



Northern Lights School Division #113

Nomination for the

**Premier's Board of Education Award for
Innovation and Excellence in Education**



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Innovation and Excellence in Education**

- I. School Division** Northern Lights School Division #113
- II. Chairperson** Mr. Frank Durocher
- III. Director of Education** Mr. Ralph Pilz
- IV. Program Nominated** Career Transitions Program
- V. Preamble**

Northern Lights School Division #113 encompasses a large geographic region of Saskatchewan's North. Most of the population Northern Lights School Division #113 serves is of Aboriginal background living in relatively isolated rural communities. A much higher proportion of the citizens within the region are unemployed or partially employed than mainstream Saskatchewan. As well a much lower proportion of people have post-secondary training or education. It has become evident to the Northern Lights School Division #113 Board of Education that to improve graduation and transition outcomes specific strategies need to be developed.

The Career Transition Program is one of the Northern Lights School Division #113 innovative strategies to help improve graduation rates and transition patterns to post-secondary education and/or employment.

VI. Goal of the Program

The overall goal of this program and accompanying position is to help identify training and employment potential and opportunities and initiate connections with schools and students. The established position presents potential training and employment realms to school staff and students by developing active relationships with external supports such as corporate partners, health regions and post-secondary education and training entities. The Northern Lights School Division #113 Board of Education has clearly articulated that strategies to connect students to training and employment information not be limited to the conventional school year.

VII. Description of the Program

The Career Transition Program has been underway for one year. Initially a broad division-wide career survey was administered to help determine general areas of student interest. A Career Transition Consultant was hired to both review division-wide data and begin developing partnerships with external partners. The Northern Lights School Division #113 established a Board Committee to work with this Career Transition Consultant during the initial stages. It has been determined that when strategies to connect are developed that the conventional school year be expanded to include summer experiences for students if possible. As partnerships have been developed and nurtured the role of the Career Transition Consultant evolved to working directly with schools both raising awareness and encouraging schools to take full advantage of opportunities to engage students in experiences as they come available.

1. Direct Board Influence and Participation in the Innovation

- The Board voiced initial interest in providing broader engagement strategies in the area of employment readiness and training experience. The Board did not want strategies limited to only the conventional school year.
- The Director was instructed to support and develop an overall concept.
- The Director worked at a position articulation and approached the Ministry of Education for possible start-up funding support.
- The program supports the Division stated objective of improving smooth transitions for students into post-secondary education, training and/or employment; one of the key elements of the Division's Continuous Improvement Plan.

2. Innovative Nature of the Program

Innovation 1: Welding Certificate Program

As part of the Career Transition Program a group of students with a particular interest in welding was identified at one of our high schools. The concept developed to provide a Welding Certificate Program administered by Northlands Regional College but embedded into the high school program. The Career Transition Consultant was able to coordinate partnership funding and acceptance between Northlands College, Northern Career Quest funding agency, Northern Lights School Division #113 Central Office and the local high school. As a result 8 out of 10 students completed the program.

Innovation 2: Summer Health Career Experience

It has been identified by the health regions in the north that aggressive human resource strategies need to be developed to encourage young people to consider employment within the health sector. The Career Transition Consultant developed a strategy of providing 5 day career awareness opportunities at various sites to be available to interested students during the summer months. Partnerships were developed and experiences articulated. As a result 24 students spread over 5 communities took part in week-long experiences at the local hospital or health clinic. Follow-up with students will be made to discuss findings and plan possible career paths.

Innovation 3: Connections

Over the initial year many formal to semi-formal connections have been developed with corporate partners and external agencies. These connections have allowed for more effective and efficient relationships to evolve and develop. The benefits are far reaching and provide a more strategic delivery system. Connections have been made with the following:

Cameco, Areva, Mamaweeatan Health Region, Keewatin Yatthe Health Region, Office of outreach and Transition-University of Saskatchewan, Northern Career Quest, Ministry of Education, Saskatchewan Housing-Northern Branch, Meadow Lake Tribal Council, Northern Teacher Education Program, Prince Albert Model Forest, Winn Bay Mining and evolving...

Innovation 4: Housing Projects

Over the initial year the Career Transition Consultant entered into discussions with Saskatchewan Housing-Northern Branch. Eventually a relationship was articulated to accommodate 3 houses being built by students in La Loche, La Ronge and Pinehouse. Saskatchewan Housing generously provides coordination, materials, guidance and funding for a site worker to support the designated teacher. It is hoped that as these projects succeed, future projects will result.

Innovation 5: Energy Efficient Housing (Pisim Project)

A project is underway in Cumberland House that has students involved in the construction of an energy efficient house using double frame construction and utilizing passive solar orientation. Several important partnerships have evolved with the University of Saskatchewan, North Ridge Construction and others.

3. Sustainability of the Innovation within present system or school

Evidence of sustainability of the Career Transition Program is demonstrated as follows:

- The Career Transition Consultant has been employed and a working budget established.
- The Program and Position Objectives have been placed into the Board approved Northern Lights School Division #113 Education Operational Plan and articulated into the Northern Lights School Division #113 Continuous Improvement Plan.
- External partners and agencies have been directed to the Career Transition Consultant position for formal Northern Lights School Division #113 representation.

4. Cost of the Innovation related to benefits achieved

The Career Transition Program primary cost to the Division is the cost of the Career Transition Consultant, program budget and administration costs. As partnerships have developed an element of cost is assumed by external benefactors.

The benefits far out weigh the direct budgeting costs to the Division. The impact on students engaged in diverse and eclectic opportunities are invaluable. The first year has impacted approximately 90 to 100 students. The benefits of refined partnerships to the Division are also difficult to calculate, but can be assumed as substantial. The development with individual school culture to accommodate partnerships and diverse student experiences also out weigh the overt costs to the Division.

As the program does follow-up assessments with students it can be hoped that this innovation goes well beyond the financial outlay.

5. Client support for the Innovation

- Evidence of client support becomes obvious as the program develops. In the first year several clearly articulated partnerships have evolved with Areva, Cameco, Health regions and Saskatchewan Housing.
- As well the participation numbers of students has increased as the program becomes more systemic. An example such as the following serves to reinforce what can evolve: The Career Transition Consultant has been able to encourage 38 students and staff members from 4 school sites to take part in a two day workshop focusing on practical applications of Solar Energy and Wind Power over a weekend in Prince Albert.

6. Evidence of improved student achievement

- Recognizing that Northern lights School Division #113 has completed only the first year of the Career Transition Program we are seeing greater and greater acceptance of the value of providing engaging experiences.
- The Career Transition Consultant will be gathering data with involved students and staff to help determine impact on career pathways.
- Approximately 90-100 students were involved in experiences in the first year that would not have been available prior to the program being initiated.

Final Summary

The Northern Lights School Division #113 has recognized that in order to improve exiting outcomes we must do more than the conventional. The Division Board recognizes that due to unemployment and remoteness, our students have hefty challenges. However daunting things may seem, the Division continues to develop strategies that go beyond the superficial, the Career Transition Program is one innovative approach.