



## Three Year Education Plan and Annual Results Report



2020-21/2021-22/ 2022-23

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*The Annual Education Results Report for Golden Hills Learning Academy for the 2020-21 school year was prepared in accordance with requirements of Alberta Education and Golden Hills School Division. The school is committed to using the results in this report to improve outcomes for students. We use the results to develop sound strategies for our Three Year Education Plan to ensure all our students can acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to be self-reliant, responsible, caring and contributing members of society.*

# Introduction

Since the Covid pandemic in the spring of 2020, online education has become essential as an option for students. With so much uncertainty around safety and students and their families being immune compromised, online education is a more popular choice among many that would not have previously chosen it. Further to this, today's students are continuously changing the way they communicate and access the rest of the world. As a result, schools have to continuously implement, upgrade and adjust programming to keep learners engaged. The Learning Academy meets a variety of needs for students of all ages that are not often met in a regular program. With a focus on powerful learning, students are set up with a personalized learning plan that is specific to their goals and needs. Enrollment in our program is on the rise.

Although the majority of our students are in high school, we do have full programs for grade one through nine, as well as for adult learners. In Sept of 2020, we saw an increase in the Grade 1-9 program, but are unsure if this will be maintained. In partnership with Storefront School, we are offering supports to students that are not offered in other online schools, such as allowing students to come in day by day to assist them in their studies. In Sept of 2020 we supported in division schools by offering a grade 7-12 learn at home program. Our program reaches beyond Golden Hills by accommodating students from all over the province. In the spring of 2016, we began partnerships with other school divisions in Alberta. This has increased our enrollment, while allowing students around the province access to excellent courses. We continue to play a key role in supporting other GHSD schools.

The Learning Academy's office is located in downtown Strathmore, Alberta. As a member of the Golden Hills School Division, the Golden Hills Learning Academy is a public school.

## ***Over the next three years, the Golden Hills Learning Academy plans to:***

- Continue to be the first choice for students who are looking for an alternative program.
- Continue to a choice for non-primary students.
- Increase academic success at all levels.
- Continue to increase the number of credits earned throughout the school year.
- Continue to develop new and engaging courses.
- Work closely with partner schools in and out of the division to create courses that students need and want.
- Provide better opportunities for students to recover content and credits in high school courses.
- Enhance our home based learning at the elementary levels.
- Develop more levels of ELL and second languages online.
- Expand on the partnerships that already exist and develop new partnerships
- Provide more options for students.
- Provide ISP and IPPs for students will clear supports and goals.
- Continue to market and advertise our program province-wide.
- Collect feedback from students, parents and partner schools and use that feedback to make improvements.
- Continue to design and package our courses into interesting and engaging pathways for students.
- Continue to adjust and update each subject area to ensure that there is a high quality of course development and learning opportunities occurring at all times.
- Continue to improve our orientation, registration process, student tracking, teacher pages and parent-teacher interviews to maintain positive working relationships required for student success.

- Continue to build and improve on activity days for students on-site
- Provide a more comprehensive environment where students and families can forge social connections.
- Find additional ways to stay connected personally with students and families.

## **Beliefs and Values**

### ***The Learning Academy team believes that...***

...the wishes of individual families and students should be granted through choice. This may be the choice to upgrade their studies while attending another school or working full time, or it may mean choosing home schooling as an alternative.

...students should have the option to continue with their education while they are pursuing other passions or dealing with life.

...each student should be granted the freedom to access their studies at any point during the day or night and at any location around the world.

...students can reach their full potential by having a flexible and appropriate program.

...success comes with personalized and flexible learning plans.



## Context

### School Profile

In September of 2020, the learning academy enrollment had increased to approximately 560, up from 250 the sept before. The elementary and junior high programs include approximately 197 full-time online students and an additional 164 traditional home education students and another 22 that take a blended program which is a mix between a traditional home ed program and a fully online teacher directed program. After September 30<sup>th</sup>, we have multiple in-division and out-of-division students adding one or more courses with us as well as offering support to in-division schools with a learn at home program for grades 7-12. In most cases, students that are enrolled at another high school or students wishing to upgrade enroll with us for a few courses at a time. We continue to recruit students from all over the province. Depending on the courses they take, the students can choose between online courses that are available through a Learning Management System (LMS) program known as Moodle or a paper version of the same course. In an onsite registration, members of the staff sit down with the student and the student's family to discuss program choice as well as guidance counseling. If students are registered as a group via a partner school, staff members visit the school and work with staff members there to orientate the students and get them started on their courses. Our focus with all our students is to provide ongoing support. Our teachers and technical facilitators set up online access and deadlines that work best for that particular student. This personalized learning contributes greatly to completion of courses and how students experience school. The role of the parent in an individual registration and the role of a staff member in a school registration is essential throughout their time with us. They play a key role in communicating with us and with their children/student around the completion of each course.

GHLA has worked collaboratively with the Strathmore Storefront School by providing teachers, programming and administrative support.

## History

The Golden Hills Virtual School was established in the fall of 1997. The purpose of this program was to bring together distance education, junior high Hutterite education and home schooling. As Big Sky faded out and changes occurred with computer use, the virtual school remained focused on providing courses to smaller rural schools within Golden Hills. In the fall of 2009, under a new administration team, Golden Hills Learning Academy was established. Although our teaching staff and support staff remained the same, we made many changes in course load as well as in our online platform.

In 2010, we transferred our courses from Blackboard to Moodle and we continue to upgrade regularly to the latest version. Since 2010, teachers spend time creating interactive and engaging elements to each course, including course orientation videos for students and parents to view at any time. As a result, our tech facilitators have become experts in Moodle and course development. With the help of iCampus, we continue to improve our Moodle expertise.

In February of 2016, we added a program facilitator and teachers to our staff to build our course selection in order to encourage growth. This not only resulted in an increase in courses designed and re-designed, but it has built teacher capacity.

In February of 2018, we moved to our new location in downtown Strathmore. In this new location, we have flexible spaces for students, and in some cases families, to meet and work on individual goals and to offer teachers and support staff professional development and collaboration space.

## Issues and Trends

Each year, we see more students choosing an alternative program.

# Golden Hills Learning Academy 2020/21

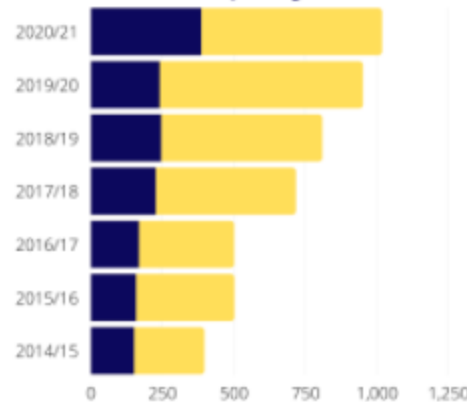
We offer the freedom to learn anytime, anywhere.

## IN THE LAST 6 YEARS,

**3934**  
**STUDENTS**



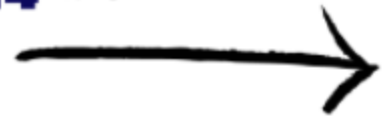
Each year, we see more students choosing an alternative program.



**Supporting In-Division**

**9** 10-12 Schools

**14** K-9



**Supporting Out of-Division**

**18** 10-12 Schools in 2020

**7** School Divisions

There was significant growth in 2020-21, which comes with many challenges. Although we were able to hire new staff, we have found it difficult to have time to orientate them as we would in previous years. Fortunately for us, our new teachers are amazing and have contributed greatly to the innovative and engaging course designs.

GHLA has a high proportion of coded students. In 2019-20, 20% of our high school students were coded. In order to provide supports and set goals, each student receives an individual plan (IPP or ISP) where the student and parents work with staff to set specific goals and teachers utilize strategies to allow the student to have the best success in their program. In Sept of 2020, more coded students joined our program, some simply with mental health concerns due to the pandemic and its affect on the general population.

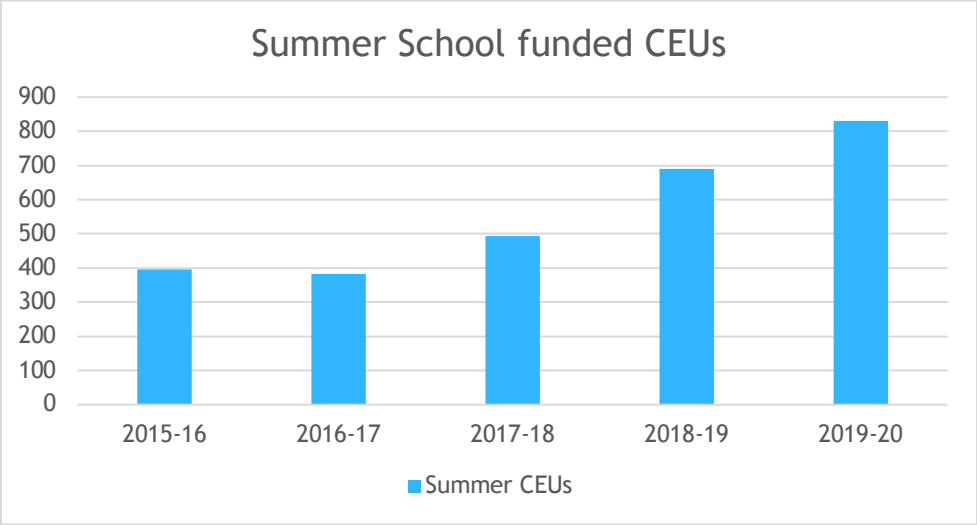
Each year, every teacher works on developing more courses. Some do this by developing a full 1, 3 or 5 credit course from scratch, others works with their already existing course materials and re-develop it info a new engaging package of courses. This includes improvements to existing courses or full development of courses not yet completed. The focus in 2020 is to add more engaging videos and interactive tools to our existing academic courses as well as developing a 3<sup>rd</sup> second language, German and adding multiple CTS credits in the area of communications and technology as well as foods.

The above course development, combined with PD as a staff and as a school division has allowed our teachers to choose what we do well to publish, share and celebrate our powerful learning stories. This continues to be our focus.

Unlike most Golden Hills Schools, The Learning Academy does not cater to a specific community. The online and distance education option is designed to reach students well beyond Golden Hills. This presents many challenges. For instance, we often have a particularly large number of students enrolled in one particular course, some taking the course on-line, and others take it through the distance education modules. Included in such a class are a number of students from other schools, many of them having multiple entry points. Understandably, the challenges that exist for the teacher of any given course may include adjusting due dates and scheduling exams, providing tutoring time online, over the phone or in person as well as dealing with any technical issues. Where teachers in a classroom can tackle lessons as a whole, our teachers need the time to offer one-on-one time. Our staff is incredibly dynamic, flexing their schedule and balancing their courses to meet the needs of each individual student. With very few full-time students, our few teachers are required to meet so many diverse demands. We continue to seek ways to run more efficiently while still providing a high level of service.

Although we are not located in Strathmore, the Learning Academy is a geographically disconnected from any particular community. It is not always easy to communicate information as well as reach out to parents and families in order to support student learning. In the past 5 years, many support systems and improved level of student tracking have been established to encourage success in student achievement. With our partner schools, we have established relationships with a teacher or EA at each school to help us co-ordinate options. Even with a credit sharing model and multiple supports, we still have students that are difficult to motivate. This remains to be one of ongoing goals. In 2018-19 we reached out to Drumheller outreach, with a different funding model than other schools to allow their students more options that are engaging in hopes they can improve course completion.

Summer school enrollment has continued to grow over the past few years. Last year, we grew by 40% and Even though the term is never more than 6 weeks, resulting in a lot of work for teachers and students in a very short timeframe, students in the past three summers have been just as successful in 6 weeks as they have been the rest of the school year. We will continue to offer summer school as long as it is a need for out GHSD students.



Our full time junior high students can sometimes prove to be challenging as many of them come to us from a predominately teacher lead environments. Although many different types of learners benefit from our program,

motivated students tend to experience most success. On occasion, we have to spend a significant amount of time coaching junior high students with their timetabling and with their academics. In the past few years, we have noticed more Junior high students choosing to come our way as opposed to coming our way because they are no longer successful in the regular setting. This has been a nice change. Our junior high team, led by our associate principal, has built in student success plans for each student. In 2019, we are utilizing an educational assistant to help support these students.

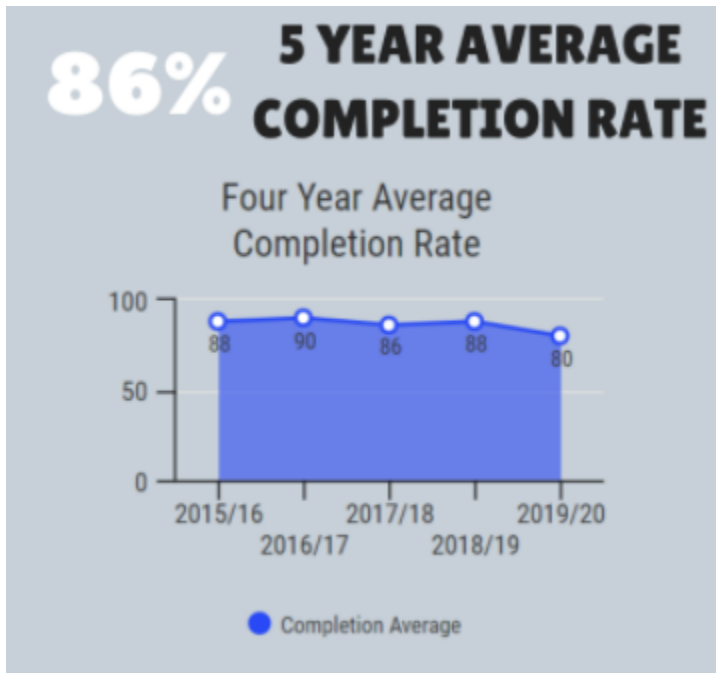
In the past 5 years we have had significant changes to our funding model. We have gone from splitting credits with schools 50/50 on a CEU model, to a credit cap, to block funding and back to no cap. Regardless of the funding we continued to offer ongoing support for students in our district. Even though we have spent significant time and money in developing courses that we have estimated to be needed, the focus had been to provide what all students need. Schools in and out of division are recognizing the quality of the courses and the quality of the service we provide. As a result, our enrollment continues to climb.

Given the potential market for online education, combined with the trend of parents wanting to choose opportunities for their children, we expect to continue to grow over the next few years. With that said, however, there are many competing online schools that serve a significantly larger geographical area and student body. By tapping into the market that exists outside of Golden Hills and advertising our strengths, The Learning Academy has a tremendous amount of potential.

## **Course Completion**

Many of GHLA students are taking a single course. Students typically enroll for courses because they need to upgrade that course, they need an additional requirement to graduate from other schools (both in and out of the division) or they need to re-adjust their schedule to work and fulfill requirements for post-secondary entrance. Some of our students have struggled to be successful in their previous school, and as such, struggle in the online environment. Over the past 5 years we have had varied results in course completion, but it has been an area of focus for us. Our records in the past have been hard to track as many students “rolled over” into the next term, but our estimates show that 50% of courses were completed. Since 2009-10, our completion rate increased to over 85% and in the past 4 years we range in the 85-90% range overall. As we gather more data from each individual partner school, we believe that this average is higher amongst students we have partnerships with.

Since the COVID outbreak in Spring of 2020, and we have grown, we are noticing that students are choosing online out of fear of being in a classroom and as such are not as successful. For this reason, we feel the completion rate will decrease overall.



## Satisfaction Surveys

Many pieces of the satisfaction survey are not applicable to an online school. Some of the questions that students and parents are asked, for instance, revolve around whether a student feels safe walking to school. In addition, many of our students come for one class so school completion and drop-out rates are not accurate.

Measure Category	Measure	Golden Hills Learning Academy			Alberta			Measure Evaluation		
		Current Result	Prev Year Result	Prev 3 Year Average	Current Result	Prev Year Result	Prev 3 Year Average	Achievement	Improvement	Overall
Safe and Caring Schools	<a href="#">Safe and Caring</a>	n/a	n/a	89.3	89.4	89.0	89.2	n/a	n/a	n/a
Student Learning Opportunities	<a href="#">Program of Studies</a>	n/a	n/a	84.3	82.4	82.2	82.0	n/a	n/a	n/a
	<a href="#">Education Quality</a>	n/a	n/a	94.8	90.3	90.2	90.1	n/a	n/a	n/a
	<a href="#">Drop Out Rate</a>	12.0	14.8	13.6	2.7	2.6	2.7	Very Low	n/a	n/a
	<a href="#">High School Completion Rate (3 yr)</a>	27.2	24.0	30.4	79.7	79.1	78.4	Very Low	Maintained	Concern
	<a href="#">PAT: Acceptable</a>	26.6	16.4	23.3	73.8	73.6	73.6	Very Low	Maintained	Concern
Student Learning Achievement (Grades K-9)	<a href="#">PAT: Excellence</a>	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.6	19.9	19.6	Very Low	Maintained	Concern
Student Learning Achievement (Grades 10-12)	<a href="#">Diploma: Acceptable</a>	69.0	62.1	63.3	83.6	83.7	83.1	Very Low	Maintained	Concern
	<a href="#">Diploma: Excellence</a>	12.1	6.9	4.8	24.0	24.2	22.5	Low	Improved	Acceptable
	<a href="#">Diploma Exam Participation Rate (4+ Exams)</a>	0.0	8.0	2.7	56.4	56.3	55.6	Very Low	Maintained	Concern
	<a href="#">Rutherford Scholarship Eligibility Rate</a>	59.2	54.3	48.9	66.6	64.8	63.5	Intermediate	n/a	n/a
	<a href="#">Transition Rate (6 yr)</a>	12.5	34.6	17.7	60.1	59.0	58.5	Very Low	Maintained	Concern
Preparation for Lifelong Learning, World of Work, Citizenship	<a href="#">Work Preparation</a>	n/a	n/a	100.0	84.1	83.0	82.7	n/a	n/a	n/a
	<a href="#">Citizenship</a>	n/a	n/a	76.7	83.3	82.9	83.2	n/a	n/a	n/a
Parental Involvement	<a href="#">Parental Involvement</a>	n/a	n/a	81.4	81.8	81.3	81.2	n/a	n/a	n/a
Continuous Improvement	<a href="#">School Improvement</a>	n/a	n/a	100.0	81.5	81.0	80.9	n/a	n/a	n/a

## Goals, Outcomes, and Strategies

### Goal #1: An Excellent Start to Learning

Outcome: Children are reaching emotional, social, intellectual and physical development milestones and are ready for school.

#### Priority for Improvement:

- Utilize checklists for kindergarten and grade 1 program of studies and traditional home- ed students to ensure readiness.
- Ensure quality online programming for primary students, with additional resources for parents.

#### Strategies for this priority:

- Our students learn from a distance with parent support, so we would support students and parents in independence, while engaging the student in inquiry based learning.
- Simple, quick and engaging online assessment pieces.
- Taking in kindergarten students in a home education capacity, without funding as a way to give students a head start in their learning.
- Goal and target setting for our grade1-3 students
- Course development grade 1-3
- Resource videos and modelling for parents

## **Goal #2 Success For Every Student**

Outcome: Students achieve student learning outcomes.

#### Priority for Improvement:

- Ensure that all students will achieve a minimum of the acceptable standard and there should be an increase in the standard of excellence (on both the PATs and diploma exams).
- Ensure that all students are enrolled in appropriate course choices and levels and are provided the necessary accommodations throughout the year.
- Motivate, engage and support students and parents to complete programs and become lifelong learners.
- Re-develop courses to reach the highest quality of course development.
- Build new and engaging courses and course activities.
- Provide a variety of course options and schedules to allow access to programs at all times, anywhere in the world.
- Provide students with specific interests to gain credits in those areas (ie. Construction Tech, Cosmo, etc).

#### Strategies for this Priority:

- Teachers utilize online checklists and offer course work designed around competencies to ensure a direct connection to the outcomes.
- Provide activity days that tie back to academics.
- Teachers provide ongoing tutoring support for all subjects and additional tutorials needed to prepare for achievement and diploma exams.
- Teachers and admin will provide on-going feedback to students and parents regarding academic success and work as a team, with families, to make appropriate adjustments to programs, if needed.
- Teachers and admin will review, as a group, achievement and diploma exam results to identify areas of need and improve instruction and course development based on that analysis.
- Have students undergo psycho-educational assessments, when appropriate, and adjust their programs to match the outcomes that are most appropriate for students.

- Support each teacher through professional development, assessment for learning and technology. Support teachers one-on-one with instructional coaches, admin, tech supports, in addition to PD opportunities in online learning.
- Utilize partnerships with other online open source schools to establish appropriate measurements for high quality course development.
- Provide access to choose from a maximum number of high school courses or curriculum routes (i.e. K&E programs, AP courses, ESL, high school options) in a variety of forms (ie. On-line and paper).
- Provide a variety of program choice so students can achieve a high school diploma through the public system, while remaining enrolled in other religious programs (i.e. traditional home education, blended programs or core subjects being offered to Islamic Students).

Outcome: Students demonstrate citizenship and entrepreneurship.

Priority for Improvement:

- Ensure that students have every available opportunity to engage in their community, through volunteering and work experience.
- Encourage students to build positive work habits and mature interactions with teachers not only to assist in their learning, but to build these skills that will help them as citizens later in life.

Strategies for this Priority:

- Teachers encourage creative, innovative ways to draw on their experiences within the community to share inside their academic and non-academic course work.
- Teachers encourage students to earn credits through work in their community.
- Reward students for citizenship through scholarships and school recognition prizes.

### **Goal #3: Quality teaching and school leadership**

Outcome: Teacher preparation and professional growth focus on the competencies needed to help students learn. Effective learning and teaching is achieved through collaborative leadership.

Priority for Improvement:

- Provide Professional development opportunities applicable to online learning and powerful learning to assist teachers in making course changes.
- Provide ongoing support by tech facilitators and admin to allow for smooth course development.
- Provide opportunities to collaborate with colleagues with a focus on Powerful Learning.

Strategies for this Priority:

- Provide examples and course templates to allow for quality course development and re-development.
- Continue to access courses in open source to build from.
- Attend k-12 iNacol, Moodle Moot, Ed ready and Moodle hub conferences for professional development.
- Attend GHSD collaborative PD for subject specific work.
- Collaboratively map CTS courses with teachers.

- Wednesday staff show and share to motivate teachers and increase teacher capacity.
- Provide a positive platform for teachers to share what they do well as teachers.

## **Goal #4: Engaged and effective governance**

Outcome: The education system demonstrates collaboration and engagement.

Priority for Improvement:

- Build on-site activity days
- Admin, teachers, student and parents develop a personalized learning plan for each student.
- Students are supported fully by parents.
- Parents and families of students support the Learning Academy in student learning.
- Provide access to the GHLA information and allow feedback through an interactive website in addition to social media (Facebook).

Strategies for this Priority:

- Continue to update the website, Instrgram and Facebook, allowing parents and communities access to The Golden Hills Learning Academy.
- Provide home-room teachers and develop engaging course orientations to establish relationships with students and families.
- Encourage face-to-face visits with parents and students and regular tutorial time for all students. This may include going into the home, out to a colony, or into a district school to offer academic support.
- Provide a parent-teacher interview nights for all students as well as group tutoring sessions.
- Develop strong relationships with parents, families and communities that allow open communication and opportunities for feedback.

## **Budget**

<b>Budgeted Operating Expenses 2020-21</b>			<b>%</b>
<b>Allocation</b> (includes prior year carryover)		<b>\$2,725,208</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Staffing</b>	<b>Certified</b>	<b>\$1,586,040</b>	<b>58</b>
	<b>Non-Certified</b>	<b>\$393,151</b>	<b>14</b>

<b>Supply &amp; Services</b>	<b>\$746,017</b>	<b>27</b>
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*Additional information concerning individual school expenditures is available by request.*

## Publication and Communication

The Golden Hills Learning Academy's Three Year Education Plan and annual results report will be available for public viewing on our school website. Our website can be accessed directly at [www.goldenhillslearningacademy.com](http://www.goldenhillslearningacademy.com) or via the Golden Hills School Division's website at [www.ghsd75.ca](http://www.ghsd75.ca) under school listings.

Our website and Facebook page is used to communicate current and important information to our students and parents, as well as partnering schools both in and out of district. Because the families we serve often live a great distance away, parents will be able to complete surveys and email input directly to us at the Learning Academy.