



MIDDLE YEARS PROGRAM

(Grades 8 & 9)

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.”

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%.

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.

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.

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

With that in mind, secondary schools have started to identify the Middle Years (Grades 8 and 9) for developmental changes, to improve student engagement (connection to successful learning and to the school community). These initiatives for Grade 8 & 9 have included: reduced number of different teachers a student has in a semester so that students, families, and teachers get to know each other better; educators that focus on young adolescents; a wide-range of exploratory and athletic programs offering new experiences and areas for success; Teacher Advisory programs ensuring that daily each student has a safe, immediate connection to school; and a more comprehensive education program focusing on integrated subjects, and relevant learning along with social responsibility, and character education.

In the Squamish Community, to provide equity of education opportunity for all students, the Board has proposed that Don Ross Secondary become a Middle Years School (Grade 8 & 9) and Howe Sound Secondary become a Graduation Program School (Grades, 10, 11 and 12).

Some Questions and Answers about the proposed Middle Years Program Don Ross Secondary School (DRSS)

WHAT IS A TEAM ?

A team is a group of teachers who have the same group of students every day. The team consists of two or four teachers. Together, teams teach English, Social Studies, Science and Mathematics. A Special Education Teacher also works with the teams. The number of teams depends each year on the number of students in the school.

DOES THE NAME OF THE TEAM HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH ABILITY GROUPINGS ?

No, for example the designations of Green, Blue, Yellow, and Red are for affiliation / belongingness only. The names have absolutely nothing to do with ability grouping. Each team has students with a wide range of ability levels. In fact, at DRSS the names come from the famous and historical Don Ross Indoor Track Meet and will enable the school to arrange for year-long contests, intramurals, and sports activities.

ADVANTAGES OF THE TEAM APPROACH ?

There are many advantages. Since team teachers have the same planning period, they are able to plan for curriculum integration, interdisciplinary units, field trips and special activities for their students. Communication and support among teachers is much greater with this approach. Parent conferences and special education meetings are made easier by the fact that all of a student's basic skills teachers are available at the same time of the day. Students also feel they are part of a group when on a team. It creates a "school within a school." The team helps provide the student with an atmosphere which is somewhat similar to the elementary homeroom class.

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.

HOW IS IT DETERMINED WHICH TEAM A CHILD IS ON ?

This is largely a random process. However, if your child selects a particular French Immersion, or music class, he/she may have his/her schedule "locked in" due to the fact that French Immersion and music are offered only at certain times of the day.