

Question from ARC Committee: Why was the Laurentian Learning Centre not included in the North Bay Planning ARC?

Answer:

For years, the Alternative School was housed at Chippewa Secondary School. The program was doing poorly at this location. The Board knew that there were students out there that could be served but was unable to attract them to the Alternative School located within the regular high school. Historically, Alternative School students thrive better in an environment separate from a regular high school, where usually those students have not been successful.

In 2012, it was decided to move the Alternative School, not only due to the poor success of the program, but to ensure that these "at-risk" students had an increased opportunity to graduate. Before the program moved to its current site at the previous Laurentian Public School (now renamed to the Laurentian Learning Centre) it was run out of a storefront on Main Street in North Bay. At that location, it was very successful and the program grew.

In 2012, Laurentian Public School was closed and sitting empty. It was noted that it was centrally located in the City of North Bay and close to North Bay Transit Services and would be a suitable location to create an Alternative School. The Board and the Ministry approved \$800,000 to do a refurbishment of the school to create the Laurentian Learning Centre.

Alternative Schools provide a more flexible environment for learning and options for students more suitable to individualized needs. The Laurentian Learning Centre serves a student population of greater than 100 that attend on a part-time or full-time basis, depending on student need. Continuous intake allows for the students to enter and leave programs allowing accommodations for other commitments (e.g. work and family schedules).

The Laurentian Learning Centre offers a variety of programs. In addition to completing high school credits, programs offered at the Centre include; International Education - Cultural Exchange and Credit Earning, ACCESS - Mental Health and Addiction, SAL - Supervised Alternative Learning, Lifelong Learning, Adults over 18, ABL - Adult Basic Literacy, Summer School, E-Learning and Night School as well as Independent Learning Courses.

The Board's School Operations and Renewal Grants has minimal effect on the Alternative School at the Laurentian Learning Centre in light of full financial reforms effective September 1, 2017 given its already close proximity to other urban secondary schools. To put things into perspective, the combined annual loss of Top-Up Allocation for School Renewal and Operations for the three North Bay High Schools is \$486,199 effective September 2017. In comparison, the annual loss at the Laurentian Learning Centre will be \$28,918.

The Board needs to address its significant excess capacity to attempt to mitigate the lost top up funding. It is clearly evident that three high schools in North Bay, all within close distances to one another, with excess capacity, significant operating costs and renewal needs - must be addressed.

When we look at why the Laurentian Learning Centre was not included in the ARC, the comparison of the three North Bay High Schools to the Alternative School is the equivalent of comparing apples to oranges. Even though it may serve students of the same age, their needs are quite different than the needs of students that are successfully served through to graduation in a regular high school.