

Transition to Middle School

Parent Handbook

Created in collaboration by:



Kinsight>

Introduction

This handbook has been developed by the Family and Individual Support Program, Kinsight, formerly Simon Fraser Society for Community Living in collaboration with School District 43, Coquitlam. It is intended to assist parents and caregivers to understand and plan for issues involved in the transition from Elementary to Middle School.

This transition is a major event in the lives of all students and in the lives of their parents. Students who have disabilities and their families often experience apprehension and may have additional concerns and questions about what this change will mean. The stresses created by these transitions can be minimized when parents and school teams are informed, involved and able to work collaboratively.

Effective transition planning responds appropriately to students' needs, develops positive connections and promotes communication between parents and school teams. With careful, timely, child centered planning, students will experience a sense of belonging to their new environment, a positive start and continued success during the middle school years.

The handbook provides an overview of the middle school model, a transition planning timeline, frequently asked questions and concerns, and some useful planning tools.

We hope that you find it useful. We wish you well for this next step on the journey of your child's education!

Family & Individual Support Program
Kinsight

Learning Services
School District 43, Coquitlam

A Thought for Our Children

***Use what talent you possess: the woods would be very
silent if no birds sang except those that sang best***

~ Henry Van Dyke



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General Information About the Middle School Model

The philosophy and approach of Middle School is founded on the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical developmental needs of young adolescents. Young adolescents undergo rapid physical growth, changes in reasoning, the onset of abstract thinking, and exposure to a range of social pressures. At the same time, the tasks of forming an individual identity, acquiring social skills, gaining independence, and developing character and values begin.

Middle schools aim to prepare adolescent students for success at secondary school. This is accomplished by linking instruction to experiences, which include advising, teaming, exploratory experiences, and interdisciplinary/project based instruction. The middle school philosophy and programs are designed to take into account these developmental changes in the adolescent students as they grow and learn. The common elements of most Middle Schools include:

Interdisciplinary Team Organization (Teaming)

- Students are grouped in teams to provide a source of identity and belonging essential for this age group.
- Students are assigned a teacher advisor, who may or may not be their core teacher
- Teachers and support staff pool their expertise, resources, interests and knowledge of students to jointly take responsibility for meeting the educational needs of a common group of students
- Teachers have common planning time where they collaborate, discussing student achievement, curriculum and assessment.

Block/Flexible Scheduling

- Team time is organized to provide flexibility for teaching and learning
- Schedules are created by teacher teams to meet the educational needs of their students

Advisory Program

- The middle school experience includes an Advisory program where groups of students meet with a teacher in a peer setting to discuss common issues and/or concerns. This time each day allows students to form a significant relationship with a staff member while interacting with a community of peers.
- Advisory can look different at different schools

Explorations Program

- Explorations programs are designed to develop and expand every student's personal interests and skills and are offered through scheduled classes and special events.
- Exploratory programs allow students to participate in a variety of curricular experiences such as fine arts (general music, drama, dance), applied skills (tech ed, home economics) and information technology (computer skills, data management)
- Band and choir may be offered as electives or extra-curricular activities at Middle School

Inclusion

"Inclusion is the value system which holds that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education. The practice of inclusion transcends the idea of physical location and incorporates basic values that promote participation, friendship and interaction"

~ Ministry of Education

The following excerpts are from Inclusion BC's Social Policy Positions on Inclusive Education:

"All students in BC, including those with special needs, are entitled to receive a quality publicly funded inclusive education. A Ministerial Order directs students with special needs to be placed in regular classrooms as the first option. Research shows that when students are included in regular classrooms they make greater overall academic gains than do their peers with similar disabilities in segregated classrooms 1. (KATZ AND MIRENDA, 2002) To ensure the success of inclusion, students must have the necessary supports to learn in the regular classroom and participate in school social activities.

The benefits of inclusion extend to all students. Typical students experience gains on many fronts: opportunities for new learning, improved values and attitudes related to human diversity, more developed interpersonal skills, as well as greater maturity, self confidence and self esteem 2. (KATZ AND MIRENDA, 2002) "

Inclusion can look different depending on the environment and the needs of the individual.

Important questions for parents to consider when planning:

- What does "inclusion" mean at my child's Middle School?
 - Does inclusion mean fully participating in all subjects, in classrooms with neurotypical developing peers?
 - Does inclusion mean participating in non-core subjects (i.e. foods & nutrition, music, computers, tech ed) with neurotypical developing peers, and attending core subjects (i.e. language arts, math, science, social studies) in a learning centre or resource room with other students who require extra support?
 - Does inclusion mean participating in some non-core subjects with neurotypical developing peers, while core subjects are replaced with a life skills program supported by an Educational Assistant (EA), 1-1 or shared support with other students with needs?
 - Does inclusion mean a full time like skills program supported by an Educational Assistant (EA), 1-1 or shared support with other students with needs?

Accommodations and Individualized Curriculum

Accommodations (formerly called Adaptations)

If a student struggles to access or engage in learning activities that have been created, accommodations may be required. Often, the classroom teacher is able to identify and implement required changes by adapting aspects of the learning activity (i.e. accommodations to environment/materials, instruction, and/or assessment) that enable a student to access or engage in grade level Learning Standards.

At other times, this requires collaborating with colleagues to better understand the area(s) of difficulty and to explore solutions. Typically, these students will have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a Learning Support Plan (LSP) to document the accommodations accessed.

Accommodations may also be made in areas such as skill sequence, pacing, methodology, materials, technology, equipment, services, and setting. Working on *select* learning standards from different grade levels is considered an accommodation.

A student does not require a diagnosis to have an accommodation; any student can have the accommodations they need to be successful.

Significantly Adjusted Learning Standards

Students who are unable to access or engage in learning activities through prescribed grade level content may require more significant supports, including an adjustment to learning standards.

Where pro-active planning and accommodations to the learning activities haven't been sufficient in making grade level curriculum accessible to students, moving to lower grade Learning Standards may be necessary.

These students will typically access additional targeted supports, such as learning support teachers; EA's and often district personnel (OT, PT, SLP). Adjustment of Learning Standards should be considered on both a case-by-case and subject-by-subject basis.

Individualized Curriculum (formerly called Modified)

Students working on individualized curriculum have challenges that do not allow them to access the prescribed curriculum (i.e. limited awareness of their surroundings, fragile mental/physical health, medical and cognitive challenges, or have multiple challenges).

An individualized curriculum has learning standards that are substantially different from the prescribed curriculum and specifically selected to meet the student's individual needs. A student using individualized curriculum is assessed in relation to the goals and objectives established in the student's IEP.

Wherever possible, teachers should work to individualize activities by providing parallel ones for these students. In addition to individualized learning activities, these students require significant essential supports during their time at school (i.e. EA, district personnel – OT, PT, SLP).

The decision to move to a replacement curriculum does not have to be formally made until Grade 10. Individualized curriculum replaces the regular curriculum for those very few students who are unable to fully access the regular curriculum.

Individualized Education Plans (IEP's)

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a documented plan developed for a student with extra support needs that describes individualized goals, accommodations, individualized curriculum, the services to be provided, and includes measures for tracking achievement.

In their Special Education Policy Manual the Ministry of Education states that the process of developing an IEP is "a collaborative and consultative process involving the student, parents, teachers, administrative and support personnel and representatives of districts/community agencies. For many students with special needs, IEPs are developed without their input, their parents' input or even the classroom teachers' input. Consequently the IEP do not reflect a full understanding of the student or their goals for intellectual, physical, emotional, social and career development."

A well written and effective IEP will be the result of a collaborative process between those persons who best know the child and understand their individual learning needs. While local school staff is usually tasked with completing this work, an IEP team may include:

Classroom Teacher	District Support Staff
Parent(s) or other Family	Educational Assistants
Resource Teacher/Case Manager	Community Professionals
Principal	Behavior Consultants

Important questions for parents to consider when planning:

- How does the Individual Education Planning process work at this Middle School?
- Is the IEP drafted or revised by the case manager, who reviews it with the school team to finalize it, and then the case manager meets with the parents to review?
- Is the IEP drafted or revised by the case manager, school team and parents together?
- Is the IEP created and reviewed each year? If so when do both these happen?
- Is the student given the opportunity to participate in the IEP planning?

Important Note: The first few days and weeks of the school year can be the most challenging for students, parents and educators alike. Generally, the IEP document for your child's current school year will not be completed until the mid-late fall. In the interim the IEP from the previous year is in place and provides direction on the students support needs. We also strongly encourage parents and students to consider putting together their own interim plan to share with their new school staff to assist them to best understand a student's needs during those challenging first few weeks. Some templates have been provided at the back of this handbook.

Logistics and Daily Life

Transitioning from elementary to middle school is a big adjustment on many levels; it may feel like their whole school life is being turned upside down. This change can be exciting but may also be stressful and a bit scary for some students.

Changes in middle school may include larger buildings to navigate, larger student populations with more complex social scenes, the introduction of lockers and multiple teachers and classrooms in a student's daily routine. Understanding what to expect and preparing your child in advance can help alleviate some of the stress created from this change in their routine.

Important questions for parents to consider when planning:

- What is the routine upon arriving at school in the morning?
- What is the bell and announcement schedule?
- Will student have use of a locker? Can my child operate or learn to operate a lock?
- What is the daily schedule?
- Where do students eat lunch?
- How many different classrooms/teachers will my child have each day?
- What are the procedures for fire/emergency drills?

Social Aspects

Your child may have spent much or all of their elementary years at the same school with very little change in routine, school staff, or their social circle. For some the transition to middle school may be one of the first experiences with significant change in their social world. Again, all of this change can be stressful and make a student nervous, but it can also be the start of exciting new adventures, building independence, and increasing their social skills!

Important questions for parents to consider when planning:

- What school-wide activities and events will my child attend?
- What are the opportunities for interaction with peers?
- What field trips or camps are planned?
- What extra-curricular clubs and activities are available?

Supports, Physical Accessibility, and Transportation

For students with extra support needs the transition from elementary to middle school may have some additional layers. It is important to know how and when these extra layers of support will be available, where there may be limitations, and how your child may best navigate these in a practical way.

Important questions for parents to consider when planning:

- What supports and services will be provided for my child and how will they be delivered?
- My child has medical/safety/personal care needs. How will the school ensure that all staff are fully aware of them and have received the necessary training before my child starts school?
- Who should I speak with to ensure this and when?
- Can my child be placed in a class with familiar students or friends?
- My child has a behaviour support plan in place. Will the behaviour support plan be continued at Middle School? How will the school ensure that all staff are aware of the plan and have received the necessary training before my child starts school?
- My child has (materials, equipment, technology) that they use at school. Who will be responsible for transferring the equipment to the new school, storing it for the summer, and making it available in the fall for class start?
- What supports and/or services will be provided for my child and how will they be delivered?
- What is the general level of supervision during non-class times (nutrition break, lunch hour, before and after school)?
- What is the plan in the event of an absent support staff?
- Which entrances, classrooms, and common areas are accessible to my child? Are there areas which are not accessible?
- My child needs transportation – what will be provided and who will arrange it?
(please note: SD43 does not provide transportation to students who attend a school outside of their home catchment area)

Important Note: If you are interested in having your child attend a secondary school outside of you catchment you must complete and submit a *Cross Catchment Application* as per the school districts guidelines. Please note this process has very firm timelines and while the process generally takes place in February each year parents are strongly encouraged to visit the school district website and determine specific dates early.

Parents should also note that School District 43 does not provide transportation for students who attend a school outside of their home catchment area.

INTERIM PLAN FOR: (insert child's name & grade)

Plan for First Day of School :

Contact: _____

Plan for First Week of School

Contact: _____

Plan for Time Prior to IEP

This plan was developed by: Name	Title	Copies of this plan were distributed to: Name	Title
			10

FOR YOUR RECORDS
List What Should be in Place for Your Child

Things to be in place in September Materials, Equipment, Augmentative, Communication, Medical, Personal Care, Other	Person Responsible to Complete	Date to be Completed

NOTES: _____

Our School Team

Case Manager: _____ Phone or Email: _____

Principal: _____ Phone or Email: _____

Classroom Teachers

Subject

Phone or Email

Education Assistant

Subject

Phone or Email

Other School District Resource Personnel (SLP, Counselor, Behaviour Consultant)

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Role: _____ Email: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Role: _____ Email: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Role: _____ Email: _____

Student/Teacher Information Sharing

Student:	
Teacher:	
Subject:	

The 3 most important things I need you to know about me:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The 3 most important things I need to succeed are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Middle School Transition Timeline for Parents

When	Action	Person(s) Responsible
Fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Elementary school identifies students requiring individualized transition plans as part of the IEP ✓ Case Manager coordinates the development of transition plan ✓ Case Manager reviews the transition plan with team members which may include parents, teachers, student services staff, an outside professionals and/or agencies ✓ Transition goals are written into the students IEP 	Case Manager (Elementary School)
Winter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Middle school contacts elementary school to schedule dates for team planning meetings ✓ Elementary school provides receiving schools with a list of students with transition plans ✓ Middle schools plan transition process, plan additional visits, determine an interim case manager, who needs to be involved, and create a schedule of planning meetings 	Administration & Student Services (Middle School) Case Manager (Elementary School)
Winter/Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Grade-wide and individualized transition activities (e.g. visits to middle school, meetings, tours, etc) ✓ Plan for visitation sessions for individual students and families as required ✓ Parents consider questions, refer to planning forms in this handbook, and prepare for meetings/discussions with schools 	Administration & Interim Case Manager (Middle School) Parents
Spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Parent Information Night ✓ Middle school Resource Teacher or Case Manager meets with individual parents to discuss student support needs ✓ Articulation meetings between Middle and Elementary school Student Services teams. 	Administration & Counsellors (Middle School) Case Manager & Interim Case Manager (Elementary and Middle Schools)
First week of Middle School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Grade 6 team building activities (this may look different at each school) ✓ Case Managers are assigned and meet with identified students 	Administration (Middle School) Case Manager (Middle School)

School District 43 Learning Services Staff and Programs

SD43 Learning Services Office

Winslow Centre 1100 Winslow Avenue, Coquitlam, BC V3J 2G3

Telephone: 604-937-6386 Fax: 604-936-5451

Director of Learning Services	Paul McNaughton	604.937-6386
Principal of Learning Services	Andrea McComb	604.937.6386
Zone Coordinator (East Zone)	Tanya MacDonald	604.937-6386
Zone Coordinator (South Zone)	Christy Areshenko	604.937-6386
Zone Coordinator (North Zone)	Jo-Anne Pearce	604.937-6386
Gifted Education Coordinator	Louise Malfesi	604.937-6386
Coordinator - Counselling and Behaviour Support	Anna Lemmo	604.937-6386
Principal, Aboriginal Education	Gayle Bedard	604.945-7386
Transition Educator	Christine DeLancey	604.937-6386
Work Experience Facilitator	Cesar Biagtan	604.937.6386

Other District Learning Services Supports

Counsellors
ESL Resource Teachers
Multi Cultural Resource Teachers
First Nations Resource Teachers
Physio-Occupational Therapy
Inclusion Support Team (Autism)

Inclusion Support Team (Behaviour)
School Psychology
Speech/Language Pathology
Audiology
Hearing Resource Teachers
Vision Resource Teachers

Other School Based Supports

Resource Program
Learning Assistance
English as a Second Language
Gifted
Skill Development

Definitions

Accommodations – Formerly known as “Adapted”

Articulation – When students are moving from elementary to middle, middle to high school, the current student services teacher meets with the future student services teacher to discuss needs and strengths. This usually happens in the spring of the year before the move takes place.

Case Manager – The teacher who writes and manages the student’s IEP.

Counsellors – Often focus on social emotional needs, but also can be involved in future planning, course selections, and transitions from one level to another.

EA – An Educational Assistant, in the past known as SEA, or Special Education Assistant. Educational Assistants work in the classroom to help support students with their education goals. They also work in cooperation with the classroom teacher and student case manager.

Evergreen Certificate – Also known as a **School Leaving Certificate**, this is an alternative to the Dogwood high school graduation certificate. Students earning an Evergreen Certificate are not required to meet the course credit requirements for the Dogwood Certificate. They do receive transcripts of successfully completed work in Grades 10 to 12 related to the goals of their education program. This completed work may include both Graduation Program Courses (credit) and Locally Developed Courses (non-credit).

High Incidence Categories – These are students with disabilities that appear more often in the general population and may require less support.

IEP - An Individual Education Plan that the government requires for students who meet the criteria for various categories of disability. This plan includes goals to work on, records where the student is now, where to go next, how to get there, and who will be responsible. The Case Manager invites parents to meetings to provide their input. The IEP is updated at least annually, sometimes more frequently.

Individualized Curriculum – Formerly known as “Modified”

Learning Resource Teacher – This teacher case manages students in high incidence categories. The focus includes academic content and skills. The Learning Resource Teacher will also be the Case Manager.

Low Incidence Categories – These are students with disabilities that appear less often in the general population and may require more support.

Skill Development Teacher – This teacher case manages students in low incidence categories. The focus includes a variety of life skills. The Skill Development Teacher will also be the Case Manager.

Zone Coordinators – They assist schools with providing support services for students with diverse needs. There are three zone coordinators, one each for schools in the north, south, and east of the school district. They can be reached through the district Learning Services Department at 604-937-6386.

Other Resources and Information

School District 43

School Board Office
550 Poirier Street, Coquitlam, BC V3J 6A7
Phone: 604-939-9201
Fax: 604 – 939-7828
www.sd43.bc.ca

Kinsight, formerly Simon Fraser Society for Community Living

204 Blue Mountain, Coquitlam, BC V3K 4H1
Phone: 604.528.3950
www.kinsight.org

Web Links:

School District 43 - www.sd43.bc.ca
BC Ministry of Education - www.bced.gov.bc.ca
Kinsight, formerly Simon Fraser Society for Community Living - www.kinsight.org
Inclusion BC - www.inclusionbc.org

Everyone Belongs in Our Schools – A Parent’s Handbook on Inclusive Education
© Inclusion BC – fourth edition 2012
available online at <http://www.inclusionbc.org/parent-s-handbook-inclusive-education>

Special Education Services - A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines
September 2009 - British Columbia Ministry of Education
available to read or download at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/special_ed_policy_manual.pdf

Community Support:

Kinsight’s Family and Individual Support Program (FISP) – provides support to individuals and families with children and youth with a developmental disability diagnosis. Two consultants are available to provide free support to families or individuals in a range of areas including support navigating the school system, Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, CLBC, or provide resource and referral to other community services and supports. To contact a consultant please call our main office at 604.528.3950 or email the appropriate consultant at the address below.

Anne-Marie McGee, Consultant for families with children and youth 0-19 years
amcgee@kinsight.org

Kathy Trotter, Consultant for families or individuals 16yrs + transitioning to adult services
ktrotter@kinsight.org