

# **Regina Public Schools:** Student Retention & Engagement



## Abstract

Regina Public Schools is strengthened by a supportive and collaborative relationship with our Board of Education. Under the leadership of our Board Chair, Katherine Gagne and our Director of Education, Greg Enion we have developed a comprehensive pathway, or program, that allows our most vulnerable students to experience success. For years, school divisions across the province have admired data which points to a large number of students (70% Indigenous) who are leaving our schools after September 30<sup>th</sup> and not returning. These students struggle with the traditional 24-credit pathway and often need more time to achieve their grade 12 diploma. In Regina Public, we often see these students register at our Adult Campus once they reach 18 years of age in order to complete their Adult 12. The Adult Campus serves an important need in our city, **but we needed to develop a pathway for younger students to see Adult Campus as a viable option for their graduation.** We also needed to keep students engaged in school, to continue developing their skills, and to stay connected to a significant adult. As a result, Regina Public has developed an alternative pathway that consists of three distinct programs that all feed into our Adult Campus. They are known as The Learning & Re-Engagement Centre (LRC), The Pre-Adult Campus (PAC), and the Flexible Learning Experience (FLEX). The goal of these three programs is simple...they work together and allow students to connect, to engage and to graduate on an extended timeframe at our Adult Campus. The programs are both innovative and successful.

**Background:**

Each year students register in one of our 27 school divisions throughout the province. They start the new school year filled with hopes and aspirations that they will succeed and continue on a trajectory towards an on-time graduation. Unfortunately, this is not a reality for a large portion of our school population. In 2014, the Ministry of Education began tracking the number of students who disengage from school and have created what is known as the “Student Lost List”. The formula to get on the list is quite straight forward. The Ministry looks at students who were registered as of September 30<sup>th</sup>. If a student is unenrolled from a school, and does not register in another Saskatchewan School, they are considered lost. Essentially, these students have dropped-out and should be a concern to our schools, our communities, and our province. It should also be noted that on average, 70% of the students on the Lost List are of Indigenous ancestry. There is an abundance of research as to why students drop out of school. Whether it is addictions, mental health, family issues, academic frustration or a combination thereof, educators often feel helpless to solve these systemic issues. In other words, the feeling is that these issues may be out of our realm of control. We are pleased to say, that our trustees and senior officials developed an action plan to address key elements that were within our sphere of control.

**Student/Trustee Forum:**

Each year our trustees host a Student/Trustee Forum focused on a theme. Eight to ten students from each high school come to our division office and engage in a focused conversation that provides our trustees with valuable information. This information is used to make positive changes in our division and cater to the needs of students. Between the years of 2016-2018 the themes concentrated on ways to address the growing concern with students who are not successful in our school division. Our students provided us with information that set in motion programming that has played an integral role in an overall reduction of lost students.

### **What Did Students Tell Our Trustees?**

Our students were able to articulate a host of reasons why school can be difficult and what we can do to address the issues. Here is a summary of themes that arose:

- They told our trustees that many students will never graduate on time. They challenged us that with part-time jobs, stressors at home, addictions, mental health, etc. that more and more students need additional time to graduate and that we need to be “o.k.” with that.
- They also told trustees that relationships are the key reason students stay at school and that for some students travelling from class to class with five different teachers was not a recipe for success.
- Finally, they talked to trustees about dis-engagement. They told us that if the material is not relevant and not presented in an engaging manner that it is easy to begin drifting away from school.

### **Action Plan**

- Our trustees and senior administration reviewed the feedback and decided that as division we could no longer admire the data on the Student Lost List, and that we needed to develop a pathway for students to remain in school and graduate with an Adult 12 diploma.

### **The Program**

- The program actually consists of three separate and unique programs that work cohesively and form a pathway for students to graduate at our Adult Campus. Here is an overview of the programs and how they work together:

#### **1. Learning and Re-Engagement Centre (LRC)**

- Our data indicated that we see the largest number of students drifting away from our school when the credit system kicks in at Grade 10. As a result, we created the Learning and Re-Engagement Centre, which is located within the mamawayatitan centre at Scott Collegiate. The LRC is a three teacher model with one Educational Assistant and is designed for students who are 15 or 16 years old and would benefit from a flexible learning environment and a unique high school experience. By exploring their

interests and being supported through individualized instruction, students have the opportunity to re-engage in their education.

### **LRC Mission**

- The Learning and Re-Engagement Centre takes a holistic approach to education and works to understand and meet the complete educational needs of each student. Flexible, one-on-one or small group learning sessions replace traditional classroom structures. Emphasis on relationship building and high academic performance cultivates responsibility, ownership, and active learning. Individual attention and a flexible-area work environment create an inclusive learning community.

### **Opportunities may Include:**

- interest-based learning
- project-based learning
- online learning
- technology-enhanced learning
- interdisciplinary learning
- collaborative learning

### **2. Pre-Adult Campus (PAC)**

- After students complete a maximum of two years in the LRC program, the LRC team transitions the students over to the PAC program. We felt it was important that students transfer into the building where they will eventually complete their Adult 12 in order to feel comfortable. As a result, we renovated the upstairs of the Adult Campus and created the PAC program. PAC provides flexible and diverse learning opportunities for students who are 17 years of age. We take a holistic approach to education and work to understand and meet the complete educational needs of every student. Students in the PAC program will continue to build their skills while working on classes that will count toward their Adult 12. PAC will provide an environment that supports the unique needs of our students who are committed to working towards their Adult 12 education.

### **3. Flexible Learning Experience (FLEX) Program**

Many students in the alternative pathway struggle coming to school on a regular basis. As a result, these students often fall behind and feel like there is no hope of achieving a credit. The goal of FLEX was

to keep students connected to our school division and to a significant adult, while still working toward an Adult 12 credit.

Regina Public School FLEX Program provides flexible and diverse learning opportunities for students 17-21 years of age. The program accommodates those students who require a flexible learning style. Students can achieve credits by meeting with an Adult Campus teacher at a convenient off-site location where they will receive modular work. The meeting time will be determined by the teacher and student based on a personal learning style. We offer programming that helps to support and facilitate student academic learning and achievement. The FLEX model acknowledges the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century student in a modular-based program.

### **Summary of Alternative Pathway:**

- Students who struggle in the regular school environment can now enter the LRC at 15 years of age and receive a unique schooling experience. Instead of transitioning between five classes, students are able to develop meaningful relationships with staff who are accustomed to working with vulnerable youth. Students can stay in the LRC for two years and will then be transitioned to the PAC program, which is located upstairs in the building they will graduate from. In the PAC program, students will begin working on Adult 12 electives while once again working with a team of staff members who are experienced working with students who have struggled in school. If the students begin to drop off in attendance, the FLEX program will connect and work with students to achieve Adult 12 credits in a modular based environment. Once the students turn 18 years of age they will simply move downstairs and officially enroll in the Adult Campus Program to complete their diploma.

### **Sustainability Of The Innovation**

- The LRC, PAC, and FLEX programs are now embedded into our high school culture as an alternate means for students to graduate from high school. The programs are established, have ongoing budgets set for them, and will continue to be a part of Regina Public Schools programming.

### **Cost/Benefit Analysis**

- The three programs have an overall FTE of six teachers and two EA's and house approximately 225 students. The staffing costs associated with this program are approximately \$575,000, but in considering the PTR of 37.5, this is a very cost effective program. It should be noted that these staff are not in addition to our current staffing formula. As a division we calculated the number of students who were not attending particular high schools and adjusted the staffing allocation in these high schools accordingly. Not only is this a cost effective program for our school division, it is cost effective program for our city and our province. It is difficult to put a price on 225 students, many of whom were on the Student Lost List and in jeopardy of not achieving any credits, let alone graduate.

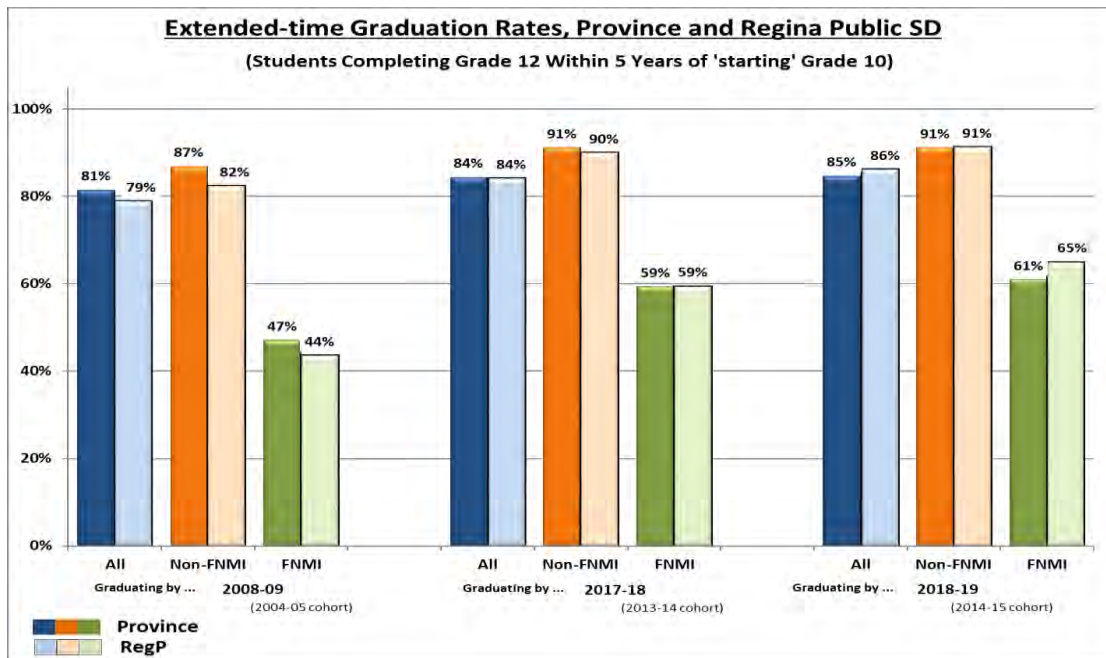
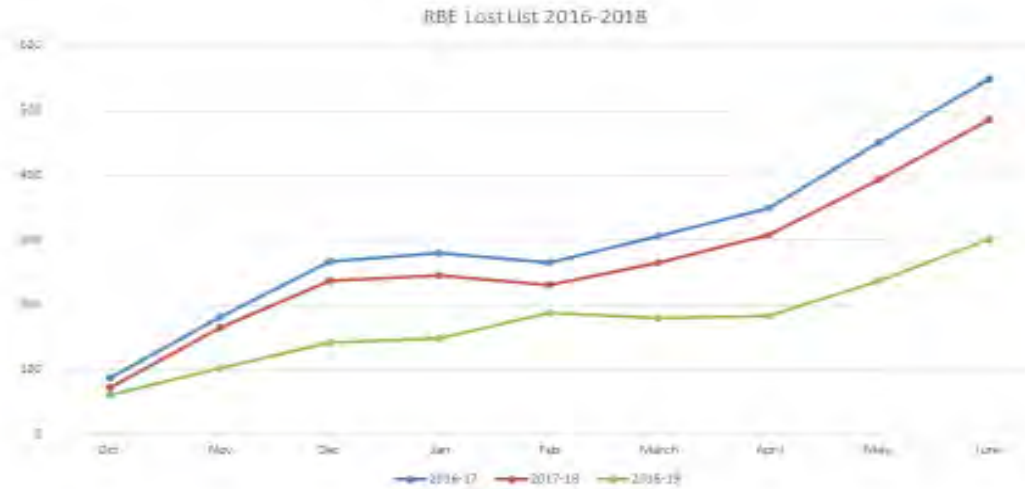
### **Partnerships**

- The Learning and Re-Engagement Program is located within the mamaweyatitan centre. This centre has three owners: City of Regina, Regina Public Library, and Regina Public Schools (Scott Collegiate). The owners have worked in partnership to support transportation of students, student meals, and curriculum.

### **Evidence of Improved Student Achievement**

- As a division we are proud of the results we have seen with these programs. First of all, we have seen a significant number of credits attained with a group of students who has typically struggled in school. In 2018/2019 the students in the LRC attained a total of 120 credits, which is an amazing accomplishment. Also, we are happy to see that we have successfully reduced the number of students our "Lost List". Below is a graph that represents the number of students that are accounted for on September 30<sup>th</sup> and how many are "lost" by the end of June. In a period of two years we reduced the number of students on this list by 250! In addition, we have included our extended time graduation results, which has shown a huge increase last year. We believe that as these programs strengthen we will continue to see an increase in our extended time graduation results.

# Student Retention



Thank you for your consideration for the Premier's Board of Education Award for Innovation and Excellence in Education. Please call Greg Enion, Deputy Director of Student Achievement, 306-523-3015 or Rick Steciuk, 306-523-3022, if you have any questions.