

**A Comprehensive Study of Student Experience, Engagement, and Areas for Improvement
in Alternative Education Systems**

UBC GEOG 379 Field Research Course
Skyline Alternate School, Williams Lake

Final Research Report

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1. Introduction

Williams Lake

The City of Williams Lake is located in the Central Interior of British Columbia, Canada, 552 km north of Vancouver. It is located in the Cariboo region and is home to over 10,832 people, of which 2,115 are Aboriginal peoples (as of 2011).¹ The geography of Williams Lake boundary lies within the Shuswap (Secwepemc - pronounced suh-wep-muh) traditional territory and neighbours both the T'exelcenc First Nations (Williams Lake Indian Band) and the Xat'súll First Nation (Soda Creek Indian Band). In addition to the city boundary lying within traditional territory, the City of Williams Lake is home to many Tsilhqot'in (Chilcotin) people. Williams Lake is named in honour of Secwepemc chief William.

The economy is primarily driven by the extraction and processing of natural resources, including forestry, mining, logging, milling and ranching. Historically, transportation also played a vital role in its economic growth with the construction of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway, later BC Rail and now CN Rail. Additionally, its location on Highways 97 and 20 allows the city to serve as a main hub for many smaller, rural communities within the region.

School District 27

As of 2011, British Columbia has 60 School Districts which administers and manages publicly funded education.² School District 27 (SD27) is located in the Central Interior of British Columbia, Canada. It serves two central communities, 100 Mile House and Williams Lake, as well as many sparse outlying communities throughout the region. They provide education to approximately 4,500 students in 23 schools. Their teachers work in communities which range

¹“Census Subdivision of Williams Lake, CY - British Columbia,” Statistics Canada, last modified January 7, 2016, accessed February 24, 2016, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-csd-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=CSD&GC=5941009>.

² “2012 BC Education Facts,” British Columbia Teachers’ Federation, accessed April 30, 2016, <http://www.bctf.ca/uploadedfiles/public/publications/2012edfacts.pdf>.

from as small as a few families, to ones that serve over 30,000 people. Their three smallest schools have less than 20 students while their largest has just under 1,500.³

The region is located on the traditional First Nations territories of the Shuswap, Chilcotin and Carrier Nations. Rapidly shifting rural demographics combined with the significant distances between schools are forcing SD27 to adapt delivery methods of education. To improve the education surrounding the First Nations community the School Board formed a partnership through The First Nations Education Committee that includes representatives from one Carrier Band, five Shuswap Bands, six Chilcotin Bands, the Métis Association and representatives from district employee groups. They work together to make recommendations on how the Provincial Aboriginal Target funding will be spent to assist First Nations students throughout the SD27 and to help move the educational agenda forward for these students. The aim to address vital issues such as language preservation, cultural diversity, racism and other social issues that many children in school face.

Along with its First Nations Programs, SD27 provides a variety of educational programs including the elementary and secondary programs, adult programs, distance education, outdoor and alternative programs.⁴

Skyline Alternate School

Skyline initially started as an outdoor education program, with approximately 20 students enrolled in the school. Eventually, Skyline transitioned into an alternative education program and serves over 150 students. Currently, Skyline has 4 teachers, 3 youth workers, 2 First Nations support workers, 1 teaching assistant and 1 secretary. As an alternative education program, Skyline is catered toward the vulnerable youth population in Williams Lake, specifically for students who were expelled from their former high schools or have had run-ins with the law.

However, over the last couple of years there has been a shift in the population at their school, as more students are choosing to switch into Skyline from mainstream education

³ "Overview," School District 27 (Cariboo-Chilcotin), accessed February 22, 2016, <http://www.sd27.bc.ca/overview-district/>.

⁴ Ibid.

systems. This may be a result of various factors, such as the flexible learning schedule and smaller class sizes offered at Skyline.

Currently students work in different classrooms, depending on where they belong in Skyline’s social and emotional growth categories, so that students are put into “like groups of kids”. Students that are in the Level 1 category, with poor attendance, little participation and minimal school work are grouped together in class. Students on the other spectrum in the Level 4 category, attending class frequently, taking on leadership roles, and planning for graduation are usually put into another group.

2. Research Question

Skyline initially started as an alternative education program that catered towards a more vulnerable youth population in Williams Lake. However, over the past years, the demographic and enrollment rates at Skyline have changed significantly. Based on our current knowledge, we discovered that there has been a consistent rise in the number of students switching from regular high schools into the Skyline Alternate School program.

Overall, alternative education programs exemplify a range of differences in comparison to regular high schools, such as smaller class sizes, offering flexible timetables and a more self-directed approach towards learning. According to the Ministry of Education, alternative education programs focus on “educational, social and emotional issues for students whose needs are not being met in a traditional school program.”⁵

The previous group that partnered with Skyline produced a white paper that identified students’ motivations for participating in an alternative schooling program. Our community partner vocalized a desire to further this project by identifying the measures Skyline Alternate can take to better accommodate the various needs of its students.

Our community partner is keen on identifying the push and pull factors that cause students to transfer from regular mainstream school systems to Skyline Alternate school. **In**

⁵ “Alternate Education Program,” Government of British Columbia, accessed February 15, 2016, <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/administration/legislation-policy/public-schools/alternate-education-program>.

particular, what are the specific changes that need to be made to address and accommodate the various needs of students that attend Skyline Alternate School? Currently the operation of Skyline has remained the same as it was 5 years ago, even though there has been a significant shift in the demographics of their school. Therefore it would be highly beneficial to be able to speak with the current students about their overall experience in attending alternative schooling.

3. Theoretical Framework

Changing community perspectives on alternative education systems

Since the 1980s there has been a strong focus on remedial, discipline-oriented programs for “youth in trouble”.⁶ Around the same time Skyline Alternate School started as an outdoor education school aiming to provide an alternative way for students that faced challenges and often got themselves expelled from their former mainstream high schools. In recent years however, there has been a huge shift in demographic of students attending Skyline. In particular more students are opting for an alternative education due to the self-paced learning style and flexible scheduling. This enables students to work at their own comfortable pace, which can be faster or slower than mainstream schools that are confined to a specific yearly schedule. Even though there has been a positive shift in the Skyline’s teaching approach and learning environment, the ongoing stigma surrounding alternative schools remains a problematic misconception in the surrounding community.

In Becker’s work she focuses on the shift in attitudes towards students in alternative schooling from a mentality of youth in trouble, to youth with troubles.⁷ By examining the intersection of diverse students that attend alternative schooling, she highlights the importance of understanding that each individual faces varying academic, social, legal, economic, or mental problems.⁸ At Skyline, we were informed that students were evaluated and divided into different classes based on their social-emotional growth, ranked from level 1 to level 4. Students in the level 1 category have poor attendance records, minimal class participation, complete very little

⁶ Becker, Sarah. "Badder than “Just a bunch of SPEDs”: Alternative schooling and student resistance to special education rhetoric." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* (2009).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

academic work and are unwilling to problem solve. Whereas on the other end of the spectrum, students in level 4 are attending class consistently around 4 days a week, take on leadership roles, managing their personal issues, and making plans to graduate and setting goals for post-graduation. It is important to keep in mind that these individuals come from diverse backgrounds of reasons that have pushed them away from their former schools into Skyline. This ranges from issues such as family conflict, religious and cultural activities, toxic relationships, bullying, mental illness (depression, anxiety), physical disabilities, and many more. By understanding the intersection of various factors that shape the diverse student population at Skyline, we aim to deconstruct the misconceptions associated with alternative education systems.

In order to reduce the stigma of the alternative schools as a dumping ground for discipline cases, Becker stresses the urgency of teachers, counselors, and support staff to reframe the school as a place for students with “special needs” rather than ostracizing students as problem kids⁹. It was found that students having “special needs” did not challenge students’ social status in comparison to being labelled a “troublemaker”¹⁰. At Skyline students who were more socially and emotionally mature were highly self-aware and able to reiterate their own individual “special needs”. These students were able to reflect on their personal challenges and seek the necessary support of their Skyline community, through counsellors, teachers, and peer support. Generally students at Skyline were pretty understanding that their peers all had their own problems, but worked positively together to keep each other afloat. Students shifted from being a problem in their former schools to having problems that needed attention within the Skyline community.

Challenges Pertaining to Special Needs and Vulnerable Students

Becker explores the shift in attitudes of students within alternative schooling through the adoption of a “special needs” rhetoric¹¹. Instead of being portrayed as culpable troublemakers, they became youth in need of academic, behavioural, emotional, or psychological guidance¹². Similarly at Skyline, many of the students who came from other high schools expressed a strong shift in the attitudes of teachers from regular schools in comparison to Skyline. At Skyline,

⁹ Ibid., 61.

¹⁰ Ibid., 69.

¹¹ Ibid., 69.

¹² Ibid., 61.

students felt as if their teachers were more patient, understanding and accepting of their individual social-emotional and academic needs. This has inadvertently created a more positive reputation for Skyline throughout the Williams Lake community, as Skyline students are sharing about their positive experiences with their friends and family members.

Under a special needs framework, students are recognized for dealing with their problems, socially, emotionally or academically. Students were no longer deemed as the problem and this has resulted in a better school atmosphere. However for some of the newer students to Skyline, with lower social-emotional growth levels, still ran the risk of being deemed as defiant or out of control. However nobody was deemed as a “lost cause”, a student who wasn’t considered worth the time a teacher might normally spend working on his or her behalf.¹³ Instead, students at Skyline were often assigned a counsellor or support worker that would dedicate more time to that particular student. This would ultimately help students work through their complex personal issues and eventually become more comfortable, confident, and successful in overcoming their troubles and prioritizing a safe and healthy lifestyle at Skyline.

Measuring Student Engagement: Challenges and Ways to Overcome Them

One of the key components of success for students in schools is influenced by their level of engagement with the surrounding community. According to Mintz, in the context of school, engagement is about the intersecting relationships with others¹⁴. Such as a student’s relationship with the school community: the people (adults and peers), the structures (rules, facilities, schedules), the curriculum and content, the pedagogy (method and practices of teaching), and the opportunities (curricular, extracurricular)¹⁵. There are countless ways in which students engage with their school community. Also, the degree to which students are “engaged” in school depends on a variety of factors such as the quality, depth, breadth of the student’s relationship with the various aspects of life and work surrounding school¹⁶. In the past the ability to measure and understand student engagement has been an ongoing challenge for both schools and

¹³ Ibid., 72.

¹⁴ Yazzie-Mintz, Ethan. "Voices of Students on Engagement: A Report on the 2006 High School Survey of Student Engagement." *Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, Indiana University* (2007).

¹⁵ Ibid., 1.

¹⁶ Ibid., 1.

researchers¹⁷. Whereas the ability to assess “student achievement” has been accomplished through the analysis of quantifiable measures such as test scores and assessments¹⁸. When attempting to measure student engagement, it appears to be quite difficult because it requires observing student’s interaction, collaboration, and perception with their surrounding school community¹⁹. Further, to understand student engagement requires listening and attempting to understand what each student says and believes about their unique relationships to the school community²⁰.

Student Engagement: Development, Growth and Success at Skyline

Our focus group discussions with Skyline students aimed to understand the push and pull factors surrounding students experience leaving their former high school and enrolling into Skyline. More specifically we explored the factors of influence surrounding Skyline students engagement with their Skyline peers, teachers and support workers. Through the execution of numerous focus groups, we were able to garner a wide range of reasons that pointed towards the importance of their relationships within the Skyline community that directly affect their satisfaction and success as students. In addition, students highlighted more of the negative aspects surrounding their engagement with their former school or homeschool situation that hindered their overall school satisfaction and success. All in all, we found that students’ engagement through their relationships with other students, teachers, counsellors, and First Nations support workers, was a fundamental part of their transition into Skyline, through the development, growth, and eventual success as high school students.

Approaches for Conducting Research with Youth Mixed Method Approach: Focus Groups and Surveys

Herdlein and Zurner present their methods and approaches in collecting information on students satisfaction, needs and learning outcomes through qualitative and quantitative methodologies, through segmented focus group sessions and individual surveying. A mixed

¹⁷ Ibid., 1.

¹⁸ Ibid., 1.

¹⁹ Ibid., 1.

²⁰ Ibid., 1.

methods approach to collect data was used, including both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, “to investigate the relationship between the university environment and student perceptions of satisfaction, needs, and learning outcomes.”²¹ Similarly, in our research with Skyline, we decided to undertake a mixed-method approach, as we believed this would enable us to garner a more holistic understanding of student experience and satisfaction. In particular we chose to conduct focus groups, semi-structured video interviews, and a likert-scale demographic survey. The acquisition of qualitative data would inform us about the push-pull factors that affected students decisions to attend Skyline. Whereas the collection of quantitative data surrounding student demographic would help understand the dynamic student population at Skyline, that has increased dramatically over the past 5-10 years.

Surveys

In Herdlein and Zurner’s study, 86 students also participated in the Likert-type scale surveys at the beginning of class lectures²². Brief orientations were provided to each group, explaining the purpose of the research and directions on instrument procedures²³. For our research at Skyline, we created our demographic survey online through Google Forms. This would enable students to complete the survey from the comfort of their mobile devices, iPads, or school computers. We chose an online medium, as we decided it would enable Skyline to modify the survey at their own will. In addition, it would enable for a smoother collection of data.

While our initial plan of conducting both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, was to compare the two to check for participant consistency, we decided to keep the data separate to ensure the utmost anonymity and confidentiality of student responses documented in focus groups. Nevertheless, the ability for students to participate in both can help make the results richer and give participants a better appreciation and understanding of this particular study. In our research, we intentionally use segmented focus groups by dividing students based on their social-emotional growth and common social groups. As Skop suggests, this particular method enables homogeneity and shared grounds between a group, which can often make participants

²¹Herdlein, Richard, and Emily Zurner. "Student Satisfaction, Needs, and Learning Outcomes." *SAGE Open* 5, no. 2 (2015): 2158244015580373.

²² *Ibid.*, 7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 8.

more comfortable and increase group discussion. Additionally, it also gives the researcher the ability to gather significant themes and ideas from the different categories of people.

4. Research Methods

For this research project, we have used a mixed-methods approach as we believe that we can gain a more holistic understanding of our research topic by examining it from various methodological perspectives. The benefit of such approach is that it enables us to formulate and reassess the assumptions that we make about our research focus.

Surveys

Our initial plan was to produce and administer a two-part survey prior to our arrival at Williams Lake. We hoped that by conducting our surveys beforehand, it would enable us to form a better understanding of the students we would be working with. Furthermore, the survey results would significantly help us shape the varying focus group discussions we planned to conduct during our stay at Williams Lake by tackling similar issues and concerns that would have been raised during the preliminary surveys. In addition, we hoped that by giving students the survey in advance, they would have had more time to learn about what we are doing and understand their role as students in shaping the outcome of our project. It is important to keep in mind that all the work that goes into the formation of the surveys is part of an evolutionary process that is receptive to change based on trial and error.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, our community partner was unable to administer the surveys prior to our visit. As a result, we had to alter our plans for our week at Williams Lake in order to make the most use of our limited time frame of four and a half school days. We decided to spend our time concentrating on the focus group discussions during our stay, while allowing the school to administer the surveys after we left. Although our plans changed, we were still pleased to know that the surveys would still be relevant in its contribution to the Skyline community and enriching our research goals in alternative ways.

The first part of the survey is a short, multiple-choice response and likert-scale survey that we have designed to acquire data about the student demographics at Skyline Alternate School. The survey will provide a broader and general understanding of the research population that we have worked with. This survey gathers information such as the students' sex/gender, race/ethnicity, and school attendance. We decided to use Google Forms over other survey platforms such as the UBC survey tool, as our community partner can continue to revise and administer this survey even after we complete this course. This platform will also be accessible to students via their smartphones or tablets during class time. The online demographic survey can be found here: <http://goo.gl/forms/n6mf6q0RFp>

The second part of our survey comprises of more comprehensive, open-ended questions that aim to highlight the personal experiences of students at Skyline in a number of intersecting ways (See Appendix A to view survey). The open-ended questions will help students think about the push and pull factors that may have affected their decision to enroll in Skyline. By separating the questions into various categories, including academics, peer support, personal development and community involvement, we hoped to collect more detailed and useful responses.

We deliberately chose to create text boxes for each question to ensure that the responses would be fairly similar in length from all the students. We acknowledge that by restricting the space for each question could potentially influence the depth and detail of the responses, however we have chosen to follow through with our initial plan. Given the sensitive nature of our questions, this survey will be administered in person and on paper.

We initially decided to ask students to fill out their Personal Education Number (PEN) to allow us to link responses from both parts of the survey while preserving some anonymity. However, after further consideration, we decided that a basic coding system would be easier to administer in classrooms, rather than depending on students to remember their PEN numbers. Codes would go from A to D depending on the class of students' social-emotional growth level. Each student would receive an alphabet and a unique number that they can write on both parts of their survey (e.g. A21).

Focus Groups Discussions

Initially, we hoped that the surveys would help narrow our scope of research and support us in identifying initial patterns or themes to explore during our focus group discussions. Conducting focus group discussions would have enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of the push and pull factors that encourage students to come to Skyline, and how these factors may differ across the school population. However, during our first in-meeting in Williams Lake, Mike suggested for us to merge our open ended survey with the focus groups discussions. The rationale behind this suggestion was that the students were more likely to provide detailed, well thought out answers through oral discussions rather than written responses, as the written surveys required more effort and concentration to complete. Moreover, given the short timeline that we were on, it made sense to combine our two methods in order to obtain the highest quality of data as possible. Subsequently, we adapted our questions from the open ended survey and used them as guiding questions for our focus group discussions.

We conducted focus group discussions over the course of four days, with groups comprised of one to four students. Admittedly, group discussions with only one student participant may have impacted our results, as the imbalanced researcher to participant ratio may have influenced how comfortable the students felt to share their thoughts. However, we tried our best to provide the students with a welcoming and friendly group discussion atmosphere by speaking casually with the participants, offering food, and sharing jokes.

Participants were selected by Mike, who put “like” students into the same focus groups. In other words, students were grouped together based on their social and emotional growth. This is a system used by Skyline to differentiate students into four divisions based on student participation, attendance, cognitive ability to problem solve and make decisions. Students in the Level 1 category, with poor attendance, little participation and minimal school work are grouped together in class. Students in the Level 2 category are starting to have good attendance, participates in activities, beginning to address inhibiting personal issues, completing some academic work. Students in the Level 3 category have better attendance, becoming more of a role model for other students, having more success dealing with personal issues and are completing courses. Students in the Level 4 category are attending class frequently, taking on leadership roles, and planning for graduation are usually put into another group. Focus group

discussions tended to be comprised of students who were friends, or were in the same class. Anyone who was present and willing to speak in the group discussions were encouraged to participate (View Appendix A). In total, we conducted 19 focus group discussions, and spoke with 39 students. Group discussions ranged from being 5 to 30 minutes long.

Day in the Life Video - Interviews

Our aim for the “Day in the Life” video was to provide a tangible tool for the Skyline to help deconstruct existing stigma surrounding alternative schools, through the creation of a positive depiction the diverse actualities of Skyline. Our initial aim was to get students to record various parts of their day at school using cameras. However we decided against this, as we thought this would be too disruptive to their daily work schedule. Instead, we chose to conduct semi-structured interviews with several students, one teacher and the principal. Through these interviews, our goal was to capture a genuine depiction of Skyline as a positive and thriving safe community of hard-working, supportive, and caring people. We are aware that the number of students included in this video is an extremely small depiction of the actual student population of Skyline. One of the key reasons some students did not participate in the video interviews was due to high levels of anxiety. As noted in our focus groups, many students were dealing with on-going mental illness issues such as anxiety and depression, with varying severity levels. One of the key things we stressed to students about our video project was that it was completely voluntary and only if they felt comfortable being directly on camera. In addition, students were entitled to skip questions or opt-out at any time throughout the video making process. Since we left the video project as a voluntary option for students, we found that there was a smaller interest for participation, in comparison to the focus groups which were strategically selected by the principal of Skyline, Mike Franklin. The video can be viewed here:

<https://youtu.be/tabgYgbUZVM>

5. Data Results and Analysis

In order to condense the student responses in a useful manner for our community partner, we have categorized the answers by different factors. We have also separated each question by

the students' class in order to highlight similarities and differences between the three classes. We have also used a qualitative approach to place different weight on each factor, based on the number of times a response was made.

The table below shows the total number of focus group participants from their respective classes. Tony's class has most of the Level 1-2 students, while Gord's class has more Level 3 Students. Lastly, students in Heather, Mark and Patti's class are those in Level 4 who are preparing to graduate.

Teacher	Total Number of Focus Group Participants
Tony	7
Gord	9
Heather, Mark and Patti	22
Mike/Lynn*	1
Total	39

**This particular student is away most of the year, and takes on distance education courses while away. In order to keep this students' answers anonymous, we have not added a table to breakdown the responses. Alternatively, we have taken this students information into account throughout our data analysis section.*

Question 1: Why did you come to Skyline?

Categories:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Mental Health | 5. Needed to catch up |
| 2. School Environment | 6. Teacher and Staff Relationship |
| 3. Last Resort | 7. Family and Personal |
| 4. Self/slower pace | |

Tony's Class

Factors (number of responses from students)	Total
1. Mental Health - Anxiety (2) - Claustrophobia (1)	3
2. School Environment	2

- Dislike big crowds/classrooms (2)	
3. Last Resort (1)	1
4. Self/Slower Pace (1)	1*
5. Needed to catch up - Missed a lot of classes in former high school (2)	2 in total (1*)
Others: - More time to think about the future (1) - More time to enjoy out of school activities (1*)	2

Gord's Class

Factors	Number of Times
2. School Environment - Didn't like the surroundings at former high school (2) - Negativity in former high school (1)	3
3. Last Resort - Forced to leave former high school (3)	3
4. Self/slower paced - Ability to take extra courses (1)	1
Others: - Moved from out of town halfway through the year (1)	1

Heather, Mark and Patti's Class

Factors	Number of Times
1. Mental Health - Anxiety (2) - Depression (1) - Substance abuse issues, crashed car (1)	4
2. School Environment - Too many people in former high school (4) - Bullied at former high school (1) - People were rude at former high school/better people at Skyline 2 - Disliked teaching style at former high school (ie. teachers were more strict) 4	11
3. Last Resort - Dropped out from former high school	3
4. Self/Slower pace - Less structured/more flexible schedule allowed student to get more done (11)	12

- To graduate (would not be able to graduate in other school) (1)	
5. Needed to catch up - Homeschooled previously, needed more help and support with harder subjects (4) - <i>“Formatted like homeschooling but have teachers on standby, can get have teachers to support you”</i> - Homeschooled previously, fell behind and needed more of a push from teachers (2) - Fell behind/missed classes in former high school (3)	9
6. Teacher and Staff Relationship - More individual help from teachers (1)	1
7. Family and Personal - Familial instability (1)	1
Other: - Moved from out of town and didn’t want to go to a regular high school (2) - Formerly in another alternate school out of town (2) - Had friends coming to Skyline (1) - Heard it was easier than traditional schools (1)	6

Question 1 Summary:

The responses for Question 1 matched Mike’s expectations from the students that he outlined in our first meeting on Monday at Skyline. The majority of responses from all three classes addressed Categories 2 (School Environment), 3 (Last Resort) and 4 (Self/Slower Pace). However this is not depictive every individual opinion noted from the student responses.

Question 2: What are some things about Skyline that you enjoy?

Categories:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Mental Health | 5. Needed to catch up |
| 2. School Environment | 6. Teacher and Staff Relationship |
| 3. Last Resort | 7. Family and Personal |
| 4. Self/slower pace | 8. Courses and Extracurricular |

Tony’s Class

Factors	Number of Times
2. School Environment - Small school <i>compared to larger high schools like Columneetza or WL,</i> teachers and support staff open and friendly (1)	1

4. Self/Slower Pace - Self-paced learning, can get work done faster (5)	5
8. Course and Extracurricular/Life Skills Activities - PE Activities (e.g. hockey) (1)	1 *
Others: - Lunch offered at Skyline (2)	2*

Gord's Class

Factors	Number of Times
2. School Environment - Smaller school (1)	1
4. Self/slower pace - More freedom compared to old high school (8) - <i>"Don't have to get everything done at the same time"</i> - <i>"Work at your own pace, not as much pressure"</i> - <i>"Don't have to ask unnecessary questions like going to the washroom"</i>	8
6. Teachers and Staff Relationship - Teachers are kind and respectful (2) - <i>"Teachers actually respect me, treat you like an equal human being"</i> - <i>"Teachers here at skyline always making sure you're okay, even though you may not have them"</i>	2

Heather, Mark and Patti's Class

Factors	Number of Times
2. School Environment - Not a lot of interpersonal conflict (1)	1
4. Self/Slower Pace - Gets work done faster (8) (ie. More relaxed, give you space, - "if you're having a bad day they understand more, if you need to take the day off you can - you can just sit and if you're not having a good day teachers will let you go home and get your head straight" - Great flexible schedule (ie. Wednesdays - Half day schedule, helps you set your own program and stay on track, balance between freedom and structure great here at Skyline) (3) -	11
6. Teacher and Staff Relationship - Teachers/support staff and peers are friendly and nice (ie. Skyline teachers act	13

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> more like teachers) (4) - Teachers are helpful with school work (2) - Interpersonal conflict solved quickly (teachers listen to both parties) (1) - Having a place to learn and tools for support (ie. Classroom setting here at Skyline great, Skyline a good middle ground between homeschooling and regular high school) (2) - Help from youth support workers, always readily available (1) - One on one support (3) - <i>"I was a full year behind but caught up in six months"</i> 	
<p>8. Courses and Extracurricular/Life Skills Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kitchen available for student use + get credits for being involved (2) - Offers more activities than regular high schools (e.g., horseback riding, concrete fitness, pottery, etc.) (6) - Enjoys life skills groups and resources (3) 	11

Question 2 Summary:

The responses for Question 2 were highly varied. However the majority of responses in all three classes comprised of Categories 2 (School Environment) and 4 (Self/Slower Pace). A key finding to note is that Category 8 (Courses and Extracurricular/Life Skills Activities) was noted by eleven students from Heather and Mark's class, as an important reason for their enjoyment at Skyline. Overall the responses from all three classes were dominated by positive responses.

Question 3: What are some things that didn't work at your former high school?

Categories:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mental Health 2. School Environment 3. Last Resort 4. Self/slower pace 5. Needed to catch up | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Teacher and Staff Relationship 7. Family and Personal 8. Courses and Extracurricular/Life Skill Activities 9. Learning Structure 10. Attendance |
|---|--|

Tony's Class

Factors	Number of Times
<p>1. Mental Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anxiety (1) 	1
<p>2. School Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Boring (1) - Too many people (1*) - Didn't get along with other students (ie. People weren't nice) (3*) 	5

6. Teacher and Staff Relationship - Teachers were not clear in their teaching methods (ie. would not clarify specific issues until the later years) (1)	1
7. Family and Personal - Family Tragedy (1)	1
8. Courses and Extracurricular/Life Skills Activities - Did not enjoy the extra mandatory subjects (ie. Bible study..) (1)	1
9. Learning Structure - Slow-paced learning (1)	1

Gord's Class

Factors	Number of Times
2. School Environment - Didn't get along with other students (ie. bullied, conflict) (4)	4
6. Teachers and Staff Relationship - Teachers weren't as helpful (ie. not friendly, too strict - weren't allowed to leave campus, didn't care as much) (4)	4
9. Learning Structure - Class changes and block rotation (1)	1
10. Attendance - Poor Attendance (ie. skipped class, falling behind, couldn't keep up with school work, stayed at home) (3)	3
Others: - No smoke pit (1)	1

Heather, Mark and Patti's Class

Factors	Number of Times
1. Mental Health - Anxiety (1)	1
2. School Environment - Drama with peers (ie. "cliquey") (1) - Friends did not get along with other friend groups (1) - Unable to pay attention in class (1) - Bullying (ie. peer made fun of her because of wrong answers) (1) - Social isolation (ie. didn't like to be around her peers) (1) - Class size (ie. too many kids, not a fair student-teacher ratio, didn't like to be around too many people, too few kids) (3)	8
4. Self/Slower Pace - Teaching/learning style didn't work for them (5)	5

(ie. fixed schedule, constant assignments, fixed deadlines, not being able to take her time to do work and feeling rushed, hard to contact teachers for online schooling and had to wait for two weeks from doing assignments and tests, homeschooling - no self motivation or guidance from parents/teacher who are not present, WL I was told that if you were just going to waste time and do nothing - not to go - didn't have the mindset to go and if I wouldn't go I would get in trouble - or)	
<p>6. Teacher and Staff Relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Didn't get along with teachers (1) - Conflict with teachers (ie. didn't leave you alone, they were too strict, when I went I would get in trouble for wasting time) (3) - Too informal (ie. let you do your own thing, teachers tried to be your friend) (1) - Teachers not following through with plans (ie. saying things were not due and then they were) (1) 	6
<p>7. Family and Personal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unhealthy relationships (ie. boyfriend) (1) 	1
<p>8. Courses and Extracurricular Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Struggling with specific subjects (ie. math) (1) 	1
<p>9. Learning Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time wasted in class and wanted to complete work faster (ie. teacher wanted to re-cap gr 8 math - which he didn't learn before and cause him to fall behind,) (2) - Homeschool - did not like format (ie. video chat with teachers, powerpoint lessons, EBUS - need to be disciplined and set your own program) (2) - Daily block rotation schedule (ie. ABCD, BACD...) (1) 	5
<p>10. Attendance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skipping class/Putting zero effort in (ie. hiding out in the library) (2) 	2
<p>Others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Living out of town (1) - Moved out of town (1) 	2

Question 3 Summary:

This question was created to garner the diverse responses regarding the push-pull factors that influenced individual students' decisions to come to Skyline. In particular, to better understand the reasons why their former schools did not fulfill their specific needs. For all three classes, the majority of responses comprised of Categories 2 (School Environment), 6 (Teacher and Staff Relationship) and 9 (Learning Structure). Overall, students found that upon their transition to Skyline, their unmet needs from their previous schooling situation was addressed.

Question 4: What are some things about Skyline that you would like to see improved?

Categories:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Mental Health | 8. Courses and Extracurricular/Life Skill Activities |
| 2. School Environment | 9. Learning Structure |
| 3. Last Resort | 10. Attendance |
| 4. Self/slower pace | 11. Nothing that needs improvement |
| 5. Needed to catch up | 12. Designated Smoking Area |
| 6. Teacher and Staff Relationship | 13. More Funding |
| 7. Family and Personal | |

Tony's Class

Factors	Number of Times
2. School Environment - Less vulgar language used by students in class (1)	1
8. Courses and Extracurricular/Life Skills Activities - More programs for emotional/personal support "e.g. girl groups, glass slipper program" (1) - More art classes on different days (2) - More food classes (1) - Sports: lacrosse (1) - Specific skyline sports clubs (instead of joining WL high school clubs) (1)	6
9. Learning Structure - More organized teachers (1) - E.g. "all kind of mixed up", P.E. course is one textbook for grade 10-12, same chapters given from the same textbook (first 6 chapters) for both grade 10 and 12, so they got mixed up, a little bit disorganized, didn't realize she did not do any tests ("don't worry about the test"), expect students to keep track of their courses on their own, but teachers don't check enough "back up"	1
11. Nothing that needs improvement (1)	1
13. More funding - More funding for food lunches (1)	1

Gord's Class

Factors	Number of Times
6. Teacher and Staff Relationship - Improving relationship between student and first nations worker/secretary (1)	1
8. Courses and Extracurricular/Life Skills Activities - Sports: Baseball (2) - Sports: Football (1)	3

11. Nothing that needs improvement (4)	4
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Heather, Mark and Patti's Class

Factors	Number of Times
<p>6. Teacher and Staff Relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less attention and focus on high-risk students (not enough on low-risk students) (2) - "If things are going well they don't push as hard" - "When youth workers check on me it's just like 'hey how's it going?'" - "You can be slightly connected but they [youth workers] can brush you off when you're not in the high-risk" (1) - A better relationship between youth workers and students (equal treatment to all students needed) (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"We are an alternate program"</i> - <i>"Comes off very arrogant"</i> - <i>"Wish the youth workers were more kind"</i> - <i>"Rude things said to students behind their back and in front of them"</i> - <i>"If you're not into sports or kickboxing - not worth the youth workers time"</i> - Notes written about them everyday - "they'll put themselves on you, do stuff and make you look bad/lower than them" - Feels teachers talk to students all equally 	3
<p>8. Courses and Extracurricular Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Class: Heavy metal rocks (offered more frequently) (1) - Art class: Pottery (offered more frequently) (1) - Outdoor sports (offered more frequently) e.g. ultimate and horseback riding (3) - More inclusive programs for everyone (e.g. poetry competitions not only for First Nations) (1) - More classes on different days (e.g. works to support herself and some classes are only offered on specific days) (1) - Wish teachers were available more often/on different days (e.g. Biology teacher only comes certain days, often can't get help from teachers) (1) - Can't do Chemistry 11 at Skyline (1) - More shop classes (1) - More P.E. classes offered on different days (1) 	9
<p>9. Learning Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More push from teachers (1) - More structured courses (e.g. knowledge on course requirements necessary to enter university for a specific course) (2) - 	3
<p>11. Nothing that needs improvement (5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Individual improvement rather than the programs we have, since the school experience is dependent on the individual" - "Not really too much they need to improve on, it's pretty good here, pretty relaxed, not much you can do to get in trouble - Taken a lot of the stress of 	5

<p>my shoulders in terms of schooling - this place allows you to finish at your own pace and lets you take off time if you need - if school isn't your priority they won't push you"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has gotten the support she needed to transition back to WL high school 	
<p>12. Designated smoking area (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Accommodates and keeps the area clean" - "Only one planet to live on" - the picnic table spot would be the best - Not sure where the new spot would be because there's an elementary school 	3
<p>13. More Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skyline's own gym facility (1) - More fundraisers (e.g. fruits/vegetable sales) top help with lower lunch budgets (1) 	2

Question 4 Summary:

The improvements that students wanted to see were very specific and based on their individual needs. The responses were not highly generic and predictable but rather situational based on personal experiences and desires. However in general for all three classes Categories 8 (Courses and Extracurricular Activities) and 11 (Nothing that needs improvement) were highlighted as common suggestions for ways to improve Skyline.

Question 5: Please share any thoughts about your experience at Skyline

Tony's Class

Factors	Number of Times
Enjoys going to Skyline (ie. likes it here, good, comfortable environment)	3

Gord's Class

Factors	Number of Times
Enjoys being at Skyline (ie. not as bad as people cut it out to be)	2
Students are respectful (ie. students get along with each other)	1

Heather, Mark and Patti's Class

Factors	Number of Times
Enjoys going to Skyline (ie. "Home away from home")	5

Staff is really welcoming, really understanding and good with dealing with individuals, taking them aside, (one on one) for support, youth counselling	1
Recommended friends outside of Skyline to come here	1
Learning happens with teachers on a personal level	1
Planning to graduate (ie. Attend TRU for Computer Science, happy she is able to graduate after missing two years)	2
Good Support from Teachers and other Staff to complete work (ie. catching up with specific courses)	1
More or less pretty good, like the program, lets you do your own thing, don't have a set schedule, do what you want, if you don't feel like doing one subject you can switch around	1

Question 5 Summary:

There was a significant number of students who chose not to respond to this question. However among the students that did respond, there was a general consensus about enjoying being a student at Skyline and an overall satisfaction with the way the school is being run.

6. Recommendations for Community Partner

Based on the student responses, we have highlighted several areas of improvement that we feel require further attention or were either raised repeatedly by students during the discussions.

Improving Youth Worker-Student Relationship

Based on our focus group discussions with the students and our observations while at Skyline, it has come to our understanding that a small number of students had concerns about the relationship between students and a specific youth worker. More specifically, one student described a youth worker being very rude and arrogant, often saying disrespectful things in front of the student and privately to others. One student added, “if you’re not into sports or

kickboxing, you're not worth the youth worker's time". Some students are assessed daily and often felt critically judged or looked down upon by the youth workers. Furthermore, the student argued, "we are an alternate program" and hence should not be treated with the same framework or interaction as in traditional high schools.

In order to continue the positive and beneficial support which students receive from the Skyline staff, it may be beneficial for support workers to continue working on their open and non-discriminatory relationship with students. Doing so may enable some of the current students to feel less negative emotions and dissatisfaction towards these staff members.

High-risk and Low-risk Categories

Some students expressed sentiments surrounding the discrepancy in the levels of treatment and attention given to high-risk students compared to low-risk students. Students noticed that their peers who were deemed high-risk would receive daily monitoring from support staff. For example one student expressed "you can be slightly connected but they [youth workers] can brush you off when you're not in the high-risk [category]." However in regards to teacher-student relationships, students agreed that the teachers did their best to provide students with an equal amount of attention and support. Therefore, to improve the imbalance of attention given to low-risk students, it would be important to re-evaluate the distribution of attention from support staff and strive towards a more genuine interest in the social-emotional and academic well-being of all students.

Courses and Extracurricular Activities

One of the main concerns from students was the limited availability and variety of courses offered throughout the week. Many students find it difficult either to meet certain teachers or participate in specific classes based on their shorter weekly attendance at school. As a result, some students are unable to get assistance with their courses when their teachers are not in on days when the students are. Additionally, a large number of students showed positive a strong interest in the art, sports and cooking classes and would like see more of these programs offered at Skyline. Lastly, some have suggested more personal and emotional group support programs,

providing examples such as the “girl groups” and “glass slipper programs” for youth.

Learning Structure

Students expressed some concerns about the need for improvements in the organisation of the learning curriculum. In particular some students expressed the need for more support from the teachers in keeping track of their courses. Another concern was the use of a same textbook for the grades 10 to 12 Physical Education course. Lastly, students would like to receive more support regarding the specific courses that are mandatory to enter different fields in post-secondary education. Overall there was a general demand to improve the structural organisation of how teachers support students in their coursework and graduation planning.

Fundraising for Lunch Budget

One of the positive areas which students repeatedly highlighted during the focus group discussions, was their ability to cook for their peers and enjoy lunch together. One student suggested doing teacher and student collaborations for fundraisers within the community. This could be done by handing out sponsorship from local companies to donate items that could be used at a school auction/fundraising event. Also perhaps students who participated in the fundraising process could attain school credits that counts towards graduation.

Designated Smoking Area

The demand for a designated smoking area was brought up numerous times as a key improvement that students would like to see implemented within Skyline’s vicinity. Students expressed a strong understanding of why it was important for there to be smoking in a specific location, as they did not want to disrupt the elementary school students, as well as the neighboring community members. It was evident that students were mindful of their social and environmental impact of the community, as one student even noted that they had “only one planet to live on.” Some students were quite conflicted that there was no distinctive location for smoking, which resulted in a higher level of litter from cigarette buds and spitting on the ground.

It would be extremely useful to create a designated smoking area and clearly outline the specifications with the teachers, staff, and most importantly the students. This would work to eliminate the current misunderstanding regarding smoking boundaries for students.

7. Conclusion

Research Limitations

Throughout our research there were several inhibiting factors that influenced our work. It is crucial that we reflect on these, as it contributed to the shaping of our results.

I. Responses from Students in “lower category”

From the analysis of our data, we noted that there was a huge disparity in the frequency of students surveyed. In particular the majority of students (22) were from Mark and Heather’s class, primarily grade eleven and twelve students with high social-emotional growth levels. Followed by the remainder from Gord (9) and Tony’s (7) class, where students ranged from the mid to low social-emotional growth levels. This is important to note because the responses from students in the lower categories tended to be shorter comments that were less comprehensive and emotionally reflective.

Teacher	Total Number of Focus Group Participants
Tony	7
Gord	9
Heather, Mark and Patti	22
Mike/Lynn*	1
Total	39

**This particular student is away most of the year, and takes on distance education courses while away. In order to keep this students’ answers anonymous, we have not added a table to breakdown the responses. Alternatively, we have taken this students information into account throughout our data analysis section.*

II. Diversity of Students in Video

We recognize that diversity in student interviewees was a weakness in the creation of our video. Five out of the seven interviewees were from Mark and Heather's class, meaning they tended to have higher social and emotional maturity. This is contrasted by the other two interviewees from Gord's class, who typically taught students with lower social and emotional maturity. While we hoped to gain a diversity of perspectives for our film, it was challenging to find students who would be willing to speak on camera, as many of them struggle with anxiety issues. Although the perspectives expressed in the video may not be representative of the diversity of experiences and opinions among Skyline students, we hoped that this video would shed light on what it means to be enrolled in an alternative school, and challenge the negative perceptions that come along with it.

III. Positionality - Researcher and Research Participant

It is always important to note that our positionality and role as undergraduate researchers from UBC may have affected the outcome of our data collection and findings. In particular, being three female researchers in our early 20s, of Chinese ethnic background who speak fluent English and are outsiders to the Skyline and broader community of Williams Lake contributed to the ways Skyline students perceived us. Thus, our positionality affected the fundamental way students responded to us in the focus groups and video project. As researchers, we found that the smaller-gap in age between us and the students enabled for an increased level of comfort for them. However this is not a definitive fact but a general observation. Overall, despite our comparative differences in the researcher and research participant relationship, we found that the majority of student responses were highly genuine, honest, critical, personal and reflective.

IV. One or Two Groups Were Mixed Classes

We recognize that since one of the focus groups contained students from different classes, the responses may have been dominated by the students with higher social-emotional growth levels. Students from the lower social-emotional growth categories were more likely to respond less frequently, provide brief responses, or echo the responses of their peers by saying "me too" or "same". The influence students have on each other's responses is noted for all the

focus groups that we conducted, especially in bigger groups of three or four students, where one student may have driven the bulk of the discussion.

Notes for Future Researchers

Our experience working with Skyline has been filled with learning opportunities and areas for our own group improve. We hope the following section will help future researchers in their research endeavours and collaboration with Skyline.

I. Flexibility

One of the biggest takeaways from this research project, from the planning process to the final week of the field work in Williams Lake, is to always remain flexible to minor and major changes throughout the entire way. Whether it was a small change such as rescheduling bi-weekly phone calls with Mike Franklin, or bigger changes like shifting the timeline for our two-part survey from prior to our arrival, to during our week at Skyline. In addition, we decided alongside the suggestion of Mike that it would be better to change our comprehensive written-response survey to a verbal-response semi-structured focus group, using the questions to guide the focus group discussion. The reasoning behind this was because Mike predicted students would have less of a desire to be as descriptive through written responses.

II. Being Mindful of Your Surrounding Environment

One thing that we did not consider at great lengths prior to our week at Skyline was how our presence would be disruptive to the daily routine of teachers, other staff and students. For example there were two instances 1) When we used a spare room that was later supposed to be used for a Life Skills group session and 2) When we were in the staff room filming our video some teachers were trying to come in and get coffee but were unable to.

III. Consent Form Details

While conducting focus group discussions, many students either questioned or hesitated when being referred to as “Subjects” on our survey and media consent forms. Future researchers

are advised to make minor changes to this and address students as *research participants* instead. This may be less uncomfortable and alarming for students, particularly if this is the first research study they are partaking in.

IV. Building A Relationship with Skyline Staff and Students

Due to the large changes in our initial timeline and the limited time we had in Williams Lake, we were unable to take as much time building a foundational relationship with the students and staff at Skyline. We are aware of how this may have potentially affected how comfortable and open some of the students felt, particularly those who are usually more reserved. If given the opportunity and time, we highly recommend future researchers to engage in more participant observations and activities with the students. Although we were not able to have a formal introduction session with the students, we were able to find ways to engage with students by playing frisbee with them, joining them on their tour to the museum, and sitting in on Gord's circle time with a First Nations elder from Soda Creek. These small moments were vital in learning more about the Skyline environment and allowed us to build a relationship with some of the students. We highly recommend future researchers take the time to build new relationships, ask questions and understand the environment. In many ways, this has not only enriched our data collections, but our understanding of our research and its importance.

V. Maintaining a constant lines of communication with community partner

It is crucial to maintain a strong line of communication with your community partner from the initial point of contact, up until the follow-up stage of the research project. For our group, we did this through email correspondence and bi-weekly phone call updates. We made the effort to call our community partner roughly every two weeks, even when we had made limited progress in our research process. By doing this, it pushed us to remain on-task with our goals and ensured we were always constantly thinking about the next step. It is important to keep in mind that your community partner may sometimes be overwhelmed with their work obligations, so you should not be afraid to send them a reminder a few days in-advance of your scheduled meeting time. Also it might be useful to take notes during the meetings and send your

community partner a copy of the notes, just so they are up-to-date with the discussion and overall plan.

VI. Be Prepared to Respond to Student Sensitivity/Honesty

Sometimes researchers can get sidetracked with all the preparation and academic scholarly research that we forget about the preparation for real-life encounters we will make when conducting focus groups and semi-structured interviews. One thing that we as researchers felt that we neglected in our preparation was being ready to hear extremely honest and difficult issues relating to students lives, their struggles and their journey in overcoming their adversity. While some of the unexpected responses caught us off guard, it is important to treat each individual with the same amount of respect and emotional neutrality, as researchers are not supposed to affect the research participants responses, by responding negatively or positively.

Acknowledgments

We must begin by paying our respects to the beautiful traditional and unceded First Nations territories of the Musqueam nation that the University of British Columbia occupies, in addition to the Secwepemc (Shuswap), Tsilhqot'in (Chilcotin) and Carrier Nations of Williams Lake, BC. We would like to recognize the outstanding efforts of our instructor, Dr. Siobhán McPhee, whom without her passion for community-based learning and innumerable hours put into preparing and planning, Geography 379B would not have been made possible. Also we cannot forget our incredible teaching assistants, Leonora King and Mike Fabris, whose countless hours of behind-the-scene support made this class a highly enriching and enjoyable experience. Most importantly we would like to extend our utmost thanksgiving towards our community partner, Mike Franklin the principal of Skyline Alternate School. From the start, we were quick to realize that your positivity is a monumental characteristic that is reflected in the impeccable work that you do for the Skyline community. Your genuine heart for the students and your constant support made our research experience with Skyline an unforgettable one, to cherish for a lifelong.

Appendix

A. Skyline Open-Ended Questions Survey (Part 2)

Skyline Alternate School - Student Demographics Survey (2015 - 2016)

Part 2 - Open-ended Questions

Greetings Skyline Students!

This survey was created by a team of UBC students in collaboration with Skyline. Our goal is to learn more about your reasons for choosing Skyline and your overall experience as a student. The information you provide us will be crucial in helping us work with Skyline to learn how we can better accommodate your needs. Your safety and well-being is our number one priority, and we would like to emphasize the following statements:

1. Your survey results will be kept confidential and anonymous.
2. If you feel uncomfortable at anytime during this survey, you can skip any questions or stop participating in this survey.
3. If you need further clarification on any of the questions please feel free to ask your teacher for help.

Thank you for taking the time to share some of your thoughts and information with us!

- Angela, Cheng Yee and Therise

Student PEN Number: _____

1. We are interested in examining the *push* and *pull* factors that cause students to switch from regular mainstream schools to alternative education schools such as Skyline.
 - **Please state and briefly explain** your personal reason(s) for leaving your former high school. (*Push factors* - any reasons that made you decide to leave your former high school because of the situation or conditions there)

- **Please state and briefly explain** your personal reason(s) for being at Skyline Alternate school. (*Pull factors* - any reasons that made you decide to come to Skyline because of the situation or conditions here)

2. We hope to identify student needs or issues that are not currently being addressed by Skyline. What improvements can Skyline make in the following areas to meet your specific needs? **Please state and explain** in the following sections.

Academic (e.g., developing learning goals, achieving academic goals, receiving support from teachers)

Peer support (e.g. relationship with classmates, building a respectable and safe classroom environment)

Personal development (emotional/mental/physical well-being and health)

Community involvement and extracurricular opportunities (e.g., volunteering, recreational activities, etc.)

3. Are you satisfied overall with your experience as a student in Skyline? **Please give specific reasons** as to why or why not.

4. **Please explain and share** any further experiences or thoughts that you feel are relevant to your time at Skyline.

B. Focus Group Discussion Questions (Students)

1. How long have you been at Skyline?
2. Why did you come to Skyline?
3. What are some things about Skyline that you enjoy?
 - a. Academic (e.g., developing learning goals, achieving academic goals, receiving support from teachers)
 - b. Peer support (e.g. relationship with classmates, building a respectable and safe classroom environment)
 - c. Personal development (emotional/mental/physical well-being and health)
 - d. Community involvement and extracurricular opportunities (e.g., volunteering, recreational activities, etc.)
4. What are some things that didn't work at your former high school?
 - a. Academic (e.g., developing learning goals, achieving academic goals, receiving support from teachers)
 - b. Peer support (e.g. relationship with classmates, building a respectable and safe classroom environment)
 - c. Personal development (emotional/mental/physical well-being and health)
 - d. Community involvement and extracurricular opportunities (e.g., volunteering, recreational activities, etc.)
5. What are some things about Skyline that you would like to see improved?
6. Other people's perception about Skyline?
7. Please share any thoughts about your experience at Skyline.

C. Semi-structured Video Interview (Students)

1. What do you like best about Skyline?
2. What is the best thing about being a Skyline student?
3. If you could describe Skyline in three (positive) words, what would you say?
4. What is one thing you hope to do in the future?
5. What are some of your hobbies?
6. What do you like to do after school?
7. What is your favourite class and why?
8. What do you like about your teachers?
9. What do you like about your peers/friends?
10. Describe your typical day at Skyline

D. Semi-structured Video Interview (Teachers)

1. How long have you been working at Skyline?
2. What is your favorite thing about working with kids at Skyline?
3. Why did you decide to work in an alternative school?
4. How has your perception of alternative schools and students changed after working here?
5. What are the positive outcomes for wide range of students that attend alternative schools?
6. What are some areas in the school that could be improved?
7. Any further comments/suggestions

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