Learning Ecosystems: Improving K-12 Education Through Learner-Centered Pedagogy
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Project Background
The rural community of Crowsnest Pass hidden in the mountains of Southern Alberta has launched an initiative known as "The School as Basecamp – Community as Classroom". This initiative has the potential to become a robust learning ecosystem that would allow for students to feel a sense of belonging and value to their communities.

Methodology
This project was conducted through the Catamount Fellowship offered by the Institute for Community Prosperity at Mount Royal University in partnership with the Livingstone Range School Division in the Crowsnest Pass. The Catamount Fellowship is designed to give undergraduate students an opportunity to dive into the ideas of social innovation, experiential learning, and systems thinking. The aim of this report is to explore the idea of learning ecosystems on a system-level as an alternative to formal K-12 education.

The Need For A New Form of Learning
As technology and society continue to evolve and the learning landscape changes, educational stakeholders have recognized the need for a new form of learning.

• As explained in Gütl and Chang (2008), modern instructional design and learning processes are moving towards supporting the development of society and all of its components, which includes the learner.
• Educational approaches are shifting from traditional school models towards allowing learners to be more independent in their own learning processes (Gütl & Chang, 2008).

Benefits of a Learning Ecosystem
• Equitable Learning
  Learning ecosystems have the opportunity to provide a more equitable learning experience where each learner has their needs met
• Learner-centric Education
  Putting the learner at the forefront of education would let students know that they are seen and heard
• Learner Autonomy
  Allowing for learners to take control of their own learning would provide different opportunities for growth
Engaging Learners in the Livingstone Range School Division

To engage directly with learners who are currently in the system, I posed three questions to elementary/middle school students and three questions to high school students in the LRSD. I received almost 200 responses in total.

**Elementary/Middle School**
- If school didn’t exist, how would you learn? What would you learn about?
- Outside of school, where do you learn the most?
- Other than your teacher, who teaches you?

**High School**
- If school didn’t exist, how would you learn? What would you learn about?
- What learning experiences could you have in the community to give you a greater sense of connection and belonging to the Crowsnest Pass?
- Who do you wish you could learn from in your community and what would they teach you?

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**What Can Out-of-School Learning Provide?**

**Experiential Learning Opportunities**
- This could include workshops with and exposure to industry professionals, local business owners, Fish and Wildlife, etc.

**Recognizing Different Educators**
- The role of parents, grandparents, guardians, and friends in a student’s learning is just as important as their primary teacher

**Emphasizing Community**
- Volunteer and shadowing opportunities can allow students to feel that they are an active and valued part of the community

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**Every student is different**

- Students love learning from other people
- Experiential learning is an important part of education
- Close contacts (i.e. family, peers, etc.) play a very important role in students’ learning experiences
- Students are able to recognize that learning can happen everywhere and is not/should not be confined to the classroom
- Students want to learn more about their environment and where they live
- Students want to feel like they are playing a role in the community

What I learned from Livingstone Range School Division.
References


