

This series of resources presents effective practices implemented by some of the 27 schools involved in the original High School Flexibility Enhancement Pilot Project (HSFEPP) as they explored ways to use flexibility to increase student engagement and achievement and to support quality teaching in their schools.

This series represents a sampling of the effective practices being implemented in redesign schools across the province.

CONTINUOUS PROGRESS COURSES

Some students at James Fowler High School were failing courses because they are unable to learn all the course material within the allotted time. To help these students achieve success, staff introduced Continuous Progress Courses.

“We wanted to be proactive rather than reactive,” says Principal Keith Johnson. “We were noticing a significant rate of failure in the -2 stream of social studies. Some students were ending up in a class with students one to two grades lower as a result – this wasn’t good for anyone.”

What are Continuous Progress Courses?

Continuous Progress Courses, formerly called credit recovery courses, allow students to re-do courses within two months of taking them originally. The program truly is proactive with some Continuous Progress Courses actually starting before the original course ends. Students are credited for work already mastered and only repeat course material not mastered. As such, students are not required to repeat the entire course.

A teacher explains: “Continuous Progress Courses are meant to develop competencies required in the area of study rather than specific curriculum outcomes, although these inform instruction, of course. Students may just need a little more time to work their way up to the level required to pass the course.”

“Often the time required (for completion of a Continuous Progress Course) is a single term, allowing students to make up credits in other areas they also might be short on. Across the board, it was noticeable that students who needed continuous progress in social studies often needed it in other areas as well.”

Continuous Progress Courses are offered in physical education, social studies, English language arts, science, math and CALM. Students who receive at least 35 per cent in the initial course offering are considered eligible to participate in Continuous Progress Courses.

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Teacher, James Fowler High School

“We truly individualize and focus on competencies instead of only meeting curriculum outcomes,” says Principal Johnson. “We create individual learning profiles for students. This work involves ongoing discussions with parents, teachers and students regarding the nature of the course and the support students require to be successful.”



How success is measured

Principal Johnson says, “We measure the success of the practice by successful student completion and by student mastery with a focus on competency learning. Also, we seek to assess how well we personalized the experience for the learner through entry/exit surveys.”

A teacher explains that, “Generally the success of the practice was measured by the number of students who were successful in earning the credits in the class, and the majority of students were successful. We also want to do some longer-term measurement to see the success rate for these students in their next course level taken in the ‘regular’ classroom.”

A student says of one Continuous Progress Course, “As a student I really liked it. It was faster than the normal class, and I knew I had to work [hard] and ended up really liking it.”

What we learned

A teacher comments, “Personally, I would like to see the Continuous Progress model continue to be offered face-to-face and to resist the urge to go online. Many of the students are in need of individual attention and personalized instruction/guidance. The small class size (ideally between 8 and 15) helps the teacher to accomplish this. Strong relationships are key, and they are best cultivated in a classroom setting.”

“I think students and their parents have to be made fully aware of the opportunity the student is getting with Continuous Progress model—they must be willing to commit, i.e., attend all classes and give their best effort. I attempt to maintain a close contact with parents where possible, including initial contact explaining the unique model of the course and the expectations for the student.”

Principal Johnson is enthusiastic about the success of this effective practice. He sees the possibility for “extension of the concept of continuous progress into all courses.” A student reiterates that “a student has to work hard” in Continuous Progress Courses.

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For more on Continuous Progress Courses, contact:

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