

School District #40 (New Westminster)

Middle Schools



OVERVIEW

- **Meeting Student Needs: SD 40 Middle Schools:**
 - Characteristics of Early Adolescents
 - Middle School “Cornerstones”
 - Characteristics of Middle Schools


- **Grade Configurations: What does the Research Say?**



MEETING STUDENT NEEDS: SD 40 Middle Schools

Characteristics of the Early Adolescent:

TIME OF TRANSITION



MEETING STUDENT NEEDS: SD 40 Middle Schools

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT:

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



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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



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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



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PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT


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



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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.



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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 40 Middle Schools

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



**MEETING STUDENT NEEDS:
SD 40 Middle Schools**

MIDDLE SCHOOL CORNERSTONES:

Teams

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



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 40 Middle Schools

VIDEO


Middle Video.MSWMM



MEETING STUDENT NEEDS: SD 40 Middle Schools

MIDDLE SCHOOLS:

- 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 40 Middle Schools

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

- 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).

In BC, 10 out of the 23 “middle school” districts have a Grade 7-9 configuration.



Grade Configurations: What Does Research Say?

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



REFERENCES

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