

Three Initiatives to Enhance the Educational Experience of High School Students

Chris Steenhof, Principal

Bulkley Valley Christian School

Smithers, BC, Canada

Consultant: Greg Gerber, SCSBC

Overall Summary: My initiative involved three initiatives at the high school (Grade 8-12). The impetus for these initiatives stem from two sources: the new BC Education Plan, a far-reaching and progressive new curriculum implemented by our provincial government; and our own 5 Year Strategic Plan, a comprehensive document that lays out the direction for Bulkley Valley Christian School in a number of strategic areas.

Initiative #1: This initiative involved developing a humanities approach to teaching English and Bible at the Grade 10-12 level. In terms of scheduling, all students in Grade 10-12 were blocked together with two teachers (I was one of the teachers as I teach Senior English) for 6 hours a week all year long. The teachers developed a schedule that allowed students to choose individual units, included some mandatory units, incorporated team teaching opportunities, and included learning outside of the traditional timetable.

Initiative #2: This initiative involved reducing each of our academic blocks by one hour a week and creating “Flex Blocks” where students were given time to work on collaborative projects, independent study, and other learning. These blocks also allowed us to offer students other opportunities, including a blended French 11 course, trades training, and career preparation.

Initiative #3: This initiative involved taking a six week period where all students were given options to participate in an activity/topic that was new to them. These included introduction to photography, choral music, textiles, outdoor education, introduction to dance, and visual arts.

Assessing the Initiatives:

All three initiatives achieved some level of success. Initiative #2 took on a life of its own and in some ways met different objectives than the ones we intended. All three initiatives will continue next school year but we have addressed many questions/areas that will need to be discussed before proceeding. For initiative #2 we are working on a professional development plan which will help teachers move towards learning that incorporates more collaboration, student choice, and student-directed learning.

For more information or for the full report, email me at csteenhof@bvcs.ca