

**Summary of**  
**“Changing the Face of Education in the Comox Valley”**  
**Community Feedback forum**

**April 25, 2017**

Following a series of three open house style meetings with parents and community members in the Comox Valley, regarding changes that had taken place in the districts organization of instruction and scheduling, a gathering was held with students to gather their thoughts on the impact of the current changes and to provide them with information about the future of learning. The students engaged in table group and whole group discussions. The commentary they provided is very thoughtful and intelligent and offers significant insight to those governing and operating the school district. A summary of the information gathered follows below.

### 1. Observations and Conversations

The following were comments overheard during discussions between the students and in response to general questions. They speak to the quality of the understanding and the desire to learn of the students in attendance. They were a remarkable group of students from the various schools in the district.

- We are feeling pressure from teachers over coverage – the message is we need to cover the same material in 20% less time! (Note – with the removal of government exams and with the intention of the new curriculum, coverage is not considered at any level to be a necessary or desirable goal of instruction in BC at this time.)
- In a quick straw poll 33/34 students indicated that they valued or highly valued the differentiated learning time. One student indicated that they were bored.
- “Test me about application – not about memorization”
- Fridays for some students do not have any independence at all – they are given assignments that must be completed during the Friday release time.
- “Make learning relevant and meaningful”
- “when you really are learning – it is fun”
- “Engage me! Make it interesting!”
- “teacher passion is infectious”
- “with each passing year – we should be given more independence in our learning”
- “I want to learn about my human rights and the rights of others”
- “Why am I forced to learn in a particular way when I know that way doesn’t work for me?”
- “I love the idea of the Independent School Project” – (Note = This was a video shared with the students – available on You Tube – as The Independent project – what if students designed their own schools)
- students repeatedly mentioned feeling the stress of coverage coming from teachers and that teachers did not have enough time anymore to provide extra help or meet with students

2. Responses to specific questions from table groups of students:

**a. What type of learning or learning experience works for you?**

- student interaction
- enough time to cover material
- self paced but with direction
- smaller classes
- one on one time with teachers
- time for questions and tutorials as needed
- opportunity for more in-depth study
- student groups within classes
- students teaching students
- project based and discussion based learning
- self taught learning
- passionate and excited teachers
- teachers who understand or try to understand different learning styles and abilities
- Teachers with specific skills or backgrounds teaching in (content) areas that they really care about
- Group learning
- Groupings based on interests in common and similar levels of motivation
- Mentorship from older students
- ILC – independent learning control
- Interactive teaching
- Work with groups with small amounts of guidance offered by teachers
- Awareness of different perspectives
- Working at our own pace
- Hands on learning
- Discussion based classes working at your own pace with teacher support
- Independent learning center classes – with teacher feedback and interaction
- Multiple assignment types – paper – computer – group or independent projects
- Classes that aren't rushed – time for everyone to understand
- One teacher for one subject – not one teacher for 4 subjects
- Group projects where the whole group is interested in the topic
- Recognition of a variety of learning and working styles
- Classes based on people who want to be there
- Less testing of memorizing – more frequent quizzing (Note – seeking to determine who is up to speed)
- Open book tests – not memorization
- More skills and less emphasis on showing what you know
- Classes that are structured and outlined – so I know what we will do and where we are going

- Classes with freedom and a better ratio of instruction to working
- Classes that are not heavily weighted on testing – show what you know over time
- Explore (The program)
- Classes with interactive friendly teachers
- Collective versus independent – self directed
- Interaction with information and learning materials
- Classes with real life application
- Classes with no work penalties – eg – losing marks for late
- Classes with enough in class time (To complete work)
- Classes that actually relate to life and prepare you for the future
- Skills that qualify you for jobs – foods, foodsafe, emergency care first aid
- Hands on classes where the learning is applied in projects and groups
- Classes with more social interaction
- More classes with demonstration – not just knowing information but seeing how to apply the skills you learn
- Less large tests; more small quizzes
- Really interactive teachers who don't just assign work and expect you to know how to do it
- Meaningful assignments – less busy work
- Regular updates on marks

**b. What made your very best learning experiences good?**

- The teacher was excited about the material
- Hands on
- Seeing direct application of the material outside the classroom
- Good relationship with the teacher
- Appropriate pace
- Separating students who learn at different paces
- Creating connections to the material that were relevant and interesting
- Hands on
- Field trips
- Community engagement
- Volunteering
- Special events
- Project based learning
- Personalized learning techniques
- Self awareness – understanding how you learn, what study techniques work for you, different settings where you learn best
- Classes arranged on the basis of best learning
- Project based learning
- Application of learning – (NOTE – theory into practice)
- Engaging teachers
- Passionate about topics and about teaching kids

- Learning how to do more things and control over our learning
- Hands on experience with teacher support
- Teachers who are keen and interested in their topics
- Smaller groups of kids with a teacher – 5-7 with one not 30 with one
- Teachers who care whether or not you understand and who have no problem clarifying tricky concepts
- Classes full of keep kids – like AP classes
- Grade 5 was a Harry Potter themed class all year long!
- Social interaction that supports learning from teachers
- Teachers that are passionate about what they teach and are respectful to students
- Peer support Jack.org – self learning and leadership – real life application of learning
- Choice
- Engagement between students within classes to make learning more interesting
- Learning material that is not part of traditional high school subjects that makes the traditional subjects more relevant
- Knowing what qualities are needed after high school
- Work ethic
- Social skills
- Self confidence and motivation in multiple content/skill areas
- Education skills
- Leadership opportunities – initiative and independence
- Valuable life skills so we can function effectively in real world
- Simple basic skills
- Freedom to have creative control over learning/projects
- Teachers that care and are passionate and who know what they are doing
- Not being forced into learning... wanting to do project or assignment
- Having a teacher check in on you – do you understand? How are you doing?
- Changes in environment – not learning in the same old dusty classrooms every day
- Student guided projects

**c. What do you want out of high school?**

- Education based on interests about the future
- In depth study of interests
- “REAL LIFE SKILLS”
- foundational education (NOTE – don’t forget the basics)
- exploration of many fields
- varied courses
- other skills – foodsafe, first aid, shop classes
- extra-curricular activities
- skills that will be needed in the future

- awareness of what I need to be able to do after high school – taxes for example
- learning related to skills and qualities needed for future careers
- communication skills
- critical thinking
- confidence
- knowledge of opportunities beyond high school
- time management
- handling independence
- learning about life and life skills
- personal responsibility
- learn about what we find interesting
- learning your own way
- don't make us learn in ways that don't work for us
- MANDATORY life skills classes
- Career path classes – not just in trades but all areas
- Assurance that we, as students, will be able to live alone as functional adults
- Assurance that we can go to post secondary schools that we want – not just what we can afford
- We want teachers who are interested in teaching academically and life skills with personal connections (NOTE – again- theory into practice)
- Teachers who help students acquire as many opportunities as possible
- To be prepared for the adult world
- To understand yourself and what you want to know about
- Actually being a participant in society - money, government, etc.
- To be prepared for the world outside of high school (taxes, cooking, useful skills like how to handle money)

**d. What do you think you need to be prepared for the future?**

- How to manage finances in the modern world
- Updated classes in the style of Planning 10
- Proper Health Classes
- Education that focuses on career of choice
- Exploration of a wider variety of topics
- Introduction of University style teaching
- Test taking skills
- Time management
- Taking classes we want
- Removal of barriers like – we can't offer this course because not enough students have signed up
- Skills needed at university – interviews, formatting papers, balancing classes
- Stress management
- Immediate feedback on assignments and work completed

- Understand ourselves
- Understand who we want to be
- Be able to try things that we might want to do in the future
- Better research to do with job opportunities
- Being able to connect with people who work in fields that interest us
- Learning about choices in professions
- MANDATORY life skills classes
- More relevant information before Grade 12
- More communication teachers/ principals/students
- Having teacher who check in with us fairly often
- More opportunities for kids on Flex Fridays
- Career days for younger students to help guide their future learning
- Gradual build up of adult responsibilities
- Basic skills of education – grammar and creativity!
- Real life application of skills learned
- Self worth and confidence – knowing that we can function and survive as an adult
- Values
- Strength
- Purpose
- Difference between learning and grades and intelligence versus grades
- Collaboration with others
- Goal setting
- Understanding money (finances)
- Personal values
- Time management
- How to ask for help
- How to adult!
- More work experience opportunities
- Career counselling – opportunities to find your interests
- More experiences with real life / life after school
- Having people from different careers present to students
- More Planning through grade 11 and 12

**e. What would you change about schools?**

- Remove block structure
- Self paced learning with teacher support
- Groupings of students based on learning styles
- Shorter blocks
- Customized courses (NOTE – customized to student and teacher interest)
- Tests to gauge progress not academic value (NOTE - more formative and less summative assessment)

- Smaller classes (NOTE – We discussed the idea of not having every student attend the class every day as an alternate to smaller classes)
- Smaller schools that are more closely connected (to the community?)
- Teachers that are passionate about their subjects
- Mentorship between students and teachers
- More money in the system
- Equity between schools
- Programs that students want
- More creative and flexible electives
- Different grading system for electives
- Self taught electives
- Education related to current issues
- Paying for education
- Change value of assignments – some things are more important and they need to be flexible
- Adding new ways to do assignments (NOTE- demonstrate learning in a variety of ways)
- Take bullying seriously! (NOTE – this discussion was monitored and the behaviours discussed would not meet the real definition of bullying. What was discussed was the impact of not really understanding how our words and actions can hurt others – which is very important – but is also different from bullying where ongoing occurrence and imbalance of power are key elements)
- Want to be taken seriously by adults and not brushed off
- Change irrelevant pre-requisites – eg – why is my entrance into computer science awaiting my result in French?
- Take on big topics and let us choose our area of interest within the big ideas
- Group conversation for long periods – engagement
- Smaller class sizes – with ILC design
- Hire more engaging, passionate, helpful, interactive teachers
- More variety and opportunity in classes
- We don't need 3 high schools
- Newer technology and resources
- Smaller class sizes
- Better quality teaching
- More instructional time
- Funding for school clubs
- More variety in course selection starting in grade 8
- Peer lead activities
- More real life experiences with your learning
- More prep time for teachers
- Get rid of planning
- Adequate funding to cover costs of trips and technology
- Students have more opportunities to provide input into school systems and even choosing teachers



- More diverse (integrated) subjects – like teaching chemistry through cooking as an example
- Better communication between parents and students about what is happening in the district
- Mentors to support you in following a career path

Table Group Responses to Questions asked  
(\* indicates comment repeated)

**1. What are the desired attributes of graduates of SD 71?**

- a. Have their time not wasted
- b. Ethical \*\*\*
- c. Need foundations of learning \*\*\*\*\*
- d. Need knowledge to draw on
- e. An education that allows them to be productive\*
- f. Educate them about things that parents can't
- g. Skills to survive the next 50 years \* \* \* \* \*
- h. Ability to ask good critical questions \* \* \*
- i. Prepared for world – finance (financially literate) \*\*
- j. Resilient – able to deal with disappointment \*\*\*
- k. Persistent – willing to keep trying \* \*\*
- l. Problem solvers, critical thinkers, and independent thinkers:\*\*\*\*\*
- m. Self aware \* \* \* \* \*
- n. Ability to take responsibility and accept consequences \* \*\*
- o. Competitive and current
- p. Confident \* \* \* \* \*
- q. Adaptable and Flexible \* \* \* \* \*
- r. Happy \*
- s. Good work habits \*
- t. Contribute to society \* \* \* \* \*
- u. Ambition
- v. Have goals and ability to achieve them \*
- w. Empathetic \* \* \* \* \*
- x. Open to new ideas \*\*
- y. Organized
- z. Analytical regarding information
- aa. Communicators \*\*\*
- bb. Able to find their pathway / passionate \*\*\*
- cc. Time management
- dd. Work collaboratively\*
- ee. Creative\*\*\*
- ff. Fit
- gg. Life long learners \*\*
- hh. Global thinkers \*\*
- ii. Self starter\*\*
- jj. Healthy relationships
- kk. See the big picture \*
- ll. Patient
- mm. Risk takers
- nn. Tech savvy \*

## 2. What brought you here to this meeting?

- to see what is coming
- to get a sense of what parents want \*
- to see what is changing \*
- Believe we need change
- Provide perspectives \*
- Gather information \* \*
- Want to be part of the new reality
- To be sure that Fridays remain the day
- Better support for staff
- Fridays don't seem to be working due to a lack of structure
- Students are confused about how to use their time effectively
- We need to teach students how to be independent and creative with their time
- Are students tracked after graduation?
- Has technology exceeded the workforce?
- Are we too focused on technology?
- Curious
- To protest 4.6
- To support 4.6
- To find out how less is more (time issue)
- Fascinated how this change has gone from financial to learning to catch up
- Why are we the only ones doing 4.6
- Why are we staying with 4.6 when extra funding is coming in?
- Want more information
- This is a very broad topic
- Stay informed
- To discuss possibilities
- How will changes impact students?
- How do our kids stack up -- globally? \*
- To talk about Fridays
- Wasn't expecting answers but was not expecting this
- All this (Change) is a waste of time without funding changes \*
- Is this a ploy to distract us from what is happening?
- Not clear what changes we are talking about
- Want ongoing better communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis
- Don't like 4.6 – frustrated that time keeps changing

- Hear teacher voice

### **3. What is on your mind at this time?**

- Don't want to hear the sales pitch – how does this relate to what is happening here?
- This was meant to be about how we judge/gauge the value of 4.6
- There is a need to check with students about what worked and what didn't... and parents and teachers.
- This is a budget matter no matter what
- If teaching 8/8 cannot plan or collaborate for Fridays
- ½ day curriculum implementation is valuable
- Want quality and quantity
- We are taking student time away so teachers can collaborate
- Parents are paying for teacher collaboration time
- This system is better than PLC Wednesdays
- Why can't teachers collaborate outside of work day
- What is best for the kids?
- Need to understand the benefits
- What our kids get in 4 ½ days is not good
- Sick of our kids being experimented on
- Seems to be a trial and error system
- Is collaboration time working?
- We need continuity – it seems to be changing constantly
- We need more continuity with teachers staying at the same school
- How do we keep kids engaged
- Should High School Students evaluate teachers?
- We should have been given more time for feedback
- Fridays working for some kids but not all
- Teachers weren't prepped for how to operate this new schedule
- Give the new Friday structure more time – let's reflect then learn from our mistakes
- Our students need advice on how to use Fridays more effectively\*
- Not all teachers are on board – how do we move them along
- How do we get teachers to change – to buy in?
- How do we get students ready? What will this look like? When can it begin?
- Community involvement and engagement – mentors, clubs – not all learning takes place in classrooms
- Let's make AIW run 24/7
- What are next steps?
- How can we have input on changes for next year?

- Is recess instructional time?
- 4.6 or 4.8 week still happening next year?
- Fridays structure for now? And for next year?
- Better communication for goals and input
- We do need to teach kids differently and different skills
- Stop grouping kids just by age

#### **4. What about the current situation – good or bad?**

- passion projects on Friday for some
- Friday PM may not be ideal learning time
- Students are getting extra help and support
- Can't do a passion project if getting caught up or seeking assistance – How do we manage both?
- Catch up time leaves weekends free
- Opportunities for blended programs
- Curriculum implementation for teachers!
- Too many students not attending Difficult access for students from Denman and Hornby
- Mandatory extra help is a problem
- Can be a financial burden for parents of elementary students
- Engage parents and students with clear goals (district) communicated effectively to parents
- Care in place for students (during flex time) is needed
- Ensure common experience within flexible curriculum
- Grade 8's and 9's are not getting enough guidance on how to use their Friday time – it is currently just free time and that is not ok! \*\*\*
- Junior students need direct teaching on how to do inquiry and alternate learning styles
- Early dismissal in any form is hard on parents
- Curriculum implementation is great – teachers should do it on their own time
- Elementary schools need to go back to full time and collaboration should be done on your own time
- Some teachers like the 8:45 – 2:30 model – time for extra help and new learning processes.
- Elementary kids need enough time to eat lunches
- Early dismissal on Wednesday was better – more engagement – Friday – too many absences
- Communicate expectations clearly to parents

#### **5 What possibilities or suggestions do you have moving forward?**

- more structure for students balanced with clearly laid out options

- 1 hour blocks on Friday would be manageable
- advisory type model to guide the flex time scheduling and to support accountability
- Different options and opportunities at different secondary schools
- Flex time should also be integrated into regular instruction – not just as a special thing on Fridays
- More blended learning like Sc 9 is at Highlands
- Capacity in teachers equals success in students!
- Opportunities for increased metacognition
- More guided experiences / exposure for students with mentors and with teachers in new relationship with learners – mentorships
- Balance between have to do and want to do! Flexibility and basics
- Allow time for this change to happen – consider risks and responsibilities – be patient
- Active living programs for students – outdoors~!
- Funding shift – distance learning and specialized programs
- The key is the teachers!
- Each school needs many options for students
- Blended learning and working at students own pace – Work independently so work is not exclusive to school setting.
- Less spoon feeding – more independence – teach inquiry skills – students learn to be self motivated learners
- Self paced independent learning starting in elementary schools – build the skills that they will need later on
- Support teachers in their professional growth so that they can teach in new ways
- More changes needed at elementary level
- Have parents involved in a teamwork arrangement
- Students can learn out in the community
- Clear limits and expectations
- Teach more processes
- Focus on problem solving and choice
- Self regulation taught at all levels
- Start late on Mondays instead!
- Needs to be structure and accountability within differentiated structure
- Educators need to decide on how to instruct and assess all of the 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies and skills
- Good communication is essential so that community understands changes and why they are happening – create some TRUST!
- Engage (utilize) community in differentiated instruction – how do we bring the two together?
- Differentiated learning should be included all days not just Fridays
- Start teaching the skills that are not academic – compassion, understanding etc
- Provide many opportunities for learning in different ways – understand accountability to peers teachers parents etc
- Teach children how to manage their time and how to make good choices

- Public system should not be driven by University as a goal
- Expose students to opportunities and careers that are not on the traditional path
- Innovation takes inspiration and motivation – these are not common in current situation
- This work needs the support of all – including government