



## FLEXIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Alberta Education defines this as:

- Student centered learning
- Making students responsible and accountable for their learning
- Having multiple entry and exit points into the curriculum
- Using technology to facilitate on-line learning
- Teachers decide how best to structure time with students
- Students have more control over where and when and what they learn

“Removing the bell to start ‘flex time’ helped to communicate to both teachers and students that learning doesn’t stop and start at scheduled times. As a result, the focus has shifted from, “When does class end?” to “Have we covered the necessary outcomes for today?”

Carol Koran, Principal

### What does a flexible learning environment look like at Catholic Central?

#### Flex Time

Almost every school involved in the High School Redesign (Flexibility) project looks at some form of “flex time” as one of the first changes made to the day. Although it seems like a simple concept – provide time for students and teachers to choose where, when and how to use their time in the school day, the move to flex time tends to raise a number of questions. At CCH, flex time at the mid-point of the day made sense for us as one way to ensure students could move easily between our two campuses. However, as with all good ideas, we quickly discovered that flex time meant much more.

Students have demonstrated that they can be responsible in selecting how to use this flexible learning time. They choose which teachers they need to see for 1:1 assistance, they meet with study groups or clubs, or they get some necessary recreation time in the Fitness Centres.

Teachers are able to set appointments to meet with students to make up assignments, get some 1:1 feedback or get extra help.

Teachers are also able to provide enrichment activities for students – another way to personalize their education experience.

Students report feeling less “stressed” ; they have the necessary unscheduled time in their day.

#### Flex 5

In 2013-14 we implemented “flex 5” at our Trinity Learning Centre (Outreach School). A teacher is now available to students twice a week from five p.m. to eight p.m. This works well for students who have jobs or other commitments, and who appreciate the chance to connect with a teacher for help on their self-directed learning modules. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century world of students, the traditional school day no longer works. Flex 5 has grown in popularity with students; we now have students on a regular program asking if they can take courses during “flex 5” in order to better fit their schedules or learning styles.

## Flex and the Quarter System

Having multiple entry and exit points into the curriculum is made easier on a quarter system, simply because students have four “start and stop” dates rather than the traditional semester system. We’ve also learned that “multiple entry points” means students should be able to move at their own pace through learner outcomes.

When teachers structure their lessons differently, either through the creation of independent learning modules, or by providing lessons on moodle, or by giving students choice in which outcomes to address first, they are providing that flexibility for students to take control of their learning. This has been a practice at CCH with our CTS courses for a number of years.

With more access to technology and on-line learning opportunities, students at CCH are able to continue accessing courses, even when they have attendance difficulties or medical difficulties that make it hard to be in class on a regular basis.

## Learning Outside the Classroom

As we move forward with the High School Redesign project, we are looking to expand the programs we offer “off the timetable”. Students will be able to earn course credit for activities they undertake on their “own time”, but which fulfill learner outcomes for courses in recreation, music, theatre and leadership. Learning happens in many contexts besides the school building; for the 21<sup>st</sup> century student, learning is both a life-long endeavor and a life skill.

“Thanks for trusting us with flex time. Students really need the chance to work through things at their own pace and to get help when they need it. We don’t need a bell to tell us when to start learning.”

Grade 10 student

“There’s so much that happens after school and that we put so much time and effort into, it would be nice to get some recognition (credits). Leadership is something universities and colleges like to see on resumes, so we should be able to claim it as a course.”

Grade 12 student

