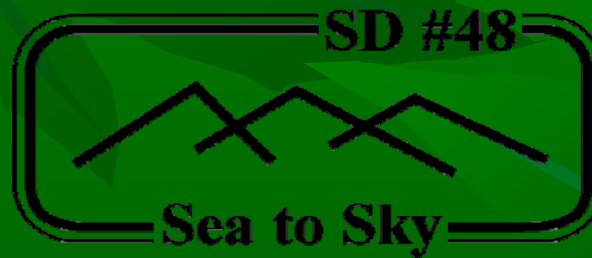


School District 48 (*Sea to Sky*)



Middle Years Program (Grades 8 & 9)

Edition: February 5, 2010



MEETING STUDENT NEEDS: SD 48 Middle Years Program

- The Board Goals 2009 - 2011 document, includes the following opening statement: *“The Board will continue to place the highest priority on student success and challenge each student to achieve their personal best, “Maximizing Learning – all learning, for all students.”*”



***MEETING STUDENT NEEDS:
SD 48 Middle Years Program***

- **School District 48 has a Graduation rate of 80%, which is slightly above the Provincial Average Graduation Rate. Our Board of Education's goal is a Graduation Rate of 100%.**



MEETING STUDENT NEEDS: SD 48 Middle Years Program

- **The Board of Education has and continues to support a number of student program and teacher Professional Learning initiatives and increased student success has resulted.**



MEETING STUDENT NEEDS: SD 48 Middle Years Program

- **The Middle Years (Grades 8 and 9), play a particularly important role in determining whether students are successful in the Graduation program.**



MEETING STUDENT NEEDS: SD 48 Middle Years Program

- **To achieve that Graduation Goal of 100%, School District 48 (Sea to Sky) has a very competent professional and support staff, who work very effectively to improve student learning.**



MEETING STUDENT NEEDS: SD 48 Middle Years Program

- **Secondary schools have started to identify the Middle Years (Grades 8 and 9) for developmental changes, to improve:**
 - 1. student engagement (connection to the school community), and**
 - 2. student learning.**



MEETING STUDENT NEEDS: SD 48 Middle Years Program

■ The Middle Years Program (Grades 8 and 9) include:

- 1. reduced number of different teachers a student has in a semester so that students, families, and teachers get to know each other better;**
- 2. educators that focus on young adolescents;**
- 3. a wide-range of exploratory and athletic programs offering new experiences for success;**



**MEETING STUDENT NEEDS:
SD 48 Middle Years Program**

- 4. TEACHER ADVISORY programs ensure that daily each student has a safe, immediate connection to school; and**
- 5. a more comprehensive education program focusing on integrated subjects, and relevant learning along with social responsibility, and character education.**

OVERVIEW

- **Meeting Student Needs: SD48 Middle Years Program:**
 - Characteristics of Early Adolescents
 - Middle School “Cornerstones”
 - Characteristics of Middle Schools
- **Grade Configurations: What does the Research Say?**



MEETING STUDENT NEEDS:
SD 48 Middle Years Program

Characteristics of the Early Adolescent:

TIME OF TRANSITION



**MEETING STUDENT NEEDS:
SD 48 Middle Years Program**

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT:

- **Irregular growth spurts**
- **May be disturbed by body changes**
- **Varying rates of maturity**
- **Restlessness and listlessness**
- **Big appetites**



MEETING STUDENT NEEDS: SD 48 Middle Years Program

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Highly curious**
- **Begin questioning values and beliefs**
- **Egocentric**
- **Prefer active over passive learning**
- **Relate to real life experiences**
- **Transition from concrete to abstract thinking**



**MEETING STUDENT NEEDS:
SD 48 Middle Years Program**

PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Erratic and inconsistent behaviour**
- **Highly sensitive to criticism**
- **Exaggerate simple occurrences and believe that personal problems are unique to themselves**
- **Moody, restless and self-conscious**
- **Hormonal imbalances trigger emotions**



MEETING STUDENT NEEDS: SD 48 Middle Years Program

PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Optimistic and hopeful**
- **Searching for identity and acceptance from peers**
- **Vulnerable to naïve opinions**
- **Psychologically “at risk”**



**MEETING STUDENT NEEDS:
SD 48 Middle Years Program**

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- **May be rebellious toward authority figures**
- **Confused and frightened by new social settings**
- **Fiercely loyal to peer group values**
- **May be aggressive and argumentative**
- **Needs frequent affirmation and the knowledge that they are cared for**



**MEETING STUDENT NEEDS:
SD 48 Middle Years Program**

MORAL AND ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Idealistic**
- **Strong sense of fairness**
- **Reflective about thoughts and feelings**
- **“At risk” in moral and ethical choices and behaviours**
- **May ask large, ambiguous questions about the meaning of life**



***MEETING STUDENT NEEDS:
SD 48 Middle Years Program***

Middle Years philosophy and practices are a direct response to the unique needs of the early adolescent.



**MEETING STUDENT NEEDS:
SD 48 Middle Years Program**

MIDDLE YEARS CORNERSTONES:

Teams

Pods

Teacher Advisory Program

Exploratory

Flexible Schedule

TEAMS

- **Connection/sense of belonging for students**
- **Common planning time for teachers**
 - **Sharing of resources/ideas**
 - **Problem-solving**
 - **Consistency in expectations**
 - **Coordination of work**

What Is Meant By The Term “POD”?

Pods are how we group our students within a team. A pod is a group of students that follows more-or-less the same academic schedule. These students become very familiar with and supportive of each other. The rationale for the creation of pods is that pods imitate the elementary school class pattern and subject the students to far fewer peer groups and unfamiliar people or territory.

TEACHER ADVISORY PROGRAM

■ The Fourth “R”: Relationships

- Interpersonal skills
- Service to the school and community

■ Connection

- To the Advisor
- To the Advisory Group

■ Guidance

- Appropriate choices—social responsibility
- Self esteem; virtues

■ Skill Development

- Conflict resolution; communication skills, problem-solving etc.

EXPLORATORY

- Technical Education
- Home Economics
- Music
- Drama
- Art
- Computers

FLEXIBLE BLOCK

- **Extended periods; e.g. Double Block**
- **Team may coordinate schedules to allow for guest speakers, field trips, special projects etc.**



MEETING STUDENT NEEDS: SD 48 Middle Years Program

MIDDLE YEARS:

- Focus on the unique needs of early adolescents;
- Offer students an enhanced program at a younger age;
- Do not rush students into the high school setting;
- Provide social activities that are more compatible with the maturity levels of the students;
- Create “smallness within bigness” through team configurations to help students feel connected;
- Afford younger students with the opportunity to experience specialty areas such as woodwork, metalwork, cooking, sewing, drama, art, computers, music and band.



MEETING STUDENT NEEDS: SD 48 Middle Years Program

MIDDLE YEARS

- Team work can facilitate better communication among teachers concerning the needs of students.
- Teachers have common planning time to share resources and ideas and problem solve.
- Students are afforded many opportunities for intramural, service and leadership activities.
- Advisory allows students to learn about topics of relevance to them and provides valuable guidance. There is emphasis on the “fourth R”: relationships
- In middle schools, early adolescence can be celebrated.



GRADE CONFIGURATIONS: *What Does Research Say?*

Programs, policies and practices designed to meet early adolescent needs are difficult to generalize to grade levels because differing rates of maturation are highly individual between childhood and adolescence (Hough, 1997).

What is key is that the programs, policies and practices meet the diverse physical, social, emotional, moral and cognitive needs of early adolescents.

Sound educational practices are more important than grade span (Paglin & Fager, 1997).



GRADE CONFIGURATIONS: *What Does Research Say?*

“Successful education for young adolescents does not depend on a grade configuration within a school but what goes on in those classrooms and within those schools. Young adolescents will neither progress academically nor improve socially unless we provide exactly what we know makes a difference -highly skilled teachers and administrators who understand these students, have the appropriate content knowledge, and employ instructional methods that best help their students learn” (Swaim, 2005 in a letter to National Middle School Association members).



GRADE CONFIGURATIONS: *What Does Research Say?*

Middle level education is not about grade configuration, but rather about effective programs and practices, like interdisciplinary teaming and integrated curriculum, that are developmentally appropriate for young adolescents (National Middle School Association, 2005)

The ideal grade organization for middle grades students is a separately organized middle school (McEwin, Dickinson & Jacobson, 2004).



GRADE CONFIGURATIONS: *What Does Research Say?*

Several large scale and comprehensive studies demonstrate that young adolescents who attend middle schools that use essential programs and practices like interdisciplinary teaming have higher achievement scores (Felner, Jackson, Kasak, Mulhall, Brand & Flowers, 1998).



GRADE CONFIGURATIONS: *What Does Research Say?*

**It is the quality of the programs
that makes the real difference
in middle schools.**

REFERENCES

Felner, R.D., Jackson, A.W., Kasak, D., Mulhall, P., Brand, S. & Flowers, N. (1997). The impact of school reform for the middle years: Longitudinal study of a network engaged in Turning Points-based comprehensive school transformation. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 78(7), 528-532, 541-550.

Hough, David (1997). A bona fide middle school: Programs, policy, practice, and grade span configurations. Chapter 25 in Judith Irvin's What current research says to the middle level practitioner (pp. 285-294). National Middle School Association, Columbus, OH.

McEwin, C.K, Dickinson, T.S. & Jacobson, M.G. (2004). Programs and practices in K-8 schools: Do they meet the educational needs of young adolescents? Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association.

Paglin, Catherine & Fager, Jennifer (1997). Grade configuration: Who goes where? Northwest Regional Education Lab, Portland, OR.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**SD 48 would like to thank
the New Westminster and
Quesnel school districts for
the information they have
made available.**