



## QUALICUM SCHOOL DISTRICT

Yath éisum / Always growing / Grandissons ensemble

May 16, 2024

Hello everyone, bonjour, and uy' skweyul:

As you no doubt have heard, we have been in discussion with our two secondary schools regarding the potential alignment of our two secondary timetables for next school year. The original proposal would have had both schools be fully linear in grades 8 and 9, meaning year-long, and be semestered, meaning half year, in grades 10-12, with no A, B, C, D type tumble in the daily schedule.

The advantages of static and aligned timetables are as follows:

- Static schedules are much less confusing – every day a portion of students arrive in the building not knowing the block order. Students who struggle with executive function can have even more difficulty staying organized.
- Far easier to schedule with outside obligations and interests. Students (and adults) often have other responsibilities that need their attention. For example, the most recent McCreary Survey showed that 24% of students had been absent at least three times to look after a sibling or other relative.
- Far easier to access partnerships such as work experience, trades and apprenticeships, as well as community expertise (i.e. Indigenous artists). Our students deserve these types of opportunities and a rotating timetable makes these much more difficult, if not sometimes impossible to organize. With post-secondary enrollment down to 68% from 81% before COVID, the ability to access college and university dual-credit programs that improve transition to post-secondary is more critical than ever.
- Far easier to access actual work opportunities outside of school through a part-day schedule – senior students often seek work to save for post-secondary or life on their own. Again, the McCreary Survey showed that 10% of high school students work to contribute to their own household.
- Aligned timetables will make it possible to have students cross-enroll between the two high schools and access specialty programs on a temporary basis (e.g. Ballenas Hockey/Kwalikum Auto), as well as to more easily cross enroll PASS and CEAP students back into our two standard schools - each of our secondary schools have unique programs that would become more accessible to students across the school district.

Further to the above, our secondary principals have been working on schedules that would have our grade 8 students take their core classes (math, science, English, and socials) in the morning and their exploratories in the afternoon. A similar strategy is being explored with the grade 9 schedules, although with a more blended approach.

While research does not support significant differences in student learning between morning and afternoon, we do concede that energy levels can vary throughout the day. Because this can impact classroom management, which does impact learning, we believe arranging the block orders intentionally for our younger secondary students would be helpful, as it is their energy levels that tends to vary the most. Again, a fully rotating timetable prevents this from being possible.

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We are particularly interested in the prospect of creating more customized schedules for students who are struggling with issues that have prevented them from being able to attend regularly. These challenges have increased greatly in all jurisdictions since the pandemic, and will require our most thoughtful local responses. We simply cannot create effective part-day programs when the classes that students need for graduation are taking place in different times and combinations throughout the week.

Conversations with student voice groups at both schools and with secondary staff who were willing to engage in more fulsome problem-solving have led to another timetable possibility, which has emerged as a compromise. This new option, nicknamed “Wibble” by our secondary principals, would consist of a two-day schedule with a simple ABCD order on day one, and a BADC block order on day two. The more this option was examined by our leadership teams, the more potential was discovered.

Because the AB and CD blocks in the two-day option would remain partnered and would not move from a.m. to p.m., it would still allow a number of the key opportunities described above to be possible, while also addressing many of the concerns that some have expressed about a fully static schedule. We particularly like the idea of potential contact time between staff and students either at lunch or before or after school every second day. This feedback was critical to making the final decision.

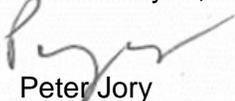
We recognize that there has been significant resistance to the idea of any move to a different timetable structure. Change, even to something that is arguably less complex, can be hard for people to consider. The reasons I cited above certainly may not be immediately apparent to everyone, and some may even be doubtful of the positive impact on student success. At the end of the day, what is genuinely best for students is at the heart of this change process, and the wide range of possibilities that lay in front of us are too simply great to ignore.

As these conversations have occurred at district meetings, school staff meetings, PAC meetings, DPAC meetings, as well as at recorded public meetings of the Board, the actual rationales for the potential change have been available to anyone who wished to know more. I have even had parents reach out to me individually, and have been happy to provide information regarding potential timetable changes to them directly. That being said, I hope this letter helps clarify to you how this new timetable rotation, aligned at both schools, will provide more opportunities for students this coming fall.

In closing, we will be moving forward with the new two-day “Wibble” option at both secondary schools in September. School principals will work with each other to coordinate the two-day rotation and the placement of the FLEX time at both sites, and will work with their own staffs to continue to maximize the potential benefits for their students as described in the previous paragraphs.

On behalf of the Board of Education, the senior team, and secondary leadership, I will confirm that all decisions in the Qualicum School District are made with the best interest of students as the top priority.

We thank you, as always, for your patience and support.



Peter Jory  
Superintendent of Schools/CEO