth Support Workers
- 1.0 FTE Social Worker (funded through Community Link)
- 1.0 FTE Administrative Assistant

In addition, 0.5 FTE Hospital / Homebound teacher is also located at the site. Two Mental Health Clinicians from Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) provide the equivalent of 5 days of service per week to select students. The clinicians are funded through the District's Community Link budget. As outlined on the Ministry of Education website:

"The ministry provides Community Link funding to all 60 school districts to support the academic achievement and social functioning of vulnerable students. Programs and services can include breakfast, lunch and snack programs, academic supports, counseling, youth workers and after-school programs.

Decisions about specific programs and services are left to school boards so that the needs of individual students and local communities are met. Each school district has a designated staff member in the CommunityLINK coordinator role."

Based on the current enrolment, Station Stretch can be considered well-staffed and is operating well below capacity. The restored language of the Collective Agreement states that the class size maximum for "Integrated Programs" such as these alternate programs is 15 students. Exclusive of the learning resource teacher, Horizons / Stretch / Streetview student to teaching staff ratios were 8.7 to 1 in September and 10.0 to 1 in April.

Planning for Growth and Progressive Change

During the 2018-2019 school year, staff at Station Stretch took part in an internal review of programs, practices, services, and learner engagement. Known as the "Minoru Initiative", the process resulted in several initiatives being undertaken, including:

- Working toward more seamless connections, better continuity, and smoother transitions between the Horizons, Stretch and Streetview programs.
- Having staff teach across the programs, taking better advantage of subject matter expertise, making more efficient use of staffing, and moving toward higher levels of collaboration amongst staff.

It is important to note that staff expressed the perspective that the Covid pandemic has hampered a more fulsome implementation of all of the intended change initiatives.

Success Rates / Performance Indicators

The availability of quantitative or qualitative evidence which indicates that Station Stretch programs are making a difference is an area of demonstrated growth. The District Administrator, Student Services analyzed the number of students who chose to leave the education system for a variety of reasons over a 4 year period and found that disengagement rates fell sharply during that timeframe:

- 2017-2018 27%
- 2018-2019 7.6%
- 2019-2020 6.7%
- 2020-2021 4%

This decrease in the number of students who left a program was due to concerted effort from the Station Stretch staff to provide increased flexibility in programming, additional site-based meetings around students who were struggling, and a commitment to professional learning in trauma-informed practices. Additional data made available for this review includes the following:

- A total of nineteen students have graduated from Streetview since 2020 (8 in 2020 and 11 in 2021). One student returned to a mainstream program.
- Since 2017, 66 of 91 (73%) Stretch students who transitioned to Integrated Academics, Combined Studies or a mainstream high school program graduated.
- There were 30 Outreach students registered in the program as of September 30, 2021:
 - 4 have completed the requirements for graduation
 - 6 are not attending
 - 1 transferred to another school district
 - 5 are taking courses with Streetview (4) or Integrated Academics (1)
 - 14 remain with Outreach.

Station Stretch is to be commended for their efforts and diligence in tracking the learning journeys of students who have transitioned to other alternative or mainstream programs.

Transitions

Most students who attend Stretch 9 and 10, transition to Integrated Academics (10 in 2021-2022) or Combined Studies (17 in 2021-2022) for their senior academic program. During interviews, several of these students commented on their positive experiences which they believed were due in large part to smaller class sizes, the use of a wider variety of learning strategies, and a clarity of expectations, all of which resulted in a stronger sense of belonging.

Giving due consideration to the unique nature of each program's operation, some measure of consistency and coherence between programs can only help students attain higher levels of success.

Program Recognition / Awareness

As noted earlier, Station Stretch has been in existence since 1975. Throughout the program's history, education in BC has undergone several curriculum revisions and the District itself has restructured, moving from a junior/senior high school configuration to having ten Grade 8-12 secondary schools. The Station Stretch programs are well-known to long-serving school administrators and counsellors, but less so to more recent arrivals to the District. Many mainstream parents/guardians and students have widely held negative perceptions of the program, partially rooted in history but mostly because they are not properly informed of the difference the program can make in helping students with challenging circumstances navigate their way through their high school years. Fostering a greater awareness of the design, purpose, and philosophy of Station Stretch could be a focus with staff, students, and the community, and the Station Stretch staff continue to develop its website with the intention of addressing these issues.

HOSPITAL / HOMEBOUND (HH)

The District has a 0.5 FTE teacher assigned to the Hospital / Homebound position. The individual who holds this position is also a 0.5 FTE Outreach teacher. This is a very appropriate pairing as there is considerable overlap in terms of supporting student learning challenges concomitant with mental health concerns. At the time of this review, the teacher was providing service to 39 students (13 Outreach, 26 Hospital / Homebound).

This teacher was helpful and forthcoming in providing perspectives during this review process. They are very experienced in the role and reported that the nature of student needs/profiles had changed over time. There are far fewer elementary and far more secondary referrals. The number of referrals for non-physical injuries (primarily mental health concerns) has grown to make up 75-90% of the teacher's caseload.

The teacher also noted that there is not a full awareness by classroom teachers, counsellors, and parents/guardians of the services provided through the Hospital / Homebound (HH) program.

Aside from the Hospital and Homebound Education Policy 512.6.1 (March 1990) there is little else to describe the program, eligibility for service, or the role and responsibilities of the Hospital / Homebound teacher, classroom teacher or school. There is also no district referral form to access services.

“Hospital and homebound instruction is provided for students who are absent from school for 10 days or longer, through confinement to their home or hospital during the school year for medical or other reasons, each of which will be considered individually. Instruction shall support the respective school programmes which the student would receive in school.

The district's hospital and homebound teacher(s) will provide resource help in the programme of instruction set out by the student's regular teacher.

If a student has contracted a communicable disease, instruction will be provided once a doctor's certificate is received stating that it is permissible for the student to receive instruction.”

Policy 512.6.1

In addition, the HH teacher reports that referrals due to physical injuries or medical concerns work reasonably well, but referrals for mental health issues have added complications, such as the student not attending class for lengthy periods of time, resulting in significant learning gaps. Referrals are generally made through phone calls or emails between counsellors and the HH teacher.

COMBINED STUDIES (CS) – (Hugh Boyd Secondary) and INTEGRATED ACADEMICS (IA) – (Matthew McNair Secondary)

Combined Studies (CS) and Integrated Academics (IA), though similar in intent and serving students with behavioural, social, emotional, or mental health issues, are operationally different. Both support Grade 11 and 12 students who have struggled in mainstream programs, exhibiting one or more of behavioural, mental health, and/or other personal/emotional issues that form barriers to school success. The two programs’ current locations are intended to provide convenient access to both the eastern and western regions of the District. One of the primary goals of both of these programs is to support students in obtaining a graduation diploma and allow them to transition successfully to some form of post-secondary training or education.

Program Similarities

- Students can choose to complete all of their courses within the program or can access elective course offerings in the host school’s mainstream timetable.
- Both programs subscribe to a form of “mastery learning”, supporting students to submit fully edited work that is accurate and complete.

- Referrals are made directly to both programs and are adjudicated by program staff. School administration participate in the process on an as-needed basis.

Program Differences

- Combined Studies operates on a quarter system while Integrated Academics is semestered.
- Combined Studies operates structured classes for core courses and uses an individualized, self-paced approach to offering electives. Integrated Academics operates structured classes for all its courses.
- Integrated Academics is larger and tends to offer more activity-based learning opportunities.
- Proportionally, a greater percentage of IA students access mainstream courses than CS students.

Enrolment and Staffing

Both programs struggle to attract students from the mainstream programs at the other secondary schools in Richmond. Integrated Academics currently enrolls 40 students with 26 of the students being drawn from the mainstream enrolment at the host site (McNair Secondary). Station Stretch accounts for an additional 10 students. Combined Studies currently enrolls 23 students with Station Stretch being the previous placement for 17 of those students.

Station Stretch staff had indicated that placement of their students at Combined Studies has been more advantageous because of its quarterly intake procedures. Integrated Academics intake procedures are seen to be less flexible with its twice yearly, semestered intake.

The Integrated Academics program is staffed at 2.72 FTE teachers and a 1.0 FTE youth support worker. The District provides 1.28 FTE designated teacher staffing with the remainder of 1.44 FTE coming from the school's mainstream staffing allocation. The September 30, 2021, 1701 submission included a student headcount of 37 and a student FTE of 34.41. Based on the headcount, the staffing ratio was 13.6 students to 1 teacher and based on FTE it was 12.6 students per teacher. This does not take into account the fact that nearly half of the students are taking as many as 40 mainstream courses, which are taught by mainstream teachers and which would therefore further reduce the student-teacher ratio to approximately 10.7 students to each teacher.

The Combined Studies program is staffed at 2.57 FTE teachers and a 1.0 youth support worker. The District provides 2.00 FTE designated teacher staffing with the remainder of 0.57 FTE coming from the school's mainstream staffing allocation. The program is operating under capacity given current staffing levels. The September 30, 2021, 1701 submission included a student headcount of 26 and a student FTE of 19.25. Based on headcount, the student to teacher ratio was 10.1 to 1, and based on student FTE it was 7.1 to 1. Again, this does not consider the fact that some

students are taking mainstream courses which would further reduce the student to teacher ratio. With the Collective Agreement language indicating a maximum of 15 students per class, both of these programs are well below the required limits.

Success Rates and Performance Indicators

Given the complex student needs, both programs have been successful in supporting students in obtaining graduation status. The table below provides the graduation rates for each program.

Graduation Rates: Integrated Academics & Combined Studies

School Year	Integrated Academics		Combined Studies		
2018-2019	20 of 22	91%	17 of 20	85%	3*
2019-2020	25 of 30	83%	11 of 17	65%	3*
2020-2021	24 of 24	100%	19 of 23	83%	2*

The Combined Studies figures indicated by an asterisk* represents the number of students who transferred to mainstream programs, to Outreach or who transferred out-of-district. As such, these students are not included in the number of students who earned their credential in the program. Combined Studies staff also reported anecdotally that on a yearly basis, an average of 5-6 graduates choose to continue their education at college or in some form of post-secondary training.

Program Recognition and Awareness

School administrators and counsellors have a general awareness of the two programs, but find details about their intended purpose, the manner in which they operate, admissions criteria, referral processes, and rationale for acceptance or rejection of candidates difficult to access and subsequently navigate. Combined Studies does have a program outline for candidates which could be further developed to help counsellors have more informed conversations with parents/guardians and students about possible placement. Integrated Academics provided highly detailed written responses to the reviewer's questions which could also serve as a basis for a detailed program outline that could be accessed by counsellors and administrators from other secondary schools.

School administrators and counsellors also have indicated that the differing quarter vs. semester intake procedures program-to-program can be problematic for students and families in need of more immediate support. Currently, there is no continuous entry or exit for either program.

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) & Student Learning Plans (SLPs)

Fully funded Type Three alternate programs require that all students have either an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a Student Learning Plan (SLP). As indicated earlier, Station Stretch has opted to prepare IEPs for all of its students. Integrated Academics and Combined

Studies are not Type Three funded programs and therefore only students with a special education designation require an IEP. There is, however, value in engaging students in a meaningful conversation in the development of an IEP or SLP. This could help guide students, support them in self-monitoring/assessment and inform programming. Revisiting and revising a student's learning focus can be quite easily accomplished by completing, storing, and retrieving individualized plans electronically.

COLTS YOUNG PARENT PROGRAM – Richmond Secondary School

The Colts Young Parent Program (YPP) supports pregnant and parenting youth and young adults between the ages of 13 and 26. Working in partnership with Family Services of Greater Vancouver, it has been in operation since 1991. The program offers an individualized, self-paced education program leading toward a Dogwood or an Adult Graduation Diploma. Intake is continuous. A licensed daycare operates on-site. The program is staffed by 1.0 FTE teacher and a 1.0 FTE Family Support Worker (paid for by Family Services of Greater Vancouver using a portion of the District's Community Link funding). The support worker provides parenting skills development, counselling, crisis intervention support, community service connections and post-program transition guidance. The capacity of the program is largely driven by available daycare space which is limited to 12 children under the age of four.

Referral / Intake Process

Most students are self-referrals or are referred to the program by Vancouver Coastal Health. Prospective students should be no older than 26 years of age, with those who are under 19 given priority. If a prospective student is working with community and/or health care professionals (e.g., social workers, youth workers, etc.) staff may consult with them to gauge program suitability. Staff consider the student's ability to attend regularly and to participate in scheduled meetings, as well as looking at any mental health concerns, addiction issues, and the status of the student's parenting rights (i.e., involvement with the Ministry of Children and Family Development).

Educational Program

Most, if not all, students in the program are working toward an Adult Graduation diploma, which requires the completion of five core and elective courses. It is common for students to take more than one year to complete the requirements. The teacher reports that regular attendance is often an issue for these students, which negatively impacts assignment completion. A review of ten student timetables indicated five students enrolled in only one course, three students registered in two courses, and two students registered in three courses.

Both the teacher and the family support worker are to be commended for investing significant amounts of time to ensure that these students successfully transition to life following graduation. The staff focus on short and long-term goal setting, researching post-secondary

training opportunities, connecting with community services, and seeking out grants and subsidies. When a student leaves the program for weeks, months, or sometimes years, they are still provided with ongoing outreach support.

Students are also well supported in the development of parenting skills. There are regularly scheduled workshops and presentations involving health care and community service specialists. During an interview conducted with several students from the program, each spoke very highly of the academic and emotional support provided by both the teacher and the family support worker and appreciated their assistance in finding their way beyond their schooling experiences. The teacher has developed learning modules reflective of the redesigned BC curriculum in Workplace Math 11, Child Development 12, English 12, BC First Peoples 12, and Career Life Education 12. Some students also take advantage of the mainstream offerings at Richmond Secondary School where the program is co-located.

Individualized Education Plans

Although IEPs are only required for students with designated special needs, the teacher has developed individualized learning plans for all of the students, providing a continuous focus on graduation and goal setting, monitoring and discussing progress toward goal attainment, and identifying and responding to individual learning needs.

Enrolment / Funding Implications

Students enter the program from a variety of backgrounds. Some are refugees or new immigrants to Canada, some are dealing with mental health issues, and others have overcome or are currently working towards overcoming addictions. The table below provides a four-year history of enrolment in the program, based on September 1701 reporting. Much of the enrolment is comprised of adult students. Additional adult enrolment is reported and claimed at the end of February. At the time of this review, enrolment was reported to be eight adults and four school-aged students.

Enrolment History - Colts Young Parent Program

	Enrolment (Sept 30)	Adult	School Age
2018-2019	10	10	0
2019-2020	11	9	2
2020-2021	11	7	4
2021-2022	10	6	4

All students are claimed for Ministry funding for five courses or .625 FTE, which is comprised of a combination of credit courses and Young Parent Program support blocks. The current enrolment includes one graduated adult who is funded for .125 FTE. As reported earlier, at the time of this review, five of ten students were registered in one course, three had two courses and two had three courses. Students are taking between 1 to 3 years to complete adult graduation requirements (five courses), with two years being the norm within the program. It is understood that personal issues and the challenges of raising young children can be a barrier to the student's progress towards obtaining a graduation diploma.

The funding implications for operating a program where students are predominantly adults are noteworthy. For 2021-2022, adult students were funded at \$5030 per 1.0 FTE and school age students at \$7885 per 1.0 FTE. It requires approximately 20 FTE adult students or 13 school age students to cover the average Richmond School district's teacher salary and benefits at \$100,000. The 10 students currently enrolled represent 6.25 FTE and generate approximately \$38,600. Community Link funding of approximately \$75,000 to \$90,000 pays the salary of the family support worker. It is understood that, in attending to matters of equity and inclusion, the District must make decisions in response to the many and varied needs of students, and cost neutrality is not always the objective nor the outcome of financial resource allocation.

RICHMOND SCHOOL PROGRAM (RSP) – Blundell Elementary

The Richmond School Program (RSP) is operated in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) and the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). The program has been developed for elementary-aged students with significant behavioural challenges and/or mental health concerns. The program's purpose is to provide wrap around support to the children, their family, the school, and the community. The child and their environment are assessed with the help of a multi-disciplinary team to better understand each student's individual complex needs. Supports are then provided to assist the child, family, and school in order to increase opportunities for success. The program offers three levels of support:

1. Resource Teacher and Behavioural Consultant support
2. Family therapy
3. A placement classroom if the student is not experiencing success in their home school

While approximately 100 students are receiving one or more levels of support from the program, this review is focused strictly on the 2 placement classrooms located at Blundell Elementary School. The Richmond School Program identifies a maximum capacity of 12 students and typically accommodates students in Grades 2 through 7 in two classrooms (primary and intermediate). Students commonly return to their neighbourhood school for one afternoon per week to maintain connection with their neighbourhood school. Class composition plays a role in determining how many students receive a placement in any given year. The average length of stay at RSP is two years and the range is from 1 to 4 years. At the time of the review, there were 10 students placed in the classroom component of this program (5 per classroom).

Students who are placed in these classrooms demonstrate one or more of significant behavioural, social, emotional and/or mental health issues, and previous efforts to support students at their neighbourhood school have not met with success. There is a focus on learning self-regulation and social skills along with meeting curriculum and core competencies requirements.

Staffing

The program is generously staffed:

- 2.0 FTE Teachers
- 0.5 FTE Learning Resource Teacher who serves as the case manager
- 2.0 FTE Education Assistants
- 0.2 FTE Speech-Language Pathologist
- 0.4 FTE Occupational Therapist (funded by VCH)
- 2.0 FTE Youth Family Support Workers (funded by VCH)

This level of staffing allows for considerable 1 to 1 support and immediate intervention when necessary.

Referral / Intake Process

Referrals for therapeutic and/or behaviour outreach support are made to the VCH offices of the Richmond School Program. The District's Behaviour Outreach Resource Teacher is forwarded outreach referrals and begins a process of meeting with area counsellors and school-based staff, conducting observations and providing assistance through the implementation of intervention strategies. A placement is not considered until all school-based supports have been exhausted, the family is in favor of placement, and agrees to engage in the therapeutic component of the program.

Transitions

Program staff have reported that successful transitions back to a student's neighbourhood school are often influenced by a number of factors, including composition of the classroom to which the student is returning and appropriate training for the receiving classroom teacher, resource teachers, and education assistants who will be supporting the student.

Success Rates / Performance Indicators

There was limited quantifiable or qualitative evidence available to show the degree to which this program makes a difference in terms of social/emotional adjustment or academic success. At the request of the reviewer, the Behaviour Outreach Resource Teacher who works in the Richmond School Program was able to identify only three students currently enrolled at Station

Stretch who had been part of the RSP placement class at some time in the past (a positive result). During interviews, secondary school principals and counsellors were asked if they had any former students from the RSP in their schools and how they were progressing. Responses were varied and ranged from “struggling,” to “coping” and “moderately successful.” The administrators were also quick to point out that a successful transition from Grade 7 to 8 is a challenge for most students with mental health or behavioural concerns.

STUDENT, SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR AND COUNSELLOR PERCEPTIONS OF ALTERNATE PROGRAMS

STUDENT VOICES

Interviews were conducted with groups of students from Station Stretch, Combined Studies, Integrated Academics and the Colts Young Parent Program. They shared the following general observations about their experiences in the various programs:

- All students interviewed were highly complimentary of the teaching and support staff whom they described as understanding, compassionate, caring and encouraging. Working relationships between staff and students were seen to be very positive.
- Students appreciated the more personalized educational environment (e.g., smaller classes, a strong sense of belonging, a perception that the program was less “chaotic” than mainstream programs).
- Students who moved through the various programs (e.g., Stretch to Integrated Academics, Horizons to Stretch) commented on the differences in expectations between programs, which sometimes required considerable adjustment on their part.
- There are varying degrees to which technology is being used as a tool to support learning throughout district alternate programs. An identified issue that surfaced during interviews was the use of different technology platforms in each alternate program (e.g., Scholantis Portal, MS Teams, RVS Moodle). Consideration should be given to the exploration of a consistent technology platform which will support student transitions between alternate programs.
- Students indicated that widely held perceptions of alternate programs by their mainstream peers are not very positive.

ADMINISTRATOR / COUNSELLOR PERSPECTIVES

Interviews were conducted with the administrators and counsellors from each of the secondary schools that did not host an alternate program attached at their site. Interviews centered around the following themes:

- Awareness and widely held perceptions of the services provided by Station Stretch, Integrated Academics and Combined Studies.

- Understanding of the referral process for each program and how the process might be improved.
- How schools are addressing the needs of students in Grades 8/9 and 10 through 12 who exhibit moderate/significant behaviour, mental health, or anxiety concerns.

Much of what was learned from these interviews affirmed what alternate program staff and administration had already shared with the reviewer.

It is apparent that all secondary schools are making every possible effort to keep students engaged in their learning and connected to their school communities. They provided multiple examples of the school's efforts to support students who are struggling, rather than recommend placement at another site or in another program. These examples include but are not limited to:

- Reduced course loads for the student.
- Additional learning resource support.
- Additional counselling support.
- Having the student attend only partial days.
- Providing credit recovery (allowing students to complete first semester course credits using personal learning time during the second semester).
- Accessing continuing education courses.
- Accessing online learning courses.

Most of the administrators and counsellors indicated that they have observed an increase in the number of students exhibiting social/emotional and mental health concerns in recent years.

Secondary school administrator and counsellor views about inclusion are not consistent across the District, nor are they shared by all staff in each building. This is illustrated by the following two quotes:

"We are committed to ensuring that all of our students have a sense of belonging to our school community, and will do everything possible to ensure that they are well supported and experience success."

"We are an academic school and there is a need for more programs for students who are struggling."

Respondents reported that transition to Grade 8 for students with behavioural or mental health concerns is proving very challenging. Several mentioned the need for some sort of "bridging" program to support these students. None of them advocated for any kind of program that would result in the student having to leave their neighbourhood school.

There is a general awareness of the alternate programs on the part of school administrators and counsellors, but for anyone attempting to find out details about each of the programs, admission criteria and referral processes, it is very difficult. Respondents spoke of the need for clarity and

consistency around referral processes. They believe that there is a general lack of understanding as to why certain students are accepted into programs while others are not. They complained that there is no single “go to” source of information for all the alternate programs. The online presence of District’s alternate programs is minimal, dated, or non-existent. They also stated that the periodic intake at Integrated Academics (start of semester) and Combined Studies (start of quarter) is problematic as students often need more immediate programming supports.

It was also stated that there are negative perceptions about alternate programs by parents/guardians and students, making it difficult for administrators and counsellors to assure parents/guardians that these programs are a good option for their children. As well, there is a reluctance on the part of students to leave their school community and the social connections that have been established over time.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

The District requested that information regarding diversity and inclusion in four of the alternate programs (Integrated Academics, Combined Studies, Station Stretch and the Richmond School Program) be included in this review. In keeping with Strategic Plan Priority 2: Equity and Inclusion, ensuring that “*District environments are equitable and inclusive*”, the District has identified the following points of inquiry:

- Is student representation in alternative programs reflective of the District as whole or is there significant overrepresentation of specific groups of students?
- If there is overrepresentation, are there areas that warrant further investigation to help inform policy and practice?

For the purposes of this review, the focus on diversity and inclusion considered Indigenous learners, students with disabilities and diverse abilities, and children and youth in the care of the Ministry of Children and Families.

In addition to data sources provided by the District, this report has also included data extracted from Ministry funding allocation tables for 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, and the Ministry’s How Are We Doing (HAWD) reports on Indigenous student achievement for 2020-2021.

Indigenous Learners

Overrepresentation of Indigenous learners in alternate programs has been identified as an area of concern across the province. In 2020-2021, Indigenous learners represented 11.3% of student enrolment in BC public schools and represented 43% of all students enrolled in funded alternate programs (Ministry HAWD Reports).

In Richmond, Indigenous learners represent 1.3% of total enrolment and 11% of enrolment in four of the alternate programs (Combined Studies, Integrated Academics, Richmond School Program, and Station Stretch). For comparative purposes, the data provided below reports Indigenous student representation among fully funded alternate program students. When disaggregating this information specifically for the Station Stretch site and its associated programs, it was determined that 15% of students enrolled in those programs are Indigenous learners. This is reflected in the chart below, which situates Richmond in comparison to Metro and other primarily urban school districts.

PERCENTAGE OF INDIGENOUS STUDENTS ENROLLED IN FUNDED ALTERNATE PROGRAMS				
Comparative Data for metro Vancouver and Select School Districts for 2020/21				
	<u>Total Students</u>	<u>Indigenous Students</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>	<u>District-wide % Indigenous Student enrolment</u>
Province	6378	2720	43%	11.3%
Richmond	82	12	15%	1.3%
Burnaby	133	35	26%	2.9%
Coquitlam	303	60	20%	3.9%
Langley	247	81	33%	9.0%
Maple Ridge	250	73	29%	9.2%
North Vancouver	206	47	23%	3.9%
Surrey	325	113	35%	4.2%
Vancouver	368	131	36%	4.2%
Kamloops	180	103	57%	19.5%
Nanaimo	239	114	48%	16.7%
Victoria	217	58	27%	7.3%
No data reported for Delta SD which has no funded alternate program students				
and West Van SD which has very few funded alternate program students				
Data source - HAWD Reports - Ministry of Education				

While observing that Indigenous learners in the Richmond School District are overrepresented in funded alternate programs, this is a common issue amongst the school districts represented in the chart above. Over the past three years, the Richmond School District has engaged in the Ministry of Education and Child Care's Equity in Action Project. It is recognized that continued work related to the Equity in Action Project in Richmond will be focused on enhancing supports for Indigenous learners throughout the K-12 system.

Students With Disabilities And Diverse Abilities

The table below indicates the number of learners with disabilities and diverse abilities as identified through the Ministry of Education and Child Care's special education categories enrolled in the four alternate programs during the 2021-2022 school year. For comparative purposes, the Richmond School Program, which supports elementary-aged students, was separated from the three secondary programs.

DIVERSE LEARNERS IN ALTERNATE PROGRAMS									
	Total Program Enrolment	H	Q	D	R	G	K	Total # of Students with Designations	Percentage
Station Stretch	91	33	9	6	3	3	1	55	60%
Combined Studies	33	14	6	1	2			23	70%
Integrated Academics	37	13	9	1				23	62%
Total Secondary	161	60	24	8	5	3	1	101	63%
Richmond School Program	10	10						10	100%

Category H: Students Requiring Intensive Behaviour Intervention or Students with Serious Mental Illness

Category Q: Learning Disabilities

Category D: Physical Disability/Chronic Health Impairment

Category R: Students Requiring Behaviour Support or Students with Mental Illness

Category G: Autism Spectrum Disorder

Category K: Mild Intellectual Disabilities

Children And Youth In The Care Of The Ministry Of Children And Family Development

In 2021-2022, there were 63 children and youth in the care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) registered in Richmond schools. Of this total, 37 were enrolled in secondary programs as follows:

Secondary Program	Number of Students Enrolled
Secondary regular program	26
Station Stretch	8
Combined Studies	2
Integrated Academics	1

Based on data provided by the District and the Ministry, the following observations can be made:

- Although the percentage of Indigenous learners enrolled in district alternate programs is proportionately higher than that of the entire district, this is reflective of trends throughout the province. The District's commitment to implement a comprehensive Equity in Action Plan can only help to improve supports for Indigenous students.
- The percentage of learners with identified disabilities and diverse disabilities, specifically students requiring intensive behaviour intervention or students with serious mental illness (Category H) in all four programs are proportionately higher than the district as a whole. Also, the percentage of Youth in Care at Station Stretch is proportionately higher than the district. This is to be expected given that the mandate of these programs to *focus on educational, social and emotional issues for students whose needs are not being met in a traditional school program*.
- The percentage of students identified with a Learning Disability (Category Q) enrolled in the three secondary alternate programs is proportionately higher than mainstream programs (15% vs. 5%).

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS – ALL PROGRAMS

CURRICULUM / INSTRUCTION / ASSESSMENT

Interviews with teachers in the various programs, a sampling of teacher planning documents and a review of sample student work indicated that learner engagement was very much in keeping with the BC curriculum. Although approaches to teaching and learning varied within each program, students were able to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways, to engage in project-based learning, to exercise choice in their learning and to receive feedback through various kinds of formative assessment.

All programs addressed the core competencies in meaningful ways. In some cases, core competencies were addressed implicitly, embedded in student learning experiences, while in others it was done explicitly, with students having multiple opportunities on which to reflect and self-assess their progress. For example, core competency self-reflection activities are a weekly occurrence in Stretch classes.

REFERRAL / INTAKE PROCESSES

During this review several issues were raised about referral and intake processes for the various programs.

Secondary school administrators and counsellors reported finding details about each of the programs, admissions criteria, and referral processes rather ambiguous and inconsistent (IA, CS, Station Stretch). There is also a general lack of understanding as to why it is that certain students

are accepted while others are not. They believe that there is a need to have clarity and consistency around the referral process.

Alternate program staff reported a belief that not all schools have done their due diligence in terms of exhausting all possible resources at the school level before making application to an alternate program. They also reported that in some cases schools had not documented which actions/interventions had been implemented prior making a referral to a program. Program staff, usually the teachers, become the “gatekeepers” in terms of approving or not approving admissions. School administrators participate in adjudications on an as-needed basis.

PROGRAM RECOGNITION / AWARENESS

Online sources of information for all the alternate programs are difficult to locate. None of the programs are referenced on the District website, nor does a search of the site result in links to any of the programs.

- Station Stretch has its own website, which appears to be incomplete and somewhat dated. There is no link to the site from the District’s main page as one might find for its schools and various other programs (e.g., Richmond Virtual School, Incentive Outdoor Academy, International Baccalaureate).
- A Combined Studies link can be found through the Hugh Boyd main page, and Integrated Academics receives a three-line mention in the “School Story” description on McNair’s homepage.
- A Young Parent Program page can be accessed from the Richmond Secondary homepage. The YPP also publishes an information brochure in partnership with Family Services of Greater Vancouver. The brochure is circulated to hospitals, health clinics, MCFD offices and Family Services offices. There has been little or no circulation of the brochure during the past two years due to the COVID pandemic.
- A limited amount of information about the Richmond School Program can be accessed through the Vancouver Coastal Health website. There are print materials describing the program.
- There is no readily accessible information on the Hospital / Homebound program on the District’s website.

STAFFING / ENROLMENT

As noted earlier in this review, there are several programs where the staffing provided has low teacher to students’ ratios. These include the Horizons / Stretch / Streetview components of Station Stretch, the Young Parents Program, Combined Studies, and the Richmond School Program (Placement Class). Again, when the difference between actual student headcount and student FTE is considered, that ratio lowers even more, particularly in the Young Parent Program, Combined Studies and Integrated Academics.

Alternate program staff must be able to work effectively with vulnerable learners who exhibit behavioural, social, emotional, and mental health concerns. It is an environment where colleagues must rely on collaboration and teamwork, and it requires specific training and experience as well as preferred professional strengths and attributes. However, there do not appear to be clear job descriptions on file for all alternate program positions. A review of past job postings for these programs described qualifications that ranged from a highly detailed list to a few short lines about subject matter qualifications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Richmond School District is making a substantial commitment to those programs and services which are intended to support at-risk and vulnerable learners who exhibit behavioural, social, emotional, and other mental health challenges and find success in mainstream education programs elusive. The programs that have been the subject of this review (Station Stretch, Combined Studies, Integrated Academics, Colts Young Parent Program, Richmond School Program, Hospital / Homebound) have been in operation for decades. During this time, the Ministry has implemented numerous policy changes pertaining to funding, curriculum design, and special education while the District has experienced a significant demographic change, declining enrolment, and a reconfiguration of its secondary schools from junior/senior configurations to Grades 8 through 12.

The teaching and support staff in all the alternate programs are to be commended for their dedication and commitment to helping vulnerable learners experience not only academic success, but also assist them to find ways of managing the social/emotional challenges that can impact their journeys to success.

This review has identified three themes that might serve as a lens through which the District can view and consider the recommendations provided in this report. These are:

1. Effective alignment with District policies on inclusion and special education, the District's five-year Strategic Plan, and the BC curriculum as well as the Ministry's Special Education policy.
2. Effective use of human resources and provincial funding in response to the diverse needs of learners throughout the District.
3. Clear and coherent processes for referral and intake which allow for informed decision-making by parents/guardians and appropriate recommendations by education professionals.

The recommendations below are offered for consideration by the District as it plans next steps for its alternate programs. They begin with general recommendations encompassing all programs and are followed by program-specific recommendations.

ALL PROGRAMS

District Policy and Procedures

It is recommended that:

1. The District review its policy on **Diversity and Inclusion (Policy 102)** giving consideration to language that:
 - Defines inclusion in explicit terms.
 - Is reflective of the District mission, vision, and values.
 - Supports the direction of the Board's Strategic Plan.
 - Is reflective of the current BC curriculum.
 - Is consistent with Ministry policy regarding special education.
 - Provides a useful and practical lens through which all school-based and District programs, services, supports, policies and procedures are viewed and evaluated.
2. District policy regarding **Hospital and Homebound Education (Policy 512.6.1)** receive a significant revision, including the development of clear procedures and protocols that support the policy.

Program Supervision

It is recommended that:

1. The four times yearly meetings of administration and staff of the various alternate programs consider the following areas for focus at future meetings:
 - Growth and progressive change.
 - Success indicators.
 - Student transitions
 - Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Student Learning Plans (SLPs).
 - Core competencies.
 - Collaboration and sharing of ideas across programs.
2. Particular attention be given to increasing opportunities for cross-program collaboration by administration and staff from Station Stretch, Integrated Academics and Combined Studies. In addition to themes outlined in the previous recommendation the following topics warrant consideration:

- Technology as a tool for learning.
 - Behavioural and attendance supports.
 - Multiple ways in which students can demonstrate their learning.
 - Use of rubrics and student self-evaluation.
 - Approaches to incorporating core competencies.
3. Site-based principals move from an “as-needed” role in adjudicating referrals to a more active role with the requirement that all student admissions receive their approval.
 4. Given the composition of staff (teaching, support, staff from VCH) and the need to coordinate the various programming options at Station Stretch, the District might consider a teaching vice-principal.

Curriculum / Instruction / Assessment / Career Programs

It is recommended that:

1. All alternate programs work toward more explicit cross-curricular engagement of students focused on core competencies, including regular opportunities for student self-reflection and self-assessment.
2. The District work with the Streetview, Integrated Academics and Combined Studies alternate programs in expanding opportunities for students to participate in work experience, career and trades programs, and dual credit programs. Many students who have participated in such programs have been known to find a sense of purpose, develop socially and emotionally and assume a more positive attitude toward learning.

Recognition / Awareness of Programs

It is recommended that:

1. The District improve the online presence of all alternate programs identified in this review, ensuring that each program description has clarity of purpose, describes how the program operates, eligibility requirements, student expectations, referral process, and any other pertinent information of value to educators, students, and parents/guardians.
2. To support administrators and counsellors in working with parents/guardians to make informed decisions about an alternative placement, there needs to be consistency in terms of the referral process and the way information about the program is presented. It would be helpful to school counsellors to have information that compares similarities and differences between programs to share with parents/guardians and students.

Referral / Intake Procedures

It is recommended that:

1. All referrals to the following programs be directed to the District-Based Team (DBT):

- Horizons (presently the case)
- Stretch
- Hospital / Homebound
- Outreach
- Richmond School Program

To ensure that all referrals are adjudicated in a timely manner, the DBT will need to reconsider its frequency of meetings (currently monthly) and the number of required attendees at those meetings.

2. Clarity and consistency be brought to the referral/intake process for Streetview, Integrated Academics, and Combined Studies including:

- Standardized referral forms and deadlines for referrals.
- Standardized expectations regarding documentation of interventions already attempted.
- Standardized interview process with clear expectations.
- Advocacy by the referring school during the adjudication process.
- Feedback to referring schools when student placement is not deemed to be appropriate.

To support administrators and counsellors in working with parents/guardians to make informed decisions about an alternative placement, there needs to be consistency in the referral process and the way information about the programs is presented. School administrators and counsellors need to be better positioned to discern which alternate program would be the most appropriate placement given the learning and social/emotional support needs of a particular student.

3. Secondary school administration, counselling staff and resource teachers engage in a collaborative examination of the various promising school-based interventions they currently have in place with a view to informing practice. Interviews with secondary school administrators and counsellors revealed various strategies directed at responding to the needs of students with behaviour/mental health concerns (as outlined previously). As the District considers changes to referral/intake processes, there is value in having schools share promising practices directed at helping students find success in their neighbourhood school. A collaborative examination of the various school-based interventions is very much in keeping with the Equity and Inclusion priority stated in the

District's Strategic Plan. As well, the provincial curriculum contemplates more flexible course and program delivery options being provided by regular secondary schools in response to students with diverse learning needs.

Staffing / Enrolment

It is recommended that:

1. The District review the staffing levels in all alternate programs to ensure that human resources are being used effectively, and that there is an appropriate balance between adequately responding to the student learning needs in these programs and addressing the many diverse learning needs of students across the District.
2. The District review the combined enrolment capacity needs of Station Stretch / Integrated Academics / Combined Studies relative to District needs to determine if they can accommodate current and future demand for their services. These programs are currently operating under capacity based on staffing levels.
3. The District prepare and have on file a current job description/posting for every type of alternate program teaching position. The job descriptions should accurately describe the training, skills and experience required, as well as the preferred strengths and attributes that would ensure that an applicant is well-suited to teach in a program for students who present one or more of behavioural, social, emotional and/or mental health concerns, and where staff collaboration and teamwork is essential.
4. All programs (Outreach and the Young Parent Program in particular) remain vigilant in ensuring that there is documented evidence of meeting all funding eligibility requirements.

Planning for Growth and Progressive Change

It is recommended that:

1. Alternate programs identify their highest priorities for improving student achievement, including a data-driven rationale for determining goals, identification of key measurable indicators of progress toward goal attainment and identifying desired results or preferred outcomes. This is in keeping with the Ministry's *Framework for Enhancing Student Learning* initiative and the District's Strategic Plan.
2. Alternate programs identify and monitor key indicators that track student success. This is an area of growth for all the programs. Quantitative and qualitative evidence that indicates that programs are making a difference is an area that will require attention. Along with graduation rates, course completion rates, and attendance data, three additional indicators to be considered are:

- The degree to which students have successfully transitioned to the next stage of their learning journey.
 - Student personal growth in terms of social and emotional learning using the core competency framework.
 - English language proficiency is foundational to student success and should also be assessed and monitored with greater frequency than the assessments required by the Ministry.
3. At the present time, there are no BC Ministry approved program standards for alternate programs in British Columbia. It is left to districts to use their own resources to review the quality of its alternate programs. It would be helpful for programs to conduct internal reviews of various aspects of program operations on a regular basis as part of a focus on growth and progressive change. The following links to resources in other jurisdictions may be helpful to the District and the programs in examining practice:

[Alt School Guide NDPC 2020.pdf \(dropoutprevention.org\)](#)

[Exemplary Practices - The National Alternative Education Association \(the-naea.org\)](#)

A more holistic view of measuring student success is proposed in a book called *Street Data: A Next-Generation Model For Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation* by Shane Safir and Jamila Dugan (published jointly by Corwin Press and Learning Forward, 2021). Alternate program staff may find this book of value in identifying evidence-based goals for improving student achievement.

4. The school district explore the development of an alternative approach focused at the grade 8 and 9 levels. The vast majority of secondary staff who were interviewed as part of this review commented that there are limited programming options for students struggling with the transition from elementary to secondary in grades 8 and 9. There is recognition of increasing concern associated with this demographic across secondary schools. Secondary schools have voiced a desire to provide more intensive supports while maintaining student attendance within their neighbourhood school.

In order to address this need, additional resources will be required.

There are promising practices coming out of the North Vancouver School District that specifically address the concerns for students struggling with transition to grade 8 and into grade 9:

<https://www.sd44.ca/ProgramsServices/InclusiveEducation/Choices/Documents/ChoicesHandbook.pdf>

Equity and Inclusion

It is recommended that:

1. Further examination of, and attention to the overrepresentation of specific student groups in the District's alternate programs is warranted. Consideration needs to be given to ensuring that referral/placement processes and program delivery are thorough and responsive to the individualized needs of learners and to particular groups of students. For example, recommendations from the District's Equity in Action Project may provide some insights into supporting Indigenous learners in alternate and mainstream programs.
2. The District review and analyze the representation of students with disabilities and diverse abilities in alternate programs. For example, the percentage of students identified with a Learning Disability (Category Q) enrolled in the three secondary alternate programs is proportionately higher than in mainstream programs (15% vs. 5%).

PROGRAM SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Station Stretch

It is recommended that:

1. Station Stretch continue its focus on growth and progressive change by working with the District in building on its "Minoru Initiative", incorporating the advice provided in this report and designing a multi-year development plan that aligns with District plans. The Initiative also contemplates a name change, which this review supports.
2. The program give priority to reducing the amount of time students spend with Outreach and focus on supporting them to successfully transition to another alternate or mainstream program.
3. Staff expand on key indicators that track student success and help inform practice.
4. Transition processes become more seamless for Stretch 9 and 10 students exiting the program.
5. The District consider the advantages and disadvantages of potentially relocating the program given the unique and complex demonstrated needs of the learners who are supported at the Minoru site. Students interviewed expressed that the location apart from a regular secondary school generates a sense of belonging and is more conducive to their learning.

Hospital / Homebound (HH)

It is recommended that:

1. Policy 515.6.1, *Hospital and Homebound Education*, be updated and the matter of program descriptions, roles and responsibilities, procedures to request service and referral forms be addressed in writing and posted on the District's website.
2. A mental health referral protocol be developed which outlines the necessary requirements that need to be met prior to referral for Hospital / Homebound services. As noted previously, it is recommended that such referrals be adjudicated by the District-Based Team.

Integrated Academics / Combined Studies

It is recommended that:

1. Program staff work with all students to develop Student Learning Plans (SLPs) to guide the learning process. While these programs are not Type Three funded alternate programs, and there is therefore no requirement for such, there is value in engaging students in a meaningful conversation in developing an SLP to help provide guidance, inform programming adjustments, and support them in self-monitoring/assessment.
2. Program staff expand on key indicators that measure student progress and inform practice.

Colts Young Parent Program

It is recommended that:

1. The program prioritize increasing the number of course completions each year and reducing the time required to complete graduation requirements.
2. The program be vigilant in ensuring that there is documented evidence of meeting all adult and school-age funding eligibility requirements.
3. The District review the financial implications of operating what has essentially become an adult program with lower per pupil funding and a very low staffing ratio.
4. The District assess whether the program should continue to service a significant number of adult students in the future.

Richmond School Program

It is recommended that:

1. The District identify key quantitative and qualitative indicators and track student progress as they transition from the placement program back into their neighbourhood school and/or into a secondary school.
2. Should a student be transitioned back to their neighbourhood school during the school year, the District might consider some form of “bridging staffing” be provided to minimize the need to redeploy existing Education Assistant time within the receiving school.
3. The District consider a more thorough review of the placement classroom to ensure that it:
 - Aligns with the District’s commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.
 - Aligns with the District’s five-year Strategic Plan.
 - Is supported by research as the most effective way to address the unique needs of students serviced in the program.
 - Achieves the desired results in terms of successful transition to a neighbourhood school.
 - Is the most effective way of allocating human resources in response to student needs.

CONCLUSION

Alternate programs in the Richmond School District provide a valuable service in supporting some of the District’s most vulnerable learners on their pathway to success. The extent to which these programs assist students to develop *“a sense of connection, belonging and positive personal and cultural identity through focused attention and specialized support for individualized needs of learners with disabilities and diverse abilities”* is reflected within the Richmond Board of Education’s Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

The staff and administration of all the alternate programs considered in this review can take great pride in their commitment to support some of Richmond School District’s most vulnerable students, helping them to experience success on their learning journey. Staff are to be commended for their passion and commitment to helping students overcome their personal, social, emotional, and academic challenges and successfully navigate their learning pathway toward graduation. Students were highly complementary of their teachers and support staff, speaking about their caring and compassion and their focus on building positive relationships.

The reviewer appreciated the openness and candor demonstrated by all school and district staff and administration who were interviewed during site visits and virtual meetings.

The reviewer wishes the District and the various alternate programs well as they reflect on the contents of this report and chart a journey of growth and progressive change in the years to come.

Respectfully submitted.

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