



Coast Mountains Board of Education School District 82

3211 Kenney Street, Terrace, B.C. V8G 3E9
Tel. (250) 635-4931 or 1-855-635-4931 · Fax (250) 635-4287 · www.cmsd.bc.ca

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MIDDLE SCHOOLS

The following is a generalized program description intended to portray the basic philosophy and structure of the middle schools at Skeena and Mount Elizabeth School. It is no way a comprehensive blueprint of the instructional model. As we grow with this model of education, we anticipate adaptations and changes to the framework of this program. The current version of this document is available at www.cmsd.bc.ca.

The Board of Education made a decision at the June 9, 2010 Regular Board of Education Meeting to move to include a middle school model. The middle school model will be comprised of students in Grades 7, 8 and 9. The middle school concept involves a group of two to five teachers working as a multidisciplinary team with a defined group of students. This format facilitates interdisciplinary units, where part or all of the entire team teaches on the same general topic from the perspective of different disciplines. The middle school philosophy also advocates assigning students in each team to an advisory group. By holding advisory groups regularly for various discussions and activities, middle schools try to foster a sense of belonging in students to ease social and emotional difficulties during adolescence.

Program Description

For the most part teachers will take on a generalist role, teaching multiple curriculum to an established group of children. Recognizing there will be differences from when a student enters the middle school in Grade 7 to when they exit in Grade 9, the program will transition to a model that bears resemblance to the secondary school model.

The philosophy of Grade 7 and 8 is to minimize the number of teacher contact for general instruction. In Grade 9 the transition would be to have more contact with various teachers. Teachers would operate in teams, ranging in size from two to five teachers. The makeup and number of teams will be determined by the total number of students in a grade.

In the generalist model, the core teacher will be responsible for 25-30 students. The team will work together to access the learner supports for the school which will include counselling, special services assistant hours, learning assistance, etc. to best serve the students.



Middle school is learner centered rather than curriculum centered. Key factors include relationships with teachers and students. Advisory time is fundamental to establishing that relationship and encouraging student ownership in school. As students deal with issues, adolescence, boys/girls, significant adults take ownership of guiding students through that journey. Students know they have someone to contact for their school life. School spirit and culture is a journey guided by an adult.

Grade 7 and 8

Grade 7 and 8 core teachers will be responsible for a group of 25-30 children; teaching them language arts, math, science, social, health and career, French (and/or any other language component) and physical education. The exploratory component would be taught by elective teachers enabling the core teachers time for preparation/collaboration.

Grade 9

The Grade 9 model will become more of a hybrid that bridges the gap between middle school and secondary school. The nature of teams may take on more specific curriculum strands and not be quite as comprehensive as in Grade 7 and 8. The concept of teaming is still very important and as such Grade 9 will be a transition year, one to maintain teaming for core instruction rather than isolate subjects completely. Depending on staff, teaming could be with math and science and then English and social studies as opposed to one teacher.

French Immersion

French Immersion may exist in the middle school in one of two formats:

1. Teams are comprised of French Immersion classes only. This would require multi grade classrooms.
2. French Immersion classes are integrated as members of regular teams.

Given current numbers in the existing French Immersion program, it is likely that option 1 will be the starting position for this program. An increase in student numbers will make option 2 more viable.



Exploratory

The exploratory component will include such things as fine arts, applied skills, technology education. Exploratory in Grade 7 and 8 is more prescriptive in nature and elective courses in Grade 9 will provide for more student choice.

Learner Support

The traditional secondary learner support model employs specialist teachers providing remedial service in a pull-out model. We would like the middle school learner support model to evolve into one that has specialized teachers integrated into middle school teams providing remediation support in the classroom. This would require specialized teachers to take on a more generalist role in learner support and function as an active team member for a defined group of students. Additional supports such as special services assistants, First Nations support workers, etc., would also be integrated into the teams to provide the necessary support.

Team Leader

Team leaders will play a critical role in the coordination of curriculum, instruction, learner support, and learner experiences. The effectiveness of grade level teams will be largely affected by the quality of teacher leadership within those teams. It is expected that team leaders will be a strong bridge between school administration and the classroom teacher. The team leader's role will include, in consultation with team members and administration, the establishment of team procedures and guidelines.

Advisory

Advisory is regularly scheduled within instructional time in the timetable and creates an opportunity for adults and students to make significant connections while navigating school life. Curriculum will be a combination of teacher, team, and administration developed topics. The core of curriculum topics may come from health and careers, social responsibility, school goals and current student, school and community issues. Lesson development may come out of team planning or school leadership planning. Teams will be afforded the flexibility to deliver advisory goals in an effective manner that is relevant to the learning needs of the students in the team.



Timetable

Middle school timetables are designed to accomplish three major functions:

1. To create large blocks of flexible time that enables teachers and teams to be creative and design multiple learning experiences.
2. To specifically schedule time for elements of learning such as advisory and exploratory.
3. To enable common preparation time for collaboration amongst teachers.

Collaboration Time

It is a fundamental principle that teams need time to work together on planning and instruction in order to be effective. To do this preparation, time allotted to teachers needs to be scheduled in a manner that allows teams to be together.

Staffing

Research clearly shows that effective middle schools are staffed with teachers who are committed to the middle school philosophy and are enthusiastic about working with this specific age group. As middle schools are a new model for our district, this district will be working to enable the staffing of schools with teachers who desire to work within the middle school model. This work will comply with existing staffing procedures.

Training

The district is committed to providing the most appropriate training required, in the school district's opinion, for critical roles within the middle school function. We are also committed to providing future training opportunities in an equitable manner so that all teachers have an opportunity to prepare themselves for essential roles in middle schools.

Professional Development

The school district will work in collaboration with the Coast Mountain Teachers' Federation to provide learning opportunities for teachers who wish to engage in further middle school professional development.



Transition

In preparation for elementary students transitioning to the middle school and Grade 9s transitioning to the graduation program, the district will work with all schools on a transition plan. This will include student activities and parent information sessions. As this transition will be into a new configuration and will involve twice as many students, extended conversations with elementary schools, parents, and students are planned. This will include presentations, site visits, and classroom activities. Future years will evolve into similar structures as the current elementary to secondary transitions but geared toward the new configurations.