

The Grapevine

Alberni District
Secondary School

Volume 6 Issue 1
September 2006

WELCOME TO ADSS

On behalf of the staff of ADSS we would like to extend a warm welcome to our new students in Grade 9 and in all of the other grades. We have had quite a few new registrations over the summer and in late August in particular and we hope everyone new to ADSS feels welcomed and at home here. It can be quite a daunting situation for new students as we are a large school by any standards and it is not always easy to make a connection. Please feel free at any time to drop by the office and ask for help or just take a moment to rest out of the traffic.

To our returning students and families we hope you too are excited to be here and ready to get off to a good start. There will be some changes coming this year and we will make every effort to make certain that all of our families are informed of the changes that are coming.

We are pleased to have some new staff members joining us this year. Ms. Kirsten Abercrombie will be joining us from A. W|. Neill to teach English and Fine Arts courses. Mr. Shayda Cummings has joined us from E.J. Dunn and will be teaching in the Languages department. Finally, from the far north of the Province, Mr. Bruce Carlos joins us as our new Counselor. His focus will be on providing support to our First Nations students.

Also re-joining us as a member of our Administration team is Mrs. Nora Moncur our addition Assistant Principal. We are very pleased to welcome these new staff members.

Grad News

Very quickly, Mr. Behnke will be calling for volunteers to be involved in planning the Grade 12 Graduation this year. One big topic for discussion will be determining the Grad Date for Spring of 2007. There seems to be some misunderstanding coming out of last year regarding this topic—we **are** considering a change of date for purely academic reasons. We **are not** considering dropping Dry Grad or making changes to the part of the program organized and supported by parents. There will be lots of opportunity for student, parent, and staff input as we move through September. A decision will be made by the end of September about the date so that everyone has lots of time to make plans.

Important Dates

Sept 5	School opens Gr. 9's
Sept 6	All other students attend
Sept 11	Grade meetings
Sept 12	Grade meetings and Grade 9 Team Parent Night
Sept 13	PAC Meeting
Sept 15	ADSS Terry Fox Run
Sept 16	Band Carwash 10-2
Sept 20	Photos
Sept 21	ADSS Open House
Sept 22	Curric. Implementation day School closed

ATTENDANCE POLICY NEW FOR 2006/2007

It was abundantly clear as we moved into late Spring last year that there was a need to address attendance issues at ADSS. Many students did not complete courses because of poor attendance. This scenario repeated itself as the marks came in for the Grads in early August—too many students did not get their expected graduation and too many of these could be attributed to poor attendance.

As a result, Mr. Behnke and the Administration team have been working to develop a comprehensive new policy regarding attendance at ADSS. We are confident that the plans that we will be taking to our Trustees early in the school year will have a significant impact on demonstrating to students how important we feel regular attendance is.

There will be a notice sent home to parents, grade meetings with students, discussion with our PAC, and hopefully some coverage in the newspapers and on television. It is very important that everyone is aware of the new expectations and outcomes that could ensue as a result of poor attendance.

The bottom line here is that too many students choose to stay out of class and wander through the building when they should be in class. This is not going to be acceptable at ADSS in the future. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the school and talk to any of the Administrators.

Summer at ADSS

This past summer, 36 very enthusiastic students and two teachers embarked on a new Summer program at ADSS. For the first time, summer school was offered as an opportunity for students to catch up or move ahead—speeding up the road to graduation or freeing up space in timetables to provide opportunity for students to select other electives.

The three classes offered this summer included English 10, 11, and 12. So far, we only have preliminary results because English 10 and 12 have Provincial exams, however we are confident that the vast majority of students will have completed the courses successfully.

At least one of these students was able to complete graduation requirements over the summer and therefore will be starting at college in September instead of waiting until January.

In all—a huge success for all!



GRADE 9 TRANSITION YEAR

2006 marks the first year where we are planning to fully support the transition of our Grade 9 students. Based on observations and discussions last year, it was apparent that we needed to make a concerted effort to ensure that our grade 9's get off to a good start, but also that they are supported throughout the year. Twelve teachers have taken on the challenge of focusing on our newest students. These teachers will teach one class in each semester to the same group of students. They will be a primary contact for parents and other teachers if there are emerging issues with a student in any of their classes.

Grade 9 students will have lockers outside their home room classes. That is also where their first class will be in Semester 1. In this way, the home room teacher will be able to keep track of the students and the students will have a place to congregate during breaks in the day.

We are hopeful that the evidence we see in research about schools of this size will bear out and that making a strong connection to a teacher in their first year will provide a real benefit to the students as they adapt to life at ADSS. If you have questions, please feel free to contact your child's homeroom (and A Block) teacher. Also be sure to drop by during our Open House and parent meetings, September 21 and 12 respectively.

ADSS School Goal

Based on revisions completed by the staff and the school planning council—ADSS has a single focus for the 2006—2007 school year—To improve the 6 year school completion rate. This will mean looking at all ways we can to help students meet their graduation requirements on time.



The Last Word - Jim Ansell, Principal

As we enter into a new year, particularly one that is no longer my first, I cannot help but look forward and speculate a bit—even beyond the realm of ADSS.

In Education, we are hearing a lot about “Virtual School” - a term that will get lots of play over the next few years. The intent of the Ministry of Education is quite clearly to provide an educational program to students any where, any time and through any means necessary. Our summer program was the first tangible look at this type of programming. However, we are already considering programming classes outside regular class times, expanding our online services, and generally attempting to think about education in new ways to help meet the changing needs of our students and their families.

The model we are following for our education system is painfully dated. A single teacher in a class of students, dispensing knowledge may have been a good model in the late 1800's. However, how many other systems in our society are operating on the same model that was developed over 100 years ago and still meeting the needs of our society?

We have a real obligation to look at how we do our work in schools and to look at reasonable alternates—not fads or fashions—but ways of teaching and learning that are certain to benefit the quality of student learning and engagement.

We also need to consider how students have changed in the last 100 years. Is there doubt in anyone's mind that students are different now than they were 30 years ago? Their world is electronic and fast paced. They draw information from the entire world. They deal with knowledge and information that was unthinkable a few generations ago. Attempting to teach in the same way makes absolutely no sense.

We need to look carefully at how we proceed as a school. We need to be aware of alternatives and aware of the needs of our students and families. Increasingly, BC will become a province where schools are competing for student enrolment and where funding will be based on how much of a students' program we are providing. So it is a real challenge for us to keep pace with what is working and what we need to do to meet these challenges.

At the same time—we must also stay grounded and aware of the day to day needs of our school community and deal effectively with the present as well. What an interesting time to be in a school!

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