Self-Directed Learning Frequently Asked Questions

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<th>Q: My student is identified and on an ILP. I am concerned that SDL is not conducive to their learning. How will they be supported?</th>
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<td>The Learning Support Coordinators and other educational staff will be scheduled strategically to be available in the Learning Centre when students with needs are present. Training is taking place to help our Learning Support team know how best to support all of our students in this new model.</td>
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<th>Q: I am concerned that my son or daughter will fall behind due to a lack of structure in their classroom. How will my child be supported?</th>
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<td>During this transition, there will be a period of adjustment. Our students will be developing skills to organize and plan their learning but may require extra support. While in the Learning Centre, our Learning Centre coaches circulate through the room to check in, support and guide our students with planning and goal setting. They are also present as a resource for students if they get stuck.</td>
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<th>Q: I am concerned that my child will not have enough guidance while in the Learning Centre. Who is available for help in the Learning Centre?</th>
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<td>The Learning Centre coaches will be strategically scheduled to help our students develop problem-solving skills. They are in the Learning Centre as facilitators to ask questions, help find resources or support as needed.</td>
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<th>Q: I imagine the Learning Centre to be a very loud area. What if my child needs a quiet place to work?</th>
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<td>The Learning Centre has 3 different zones: the collaborative zone allows students to work together in groups; the semi-collaborative zone is used for small group or paired work, and the independent zone is used for work that requires high-focus. The independent zone will be a quiet space with minimal talking. Work spaces will be available to students that require a quiet space. This may look slightly different at each campus. Examples of quiet spaces are sound-proof rooms, or study corrals.</td>
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<th>Q: My child is enrolled in Cambridge, CXC, or a Provincially-tested course that has a lot of content. How will the SDL model work?</th>
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<td>Students sitting standardized exams will need to be able to apply the content learned in lesson. Self-directed learning teaches our students to think critically about a range of concepts and encourages deeper application. Essentially, self-directed learning will enhance the student’s ability to respond to exam questions. They will use the skills learned in an exam scenario such as time management, planning, how they approach a question and strategies to use when they get stuck.</td>
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<th>Q: My child struggles with time management and working independently. What will happen if assignments aren’t completed in the Learning Centre?</th>
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| In the assignment, work is set out by unit (secondary) or by week (elementary). All work that is required of the student is provided ‘up front’ using a timeline so that the student knows when tasks/projects are due. No additional homework will be scheduled as it is included in
the assignment. However, if a deadline is approaching and the work is not completed in the Learning Centre, it will need to be completed as homework.

Students will work on developing skills to help them manage their time. Staff are being trained on how to teach our students these skills.

Our students will also have resources at their disposal to help with organization such as the Learning Centre Log, the Canvas Calendar and an agenda.

Q: What is being done to ensure that both staff and students know how to use Canvas effectively?

Students are being introduced to Canvas through an online course to be completed before the start of the next academic year. This course includes a series of tutorials with videos to demonstrate how Canvas will be used.

Staff have already started their training on Canvas. This is happening on a weekly basis, as well as on Professional Development days.

Q: How frequently will Canvas be updated with progress or grades?

It is expected that staff update their grades on Canvas at least once per week.

Q: What kinds of activities will my child complete in the Learning Centre?

The Learning Centre is an extension of your child’s lesson time. It is reasonable for our students to complete discussion posts, research, watch approved videos, read a variety of texts, work on projects independently or in groups, and prepare for assessments.

Q: My child typically receives a lot of one to one support. How will this happen using the SDL model?

Learning Support Team Members will be timetabled in the Learning Centre when they are not assigned to a particular class as much as possible. This will allow for individualized support to take place.

Q: What is the difference between the Assignment, the Lesson and the Study?

The Assignment is a unit overview that outlines all tasks and projects that the student needs to complete within a unit of study. For Elementary, the assignment will be updated each week. In Secondary, the assignment will cover an entire unit. This will give the student an overview of all requirements in the unit (including deadlines).

The Lesson is the time when our students meet with their teachers. This is a standard lesson where curriculum is delivered.

The Study is time spent in the Learning Centre to explore concepts. Here, the students will work on a range of tasks to extend their learning.

Q: How can we as parents support our children in this new model?

As much as possible, try to encourage the use of self-directed learning language. Words like ‘the assignment,’ ‘the lesson,’ and ‘the study’ are central to our school day.
This model places our students in charge of their own learning. Throughout this transition, our students will need encouragement to persevere and to stay positive. There will be challenges. However, we want to encourage the students to try their best and figure things out on their own.

Parents are able to see student courses on Canvas. This allows for constant communication between the school and home. If there are questions regarding course content, tasks or projects, students and parents are welcome to contact the course teachers either via email or Canvas’ inbox.

Q: How does the Learning Centre differ from ‘study hall’?

Time spent in the Learning Centre is used to extend the learning that takes place in lessons. Students will build skills and learn new approaches to concepts covered with teachers. They will be doing more than just revising or catching up on unfinished work.

Q: How will the teacher know that my child is learning when they are not always face to face?

Student work is an excellent way to track the progress made. Teachers will also have opportunities to have learning conferences more regularly to discuss how things are going in each subject area.

Learning Logs can also be used to track how much progress the student is making. The Learning Centre facilitator can update a course teacher on how things are progressing. Students are also welcome to approach their course teachers with concerns at any time.

Q: Will my child be able to interact with children from other campuses when they are in the Learning Centre? (thinking about projects or collaborative work across campuses)

A: You will have an opportunity to communicate with your peers from other campuses through a Zoom conference number designed for the Learning center.

Q: Does this mean there could be a possibility that students could have one-on-one Zoom meetings with each other without supervision?

There might be situations where two peers from different campuses could be working together, but they will only be able to meet via the learning center screen to allow for full visibility by the learning center coach.

Q: What is the teacher doing while my child is in the Learning Centre?

While students are in the Learning Centre, multiple scenarios are possible for teachers. They could be teaching a lesson to another group of students, they could be preparing lessons for upcoming units, or they could be the Learning Coach working in the Learning Centre.

Q: When will the Learning Centres be ready? What will they look like?

Each campus is expected to have a functioning Learning Centre in August 2017. The Learning Centre is a large open space that has comfortable furniture for student use. These centres will have 3 different zones: collaborative, semi-collaborative and independent. The furniture in the centre will be flexible enough to be moved. However, some campuses may use existing
furniture that is already in the building. The space is welcome to be used by a range of grades and subject areas at the same time.

Q: How do I know what my child is supposed to be doing at school?

Parents will have access to student courses in Canvas. At any time, parents are welcome to investigate their child’s Canvas calendar as well as the unit assignments posted in each course. Daily agendas should also have valuable information about the work being completed each day.

Q: How will the SDL model be used in an Elementary classroom?

The activities that the students will be doing in their classrooms will be set out at the beginning of each week using a chart. Teachers will continue to facilitate lessons as they always have. Students will also explore ideas through activities in pairs or groups. The thematic units have been designed with SDL in mind.

Q: How are teachers being prepared for this change in learning culture?

Staff have already started preparing for the change to the self-directed learning model. Through professional development and online courses, they are learning to manipulate curriculum to fit this model. Staff are starting to trial this new model in some classes already.

Q: What is a Learning Log?

A Learning Log is a record that tracks what a student is doing in the Learning Centre. It includes goals, a plan for work completion and a log of work accomplished. The Learning Centre coach signs the log at the end of each period.