



PREPARING FOR GRADE 6!

Dear Grade 5 parents and students,

It might be hard to believe, but middle school is less than 9 months away for grade 5 students. At Minnekhada, we certainly want the grade 5's to enjoy their remaining months in their elementary schools, but at the same time, we want to begin welcoming them (and their parents) into the Minnekhada community.

Moving to middle school can bring with it many questions, stresses and concerns for students and parents alike. Some questions you might be asking:

- How will middle school be different than elementary?
- Will I still be welcome and invited to participate in my child's school and education?
- Will Minnekhada get to know and continue to care for my child?
- Given all the options of different middle schools and various specialty programs, is Minnekhada the right choice for my child?

As principal, I know I have the answers to these questions, but I also know students and parents need time, examples and experiences to fully understand what middle school is like, and what Minnekhada is. I believe in our school, our staff and our students and hope the activities and opportunities we have scheduled in the coming months will help you see, learn and experience what I already know.

Last year, I offered two parent information nights and visited grade 5 students in late January and early February. In part, my thought was to present to parents and students before specialty program (i.e. Late French immersion) and cross boundary application deadlines. In the end, the feedback I received was that the meetings were a bit too soon; while yearly gains in cross boundary applications to Minnekhada suggest that people are clearly recognizing the strengths and opportunities our school offers.

Our plan over the coming months is to provide many opportunities to see and experience Minnekhada in a variety of ways. On page 2, I have outlined those opportunities and look forward to meeting as many parents and students as possible before the end of the year. Of course, there will be specific questions and concerns that might come up for parents or students as grade 6 approaches. I certainly encourage you to call or email (dmacmillan@sd43.bc.ca) with your questions, as I would be only to happy to help.

Sincerely,

Darren Macmillan
Minnekhada Principal



GRADE 5-6 PARENT-STUDENT ACTIVITIES

<u>Event:</u>	<u>Date:</u>	<u>What do you need to know?</u>
Minnekhada Student Movie Contest	February	Our students are currently working on Minnekhada promotional videos for our grade 5 students and parents. It is their attempt to share what Minnekhada means to them while introducing our amazing school (and students) in a unique way. Grade 5 students will be told how to view and vote for their favourites videos.
Grade 5 Basketball Tournament	March 6 th 1-3pm	Our annual Grade 5 Basketball Tournament invites our neighbouring elementary schools to Minnekhada for an afternoon of fun and basketball. Individual schools will register directly with us.
Grade 5 School Visits	April 13 th – April 16 th during school	Minnekhada Administrators will be coming to elementary schools to meet with all grade 5 students. The purpose of this meeting is to share some of the amazing opportunities students will have at Minnekhada, answer some questions, dispel some myths and get them looking forward to grade 6.
Open House / Parent Night	April 23 rd 6:30-8:00pm	Parents are invited to join Minnekhada staff for a presentation all about Minnekhada in the gym while students are participate in a scavenger hunt tour hosted by our grade 7 and 8 Leadership Students
Teacher to Teacher Articulation	April 27 th – May 5 th during school	Minnekhada staff visits elementary schools to talk with grade 5 teachers about the students that will be coming to Minnekhada. This is an invaluable opportunity for us to discuss how to make the upcoming grade 6 year a success for all students. We discuss things such as: learning styles & challenges, pairing students with friends etc
Minnekhada Carnival	May 7 th Time TBA	Minnekhada and PoCo Parks and Rec are co-hosting a youth carnival for students in grades 5-8. The carnival will be run partly by our students and will be a fun way for our 'soon to be 6's' to come and have some fun at our school.
Grade 6 for a ½ day!	June 3 rd 9-11:45am	Our future grade 6's will join us for a morning to experience (a little) what it will be like be a grade 6 student. A mini exploration cycle, some times with lockers and a few other fun activities. This is coordinated with our neighbouring elementary schools but it open to all our out of catchment students.

Some other ways to learn more about Minnekhada:

- Contact Mr. Macmillan to set up a meeting to discuss Minnekhada, middle school or your child specifically
- Read our newsletters that are posted at www.sd43.bc.ca/minnekhada
- Follow the Minnekhada Twitter Feed - #minnekhada for occasional articles and school updates
- Join our parent online book club in April...more info will be shared after Spring Break.



What do you really know about Minnekhada?

Minnekhada is a Community Middle School in North PoCo with a population of 450 students. Students come from diverse backgrounds (ethnicity, socio-economic, family make-up etc.) and have diverse interests (fine arts, dance, athletics, community activism, volunteerism, the environment etc.). **It is our diversity that helps make the school a vibrant, energy filled community of learners; at the same time our smaller size ensures we get to know the students on personal, meaningful levels.** We of course do not do this alone, our four primary feeder elementary schools (Leigh, Blakeburn, Cedar Drive and Birchland) have strong reputations as wonderful learning communities that value social responsibility and diversity - we try to build on their successes and move students further in all areas.

Our school has a strong focus on meeting the needs of all learners and providing them with opportunities to develop learning skills, experience new things, build positive relationships and thrive as individuals. Academically, we support students with inclusive practices within each class and team to help students develop and strengthen their literacy, numeracy and cognitive skills. We have a growing reputation for the academic opportunities we offer students whether it be through school wide public speaking, our student literacy conference, Challenge classes, EAL program, advanced math classes, an integrated Student Services department or our school wide Literacy focus – bottom line, our school sees **learning as our purpose**. Students are challenged and supported within our strong 'homeroom' class structure as well as through the various learning opportunities offered in exploration classes, clubs and programs. I have been asked why neighboring schools in PoCo have specialty programs for French Immersion or students Ministry Identified as 'Gifted'. I agree these programs are great for the students that are accepted into them but for us, **our special pride comes from the fact that our learning opportunities are offered to all of our students.**

Of course, learning opportunities are not only academic. Our staff has been working extensively in the areas of **Social Emotional Learning** and **Social Responsibility** as well as making continuous efforts to support our students as they enter and progress through adolescence. From an office perspective, Mr. Smith and I use aspects of **Restitution and Restorative Practices** to support children that have been treated poorly, create and protect our 'bottom lines' within the school community and support students that cause harm by teaching skills and maintaining clear boundaries.

Extra-curricular activities are numerous and seen as fundamental to Minnekhada's understanding of what adolescents need to thrive. We have an excellent **athletic program** (basketball, swimming, triathlon, horseback riding, wrestling, rugby, volleyball, ball hockey, badminton, golf), **Fine Arts department** (band, beginner band, choir, Mustang Rock, Mustang DJ, art club), **leadership opportunities** (Environment club, Breakfast Club, We Day, leadership, kindergarten buddies, sports council), **special events** (Spirit Days, School Movies, School wide reads, Horse Camp) and **afterschool programs** running five days a week (Lego Mindstorm Robotics, cooking, Circus Arts, drama, homework club, Science Alive etc.). All our extracurricular activities are planned, supported and led by our dedicated staff so that we can inspire, educate, motivate and

Minnehada Middle School

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Mr. Darren Macmillan, Principal
Mr. Todd Smith, Vice Principal



engage students.