

North Vancouver School District
SCHOOL PLAN
2012-2013

School: North Vancouver Distributed Learning School

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School/Community Context:

The North Vancouver Distributed Learning School (NVDLS) offers a variety of dynamic and interactive academic and elective online courses for students in Grades 10, 11 and 12. It provides a flexible pathway for students to reach their academic goals. For the 2012-2013 school year, 33 courses will be offered in a variety of subject areas, leading to both a Dogwood Diploma and an Adult Dogwood Diploma. Several new courses are also in development with the potential to include Spanish 12, English 12 Advanced Placement and Global Trends 12 for the 2013-2014 school year. In order to enhance communication and learning opportunities, all online students have access to the “DL Centre”, which allows students to have face-to-face interaction with their online teachers and provides a classroom/computer lab for tutorials and test/exam invigilation. This “blended” model has been so successful for many students that the DL Centre model is being incorporated not only at the NVDLS site, but also at each of the six mainstream high schools in the North Vancouver School District. The increased partnership and supports that onsite DL Centres will provide for our students will enhance student engagement and completion.

The North Vancouver Distributed Learning School continues to have a diversity of learners including non-graduated youth, non-graduated adults, graduated adults who are upgrading, English Language Learners, and students with IEPs. The majority of students in the program are cross-enrolled from mainstream secondary schools in the North Vancouver School District, with a growing population from other secondary schools on the North Shore, including private, independent, and public as well as a small population of students from other school districts in the province. NVDLS is a member of the BC Learning Network, a consortium of DL schools that work together to upgrade and develop course materials and share best practices. The courses are held in an open source Learning Management System, “Moodle”, and hosted by an online service provider, “Knowplace”.

Youth students enrolled are typically only taking one or two courses in coordination with their “mainstream” bricks and mortar school schedule. Some are taking courses to free up their face-to-face timetable for additional electives, some are involved in elite athletic programs, some prefer the flexibility of online, some are trying to work on courses in advance of the next grade level, and some learn better in a self-paced, technology-rich environment. The adult DL population is typically enrolled in two or more courses, with the goal being graduation, or to upgrade marks in order to be eligible for specific post-secondary programs. These adult learners are most often working and balancing home-life obligations, which makes the flexible DL model suitable for their learning needs. Current changes to the Adult funding model through the updated “Education Guarantee” may result in reduced enrolment of graduated adults in our DL program for the 2012-2013 year. However, recent Ministry changes to allow cross-enrollment opportunities for students in grades K-9 (in addition to those in 10, 11 and 12) creates the potential to utilize a per course funding model for all grades. This change will make it easier for the district to explore the potential of DL in K-9.

The program follows a continuous entry and self-paced model of course delivery and as such, the student/parent population is transient. Due to the flexible nature of program completion and the fact that many of our students are cross-enrolled, the NVDLS will partner with the PAC of the Community Learning Program as of September 2012, an alternate program that will be housed with the DL School. The NVDLS is excited to be moving to a new location in September 2012 and looks forward to working in a more central and dynamic space with the potential for upgraded technology. Access to onsite laboratories will further enhance experiences for our online science students taking our courses in a blended model.

Demographics:

Gender of Students, Number of Students Per Grade, Total Course Enrolments, Total FTE

Total Number of Course Enrollments	Total Number of Students	Male	Female	9	10	11	12	Graduated Adults
1420 177.5 FTE	1230 (277 DL home school, 953 cross-enrolled)	581	649	35	568	203	501	113

FTE Teachers FTE Administration	% Aboriginal Students	% Special Education Students	% ESL
6.43 FTE (Teaching) .5 FTE (Admin)	.01% 21 students	0.12% 159 students	0.18% 226 students

Progress Analysis:

Review of School Goals – Previous Year

1. To increase student attendance at the DL Centre:

Excellent progress has been made with this goal. The DL Centre is open more frequently during the week for student tutorials, test and exam invigilation, as a place for students to work in the computer lab and for students to drop in or make scheduled appointments for face-to-face support. The Centre is opened five days a week, Mon: 10-4, Tues: 10-6, W: 10-4, Th: 10-6 and F: 10-3. A significant increase in student attendance at the Centre, as recorded in the student sign in book, is evident. Students also report that the flexible hours at the Centre, including two evenings when the Centre is open until 6:00, are beneficial. The staff has also focused on encouraging students with IEPs to attend the DL Centre on a more regular basis to assist with adaptations in content and on assessment tasks. With the upcoming addition of DL Centres in all North Vancouver Secondary Schools in the 2012-2013 school year, further attendance opportunities will be created.

2. To improve student engagement in DL learning experiences:

Good progress has been made with this goal. We have continued to make many changes in our current course offerings to provide more engaging experiences. Of particular note, is our model of in-house course development, piloted with our Planification 10 course last year and carried forward with our French 12 course currently in development for a September 2012 start. By creating course development teams of teachers who are given release time to collaborate and create courses from scratch, we

have been able to pull together content experts, provide them with tech support and allow them to make quality online courses. Most DL courses now contain animated visuals, interactive audio and video links, the use of course forums to encourage social networking, and an active communication system between staff and students using Moodle messaging, e-mail, phone, and DL Centre interactions. Some courses contain Flash Animation and built-in tutorials that actively engage students in using Web 2.0 tools. Teachers continue to streamline course content to make it both rigorous and engaging, and create meaningful assignments using assessment as, of, and for learning, as well as provide instructional communication that clearly links to Ministry outcomes. It should be noted that the DL administration, teaching staff, and support staff are committed to the DL program and are excited to create opportunities for students to engage in their learning through technology. The teachers both individually, and in collaboration, have embraced the huge learning curve of utilizing tools in the Moodle environment and have pushed course engagement further. With the upgrade to Moodle 2.0 in June 2012, teachers will have further online tools at their disposal to enhance student engagement. This year, a block of DL tech support time was assigned to a DL teacher in order to research new web tools, trouble shoot Moodle issues and train teachers in enhanced Moodle features. This support time was highly beneficial, as it provided all teachers with in-house support and professional development in order to improve student engagement.

3. To improve student completion in DL courses:

Progress continues to be made in the area of student completion rates in DL courses. This year, a change to the registration and “activation” process has assisted the DL School in encouraging course completion and tracking course completion more accurately. Students who enrol in a DL course are put into the Moodle environment, but are only given access to the introductory/activation unit. They are given a completion timeline of 3-4 weeks, and students who do not complete in this timeframe are removed from the course. To be reinstated, they must contact their DL teacher. Once they have completed the activation unit, they are entered into BCeSIS and given full course access in Moodle. This time restriction was an effective way for students to indicate their commitment to the course and get them interested in their learning. Data from last year indicated that although total completion rates in all courses was 65%, the completion rates for courses that students had “activated” was 86%. DL students have at minimum, a year to complete a course and at times students have taken up to 18 months. Previous completion rates were operating on the 10 month, linear, mainstream model, which does not fit with the self-paced, continuous entry of DL. Patterns over the last three years indicate that specific courses have higher completion rates than others. Of note are the higher rates in PE 10, Planning 10, Grad Transitions, and Mathematics 12. Upon further investigation, it is evident that the courses with higher completion rates are courses that have been upgraded with Web 2.0 tools and have been streamlined in such a way as to effectively and efficiently cover required Ministry outcomes. Other courses that have high completion rates include those that operate synchronously---students work in a cohort model, enrol at the same time and have teacher set deadlines for assignments and tests. This model has been used with the students taking Planning 10 from Mulgrave School and has resulted in 100% completion in the last two years of our partnership with the school.

Opportunities for Further Development:

Distributed Learning continues to be a way to provide flexible pathways to graduation for a variety of learners. Future plans include incorporating more course integration through project based learning, using visual/auditory tools like Skype and Elluminate to provide real time connections even while at a distance, providing more listening and speaking tools in our current language courses, and providing more support for professional development and training for our DL teachers. We are also incorporating CUPE staffing into our DL school for the 2012-2013 year to support students with IEPs, provide Moodle orientation sessions, support in the DL Centre, and to enhance further connection with parents.

The creation of locally developed core and elective courses continues to be a key component in meeting the needs of our diverse student population while attracting new students to our program. This year we have developed several new courses that will be introduced in September 2012. Four North Vancouver School District French Immersion teachers created French 12 DL. In addition to this, Sciences Humaines 10 DL has been developed in house and we are adding Communications 11 and 12 to our course offerings. Currently under development is the Outdoor Experiential Education Course, a BAA course developed in partnership with the North Vancouver Outdoor School. This course will be a blended DL course that combines environmental issues and leadership skills through counselling opportunities at Outdoor School. These new course offerings will provide our students, both youth and adults, with more opportunities and pathways to high school graduation.

On-going teacher professional development in distance learning teaching techniques and ways to provide students with convenient, effective, and engaging online experiences are also of paramount importance. Advanced Moodle training and attendance at the yearly Digital Learning Conference continue to be a focus. An emphasis on creating a fluid connection with our mainstream schools will provide the wrap-around support that students need to be successful in the online environment. Using on-site "DL Centres" in mainstream high schools will help to increase both learning opportunities and success in online courses as well as giving mainstream schools the ability to offer a greater variety of face-to-face course experiences.

Currently the NVDLS operates on a 10-month model, but plans are underway to expand the school to 12 months in order to allow for greater flexibility for students and to remain competitive with other DL schools. This year we introduced a summer DL session, offering Planning 10 and Planification 10 to interested students. Students enrolling in the summer session receive a face to face course orientation and teacher support time through a summer DL Centre. We have also allowed students who did not finish a course by June the opportunity to continue with their course throughout the summer months, with access to teachers at the DL Centre available.

School Goals:

Based on the review of student achievement using Provincial, District and school evidence, the goals set out in the North Vancouver Distributed Learning School Plan for 2012-2013 are:

- 1. To improve student engagement in DL learning experiences**
- 2. To improve student completion in DL courses**
- 3. To improve student learning opportunities in DL and provide flexible pathways to graduation through a closer partnership with mainstream secondary schools**

School Goal 1:

To improve student engagement in DL learning experiences

Goal Rationale:

Students need to be engaged their learning environment. Improvements of current courses and future development of locally created courses will meet student needs by providing more user-friendly and engaging learning experiences that utilize the interactive online tools. Quality courses that integrate Ministry outcomes and are challenging, engaging, relevant, and easy to navigate will assist students to remain active in their courses. This goal will be ongoing, and will continue to be an integral part of the NVDLS vision.

Objective 1.1:

To increase the number of students consistently working in online courses

Strategies/Structures:

- increase the number of online technology tools incorporated in the courses: Elluminate, webcasts, wikis, blogs, website creation, social media, etc. to make the courses more interactive and engaging
- fully utilize the Moodle Learning Management System 2.0 (LMS) tools in the courses (chat, discussion, online assessments, use of meta-courses, gradebook, selective groups and groups, Moodle messaging, progress indicator, audio etc.)
- design assignments and assessments (formative and summative) to make them relevant and authentic for students, explore the potential of project-based learning in DL
- provide collaborative time for teachers to work together to re-structure and streamline current course materials to create more effective learning experiences for students
- collaborate with other DL schools and online associations (BC Learning Network) to share courses and course materials that engage students
- provide frequent communication with students via online tools to help them set goals/ deadlines, and provide them necessary encouragement to consistently keep working in the course
- improve parent contact by providing guest access to the Moodle site linking to a parent information page, increase School Connects messages, encourage attendance at the DL Open House and involve parents in goal setting and timeline management
- provide DL face-to-face orientation sessions in each mainstream secondary school outlining completion expectations, goal setting and timelines

Evidence: (Quantitative)

Key Performance Measure:	Baseline	Actual	Target
Percentage of students submitting a minimum of one assignment every two weeks	30%	40%	50%
Number of communication contacts with students, both individual and through group e-mail blasts and postings in the Moodle site	at least once every 2 weeks	at least once a week	more than once a week
Number of communication contacts with parents, both individual and through School Connects messages and postings on the Moodle site parent information page	—	varies	at least once every 2 weeks

Objective 1.2:

To increase student engagement and choices through the development of locally created courses that meet the specific needs of students in North Vancouver

Strategies/Structures:

- support teachers to participate in professional development to assist in course creation both in the district through staff meetings, Collegial Conferencing and out-of-district (i.e. BC Learning Network, Digital Learning Conference)
- provide training sessions for teachers to learn advanced Moodle techniques and explore and use web tools (Elluminate, wikis, blogs, social networking systems etc.) in the creation of courses
- use Elluminate for staff meetings to give teachers hands on experience
- encourage teachers to use Elluminate with students
- encourage DL teachers to add their own course content and activities to existing courses based on student needs
- develop elective and core courses uniquely created for the students in North Vancouver
- French 12, Science Humaines 10, Outdoor Experiential Education 10 have been developed by North Vancouver teachers and will be available in September 2012
- development of Spanish 10, Global Trends 12, and AP English 12 is being explored

Evidence: (Quantitative)

Key Performance Measure:	Baseline	Actual	Target
Number of courses created by North Vancouver teachers	2	8	10

Evidence: (Qualitative)

Student and teacher interest and engagement in the courses as evidenced by student feedback on course evaluations, discussions with teachers, and the results of the Ministry's DL Satisfaction Survey.

School Goal 2: To improve student completion in DL courses

Goal Rationale:

Improving completion rates will provide evidence that our courses are meeting the needs of students and allowing them to reach their academic goals. Students need to be “activated” in the course, “actively” work in the course, and ultimately complete the course. Completion rates in Distributed Learning are difficult to track, as based on Ministry policy, students are allowed a least year to complete their course(s). Current data management systems used by the NVDLS are designed for a 10 month school year model and it is difficult to extract information regarding students who enter the program continuously or finish a course within a new school year. Using 10 month data and manually tracking students’ start and end dates has allowed us to more clearly measure course completion. Completion rates from 2011-2012 school year indicate that students who finish the first activation/introductory unit in a timely fashion (3-4 weeks) have significantly higher completion rates. Research has also suggested that completion rates in online courses are linked to effective relationships between students and teachers. These relationships must include active communication and meaningful, timely feedback on assignments. Challenges with online completion often centre on the inability of some students to effectively manage their time in a self-paced environment. Providing more opportunities for synchronous course delivery, with cohorts of students working through the course material with set timelines, also helps to keep students engaged and leads to better completion. For example, students from Mulgrave who enroll with NVDLS for Planning 10, enroll as a group, follow teacher timelines and complete the course at the same time (synchronous model).

Objective 2.1:

To increase the number of students completing courses

Strategies/Structures:

- use face-to-face meetings, telephone calls, e-mail, wikis, blogs, social networking, Elluminate sessions, and in-course chat rooms to enhance communication between teacher and students
- encourage students to access the DL Centre to promote face-to-face interaction and teacher support to assist in chunking work, and setting goals, timelines and dates for course completion
- create cohorts of students who work through the course synchronously based on their initial registration date
- create an interactive and social learning environment between students through the use of social networking tools both in the course and on the Internet
- use a balance of formative and summative assessment (rubrics) in order to allow students to practice and learn skills with effective teacher feedback before the marks are given
- mark assignments in a timely fashion so that students will be encouraged to complete the course

Evidence: *(Quantitative)*

Key Performance Measure:	Baseline	Actual	Target
Percentage of students completing courses based on enrollment in the Moodle site	54%	65%	70%
Percentage of students completing courses based on a timely completion (3-4 weeks) of the activation/introductory unit	—	86%	90%

School Goal 3:**To improve student learning in DL and provide more flexible pathways to graduation through a closer partnership with mainstream secondary schools****Goal Rationale:**

The North Vancouver School District, in their Strategic Plan, has indicated a desire to increase opportunities for students to direct and personalize their own learning while mastering key skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration. Many students who are involved in elite sports, arts activities, career opportunities and extracurricular pursuits require a more flexible timetable to accommodate their needs. DL courses can free up face-to-face timetables, allow students to take additional courses that they are interested in and meet diverse learning needs through technology. Distributed Learning courses, supported by DL Centres on site at mainstream schools, will provide more flexible pathways to meet individual student needs and strengthen the partnership between DL and bricks and mortar secondary schools.

Objective 3.1:

To establish closer partnerships between the NVDSL and teachers, counsellors, administrators, and parents of students in mainstream secondary schools.

Strategies/Structures:

- DL administration to foster communication with mainstream administrators, by attending and presenting at meetings
- DL administration to coordinate DL registration with mainstream school course planning
- DL administration to provide information about DL courses for mainstream course selection booklets
- encourage closer connections between the DL academic advisor and mainstream counsellors
- DL staff/administration to attend district-wide counsellor meetings, in order to provide information and updates about the DL program offerings
- DL staff/administration to present at mainstream staff meetings when necessary
- mainstream counsellors given guest access to DL courses to be able to show the courses to parents and potential DL students
- continue to invite all staff, parents, and students in the district to the DL Open House events, scheduled twice a year in the fall and spring
- continue to work with mainstream teachers and administrators to develop new courses

Evidence: (Quantitative)

Key Performance Measure:	Baseline	Actual	Target
Number of meetings attended by DL staff/counselor/admin with mainstream staff/counselors/admin	4	7	10 +

Evidence: (Qualitative)

Increased sense of positive relationships, communication, and understanding of the way DL and face-to-face learning opportunities can be flexibly integrated as based on feedback from both DL and mainstream educators.

Objective 3.2:

To establish on-site DL support at each mainstream North Vancouver School District secondary school

Strategies/Structures:

- use currently “embedded” DL teachers to provide time in their schedule for DL students to connect with them and get support for their online course
- increase the number of embedded DL teachers in the mainstream high schools: use teachers who have developed courses to offer it in the DL mode in their secondary school
- encourage DL students to use the onsite DL Centre when they have an open block or after school to work on their DL courses and as an invigilation site for tests and exams
- using the above, eventually create a DL Centre, opened before, during, and after school and staffed by both DL teachers and support staff

Evidence: (Quantitative)

Key Performance Measure:	Baseline	Actual	Target
Number of DL teachers embedded in mainstream schools	5	7	14
Number of mainstream schools(of 6) with a DL centre operating with at least 4 blocks of support	0	0	4

Objective 3.3:

To continue to establish partnerships with secondary schools outside of the North Vancouver School District

Strategies/Structures:

- continue to provide Planning 10 DL to all grade 10 students at Mulgrave School
- continue to provide Planification 10 DL to a cohort group of students from Squamish and Golden
- provide Social Studies 11 DL to all grade 11 Mulgrave students, as requested for the 2012-2013 school year
- communicate through posters, newspaper ads and emails with other private, independent, and public schools to create partnerships with their students and the NVDLS
- encourage DL staff with out-of-district students attending secondary schools on the North Shore to visit the school sites to make connections with DL students, particularly groups of students working as a cohort in the DL course

Evidence: *(Quantitative)*

Key Performance Measure:	Baseline	Actual	Target
Number of private and independent schools in partnership with NVDLS	1	3	5

Connections to the District Achievement Plan

Distributed Learning is not directly associated with a Family of Schools, but serves students in the entire North Vancouver School District. The majority of our students are cross-enrolled in other North Vancouver secondary schools. We also have a small population of adult learners and a growing number of students cross enrolled from other BC high schools.

Providing for the Diverse Needs of Students

By providing an alternative means of completing courses required for Graduation, we are servicing individuals who, due to specific circumstances, are looking for more flexible opportunities to complete their high school courses in conjunction with the traditional, mainstream school environment. This includes students with physical, emotional, or behavioural issues, students who learn more effectively in a flexible, independent, and self-paced environment and students who are involved in specialized programs such as Peak Performers. We provide opportunities for students to learn any time and any place, we accommodate for diverse schedules, and meet the needs of both youth and adults who are working while completing school.

Promoting Literacy Skills

All online learning supports literacy skills through opportunities to access the read/write capabilities of the web and produce work for an authentic online audience. By providing DL courses in English 10, 11, and 12, youth, adults, and ELL students are able to work more specifically on the reading and writing skills that are essential in order to meet the Ministry outcomes in Language Arts. The promotion of these literacy skills for both youth and adults directly relates to the District Literacy Plan.

Meeting the Needs of Aboriginal Students

Although the NVDLS provides courses to all students, it has a strong partnership with the Community Learning Program and Eslah7an. These flexible programs have a significant population of aboriginal learners, and provide a variety of options to students including face to face learning opportunities, self-paced paper courses, project-based learning as well as blended DL opportunities.

Creating Safe and Caring Schools:

The NVDLS is aware of the issues regarding online safety and stresses with the students the acceptable use of the Internet, the importance of submitting authentic work (avoiding plagiarism), and the appropriate use of in-course chat rooms, discussion forums and social networking. All NVDLS students sign the District “Acceptable Use of Technology” agreement and must adhere to the policies regarding the appropriate use of personal devices and guest wireless while working in the DL Centre.

Consultation Process of North Vancouver Distributed Learning School:

- School administrators and staff have been actively involved in the development of the School Plan.
- A summary of the approved North Vancouver Distributed Learning School Plan will be posted on the school web site by October 31, 2012

School Planning Council Approval of Proposed School Plan:

Date: May 22, 2012

	Name	Signature
District Principal	Maureen McRae-Stanger	<i>Original Document signed by SPC Members</i>
Teacher	Naresh Chand	
Teacher	Billy Lauzon	

Board Approval of School Plan:

Approved by:

Mark Jefferson, Assistant Superintendent
June 18, 2012