

Our Story

The New Carlisle Community Learning Centre Developmental Evaluation Report



With help from the CLC, students like to “be able to stay at school – it’s always the first thing they say: “I’m staying!!”

About the Community Learning Centre

The New Carlisle Community Learning Centre (NCHS CLC) is one of 37 community schools in Quebec. We are located in a small town on the Gaspesian Peninsula. Many people refer to the location as The Baie Des Chaleur. Our vibrant CLC is located in the town of New Carlisle, within New Carlisle High School.

The centre was established to encourage lifelong learning by facilitating access to services and offering support to families, students and community members. The founders believed that a CLC would bridge the noticeable gaps in rural communities like ours, balancing the playing field so that our community would have the same opportunities as more fortunate and larger areas. Therefore, the CLC's main goal is to link partners together to create a culture of lifelong learning that enhances the capacity of the population to live in healthy vibrant communities.

The CLC's mission is to nurture and empower a community of engaged citizens, which encourages dignity, co-operation, well-being and lifelong learning. Over the past three years, the CLC has prided itself by offering stimulating and well-organized programs intended to support French language education, science, the arts and the adoption of healthy lifestyle habits.

Community Context

NCHS is a Prek-11 school which receives students from Bonaventure to Port Daniel, a radius of approximately 50 kilometers. All 163 of our students live in rural Gaspésie villages. Busses transport the majority of our students. This fact, along with limited disposable income for many families (see side bar), made it very difficult for students to participate in afterschool activities. The CLC

Facts and Figures

- The average family income in New Carlisle is \$42,103.
- The unemployment rate is 30.0%.
- Almost 40% of the adult population hold no high school certification.
- This past school year, partners and volunteers of the NCHS CLC contributed 4669 hours of service, valued at approximately \$126,015.
- The NCHS CLC received close to \$7,000 in material donations and \$23,312 in grants and donations.

Source: New Carlisle Municipality, MESA, CLC Monthly Monitoring Report

coordinator and principal recognized that they needed to be practical when figuring out the best way to provide students with opportunities to participate in after school activities. They began by surveying parents and students to get an idea of what was lacking and what was of interest. The CLC, along with NCHS, noted that parents needed access to a low-cost daycare facility and believed that if it was offered through the school many students would be able to stay until 4pm. As the service was being developed, many students said they didn't care for the term 'daycare.' The CLC therefore launched "Helping Hands" for students 4 to 12 years old, which includes a weekly series of activities that they can sign up for. Each activity has been designed to accommodate the needs of parents, students and teachers.

Since its debut in 2011, when activities were limited to a twice weekly sports program for secondary students, the CLC and its partners have introduced 16 activities and clubs for students of all ages.

Theory of Change

To help guide their work, all CLCs develop a Theory of Change (ToC) that describes *why* and *how* their initiative will make a difference. The NCHS CLC's TOC is centered on three outcome areas: (1) Student Success, (2) Health and Wellbeing and (3) Lifelong learning.

To help contribute to these outcome areas, the NCHS CLC, along with its partners, has introduced afterschool activities that allow marginal students opportunities to create a positive and voluntary connection to their school. The CLC has also introduced numerous opportunities for students to volunteer or work. For teachers, the CLC has helped to introduce video conferencing (VC) and community-based service learning (CBSL) opportunities, which complement or are integrated with course material. The VC network is also used to make lifelong learning opportunities available to community members. Most recently, a fitness centre was opened at NCHS and made available to high school students and community members.

These initiatives, all of which are made possible through partnerships, are intended to:

- Enhance student satisfaction of their overall school experience;
- Enhance self esteem;
- Foster student leadership;
- Enhance students' time management and stress management skills;
- Foster a sense of pride and/or accomplishment;
- Increase students' desire to succeed;
- Encourage the adoption of healthy lifestyle habits;
- Build knowledge;
- Foster a sense of belonging.

Based on an evaluation conducted earlier this year, the next section of this report will examine the CLC's general impact on the school and community while taking a more in depth look at how health habits and student behavior have been touched.

Data Tells the Story

Information for this report was gathered in a number of ways. Parents, teachers, students, Fitness Centre members and the CLC's core partner were invited to participate in surveys, focus groups and interviews designed by the CLC staff. Parents were additionally asked to respond to a survey from an external evaluator, Qu'Anglo Communications. Questions focused on surfacing shifts in perceptions and behavior related to school perseverance and health. Evaluators also consulted Tell Them From Me (TTFM), survey data collected from students grades 3-10 by the school and CLC annually. Lastly, evaluators consulted monitoring reports, which track participation rates, partnership contributions...etc, maintained by the CLC coordinator to assess progress over time.

Findings

Partnerships

To accomplish its goals, the CLC coordinator has worked to establish or sustain partnerships between the school and local organizations, municipalities, businesses and community members. Together, the CLC and its partners share

existing resources and/or introduce new ones to meet the school and communities' needs.

Over the past three years, the CLC has developed 9 core partnerships. Partners include the Committee for Anglophone Action (CASA), Family Ties, the Municipality of New Carlisle, BDCAS (Baie des Chaleurs active et en Santé, Legion branch 64, Anchor, Gilker Residence, Home & School, and SPDS. These partnerships are valuable to the CLC and have brought much needed funding and support to NCHS students, their families and the wider community.

Fostering strong partnerships is critical to the CLC's success. To do so effectively, the CLC works with partners to identify common or complementary goals and share resources. In an interview with an evaluator, Cathy Brown, Executive Director of CASA, explained that "partnering with the CLC to support community health and wellbeing was a natural step....it really takes pressure off [my] staff because we would otherwise have to do that too." By coming together, the CLC has been able to leverage CASA's support to create meaningful services that support health and well being, while also enabling CASA to more actively focus on other community needs.

The CLC aspires to build a network of partners that meet and collaborate regularly. During conversations with evaluators and the CLC coordinator, partners noted that they would like to remain more up-to-date on CLC initiatives and to meet more regularly.

Recommendations

- Host a minimum of three partnership table meetings a year and schedule them well in advance.
- Communicate developments to partners more regularly (monthly report).
- Continue to encourage the active participation of all partners.

School Impact

CLC Activities

According to teachers, CLC activities predominantly support socialization and help to foster a greater sense of belonging to the school. Teachers believe this impact is achieved by providing students with supervised opportunities to get active, have fun and make new friends in contexts that are less academically driven.

| Program/Activity | Number of participants (2013-2014) |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| Winter Fun | 23 |
| Hip Hop | 21 |
| Youth Night | 23 |
| Girls Sport Night | 13 |
| Gumboot Dancing | 14 |
| Healthy Snacking | 8 |
| Juggling | 8 |
| Bon Depart | 23 |
| Taekwondo | 24 |
| Cooking | 6 |
| Active Buddies | 8 |
| Family Yoga | 10 |

The majority of participants are elementary school children. According to TTFM data, boys in grades 3-5 are the least actively engaged in CLC after-school programs at the elementary level.

As one teacher noted, “since the CLC started, there are a lot more opportunities.” These opportunities have sparked increasing involvement in after-school programs that promote academic, personal, social and recreational development, while ultimately contributing to a positive school climate.

The table below reflects the results of a survey conducted by Qu’Anglo Communications, inviting parents to explain in what ways their child(ren) has benefited from their participation in CLC activities:

| | |
|--|--------------|
| My child has a greater sense of belonging to the school | 60% |
| My child has made new friends | 42.9% |
| My child enjoys an improved lifestyle (eats better) | 22.9% |
| My child enjoys an improved lifestyle (exercises more) | 20% |
| My child’s attitude toward school has improved | 37.1% |
| My child is more engaged in school work | 31.4% |
| My child is more interested in the surrounding community | 28.6% |

Many parents also commented that the CLC has helped them to feel more welcome and to become more involved.

Student Perseverance

While programs like the French club may contribute more directly to academic achievement, many teachers noted that students are more motivated to be in school during the afternoon because they now have something to look forward to. One teacher remarked that for high school students, access to the Fitness Centre can help them to “blow off steam and come back [to class] refreshed.” Some teachers also noted that the CLC enables students to get meaningful work and volunteer experience. The diversity of the programs offered is also believed to have helped engage students who were previously inactive.

81% of High School students are happy with the range of after school programs available to them.

90% of Elementary School students are happy with the range of after school programs available to them.

TTFM Survey Results

Through participation in CBSL projects and CLC activities, teachers noted that students’ interaction with staff and partners outside of the classroom, in a context intentionally shaped by student interests or community needs, has a powerful impact on learning by increasing student engagement and facilitating relational connections.

Student engagement and positive relationships with adults at the school, both measured through TTFM, are believed to contribute to student perseverance.

The CLC “keeps students active and engaged and keeps them attached to their school.”

Teacher

Just under 40 secondary school students participated in an online survey developed by the CLC for this evaluation. 20.51% of students indicated that CLC activities have helped them to become more physically active, 20% said it has given them something to do after school and others indicated that CLC activities have helped them to consider

school as a more fun place to be (13%).

The most popular student recommendations to the CLC included introducing new extra-curricular activities (49%) and volunteering opportunities (33%).

Life Skills

To date, the CLC has created 5 jobs for secondary students. One of the four students participating in the focus group explained that “ads are created [and] students must then provide a formal resume in order to be considered for the job. Once hired students are responsible for running the afterschool program. Responsibilities may range from creating a supply list, researching experiments or prepping the kitchen for cooking.... Learning new skills helps you to acquire new knowledge, increases community engagement and confidence.”

Many teachers believe that students who participate in CLC activities benefit from increased confidence, a sense of pride and a greater desire to succeed.

84.6% of parents believe the school/CLC is a safe and socially inclusive environment.

87% of parents feel welcome as volunteers at the school/CLC.

84.6% believe that the CLC has increased the amount of English services available in the community

78.9% believe the CLC has improved the connection between the school and other organizations serving the English-speaking community

Qu'Anglo Parent Survey Results

Recommendations:

- More efforts need to be made to successfully engage elementary school boys, grades 3 to 5.
- Consider introducing more activities for high school students.
- Create more volunteering opportunities for high school students.
- Based on comments, high school students would appreciate more space, trust and autonomy from school staff – they sometimes feel as though they are treated like elementary students.

- Collect more information from students (through TTFM, if possible) on the impact of CLC activities.

Community Impact

In addition to supporting students, the CLC works with the school and community partners to help support families and the wider English-speaking community. The most popular strategies to date include fostering lifelong learning as well as recreational opportunities.

Lifelong Learning

This past year, the CLC has hosted a dozen informational and interactive VCs. For example, the CLC has hosted free Ami Québec conferences for the public. This has given community members much needed support in coping with mental illness, wills and testaments, hoarding, and suicide. They have also helped community members to access available resources, including a free support line.

The NCHS CLC also provides distant classroom education. Most recently, the CLC has partnered with the University of Quebec and Rimouski to provide nursing courses to university level students. Opportunities to study from a distance are critical to educational achievement, particularly for those who cannot afford or do not wish to move away to study.

NCHS CLC Fitness Centre

The CLC partnered with CASA in 2011 to obtain equipment and introduce a Fitness Center at NCHS.

With additional support from The Municipality of New Carlisle and Baie des Chaleurs active en santé (BDCAS), the CLC was able open the gym in less than 3 months of receiving the equipment. The Fitness Centre is open 39 hours a week, Monday to Friday and is operated exclusively by dedicated volunteers.

82.93% indicated that low cost was the leading factor in joining the gym.

Member Survey

The Centre is open to high school students as well as members of the community and surrounding areas. The centre currently has over 40 members, many of whom reside in neighboring towns.

The data suggests that access to a low-cost fitness room at the school is believed to have significantly contributed to the adoption of positive exercise habits among members. In a survey completed by 41 members, 26.83% said they never exercised prior to joining the NCHS fitness centre and 55% say they now exercise 3 to 4 times a week compared to a previous average of 21.95%.

When members were asked about their level of satisfaction with the gym equipment, 85% said they are very satisfied with the toning machines and the free weights. While the impact of the gym has been very positive to date, space may eventually prove to be a challenge.



Healthy living is a combination of many things, including good nutrition, regular exercise and a positive attitude. Taking care of your body and feeling pride in your accomplishments can improve both your physical and mental health. There are many things you can do to improve your quality of life - improving your diet and exercising regularly is two of the easiest steps. The New Carlisle Fitness Centre allows community members to reach their goals with affordable membership rates and easy access.

Recommendations:

- 43.9 % of members feel the best way to enhance the gym would to extend operating hours.

Closing Thoughts

The information collected for this report suggests that the CLC is making positive contributions to both the school and community. Most significantly, the CLC is helping to foster student engagement and a sense of belonging to the school while contributing to the improved health and wellbeing of community members.

The New Carlisle High School and Community Learning Centre believe success looks different to everyone and that there isn't one right answer to every problem. That's why we work together with partners to enhance school life and community vitality at multiple levels. At the NCHS CLC, learners and citizens of all ages are encouraged to achieve their goals big or small.

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