

June 13, 2016

Dear Parents,

As you know, education in BC has been undergoing many changes. These changes are the results of years of collaborative work between our education partners and the Ministry of Education. The purpose of this note is to highlight important changes as we head toward the fall. One of the most significant changes for our secondary schools is the change to provincial exams. These changes will alter the exam structure and equally as important will alter calendars at the end of January and in June of next year.

Provincial exams

For several years, we have tested core skills in grades 10, 11 and 12. Specifically, the subject areas tested are:

- a. English, Math and Science in grade 10;
- b. Social Studies in grade 11; and
- c. English in grade 12.

A student's final grade was always a blend of the trusted teacher assessments and the provincial exam. In grades 10 and 11, the teacher's classroom-based assessments counted for 80% of a student's final grade and the exam counted for 20%. In grade 12, the teacher's assessment counted for 60% and the exam counted for 40%. The provincial exams themselves have always been designed and written by teachers, and marked by teachers.

Beginning in 2016/17 there will be no provincial exams in grades 10. This does not mean that there are no standards and no expectations. Instead, rather than 80% of a student's mark being from the teacher, 100% of the mark will be based on teacher assessments. This is not a radical departure from practice and reaffirms our trust in teachers' classroom-based assessments which formed the vast bulk of a student's marks in any case and has always been based on the standards in our provincial curriculum.

Beginning 2016/17, in grades 11 and 12, students will still have 2 provincial exams. One exam in numeracy (math) and one exam in literacy (English).

For 2016/17 while the creation of a new numeracy exam is underway, there is no change to the English 12 provincial exam which follows the current curriculum.

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LEADERSHIP IN LEARNING

Calendar Changes

Parents and students are used to a “Provincial Exam Schedule” at the end of January, which is semester turnaround, and in June, which marks the end of the year. These schedules often resulted in many days where students were not fully in session as exams were being written. Many students wrote exams and many students did not. Specifically, the last week of January and the last two weeks of June were primarily for exams. The above change to exams will certainly change how we do semester turnaround and year-end given that the number of exams is being reduced.

As is our normal practice, we are reaching out to teachers and to our administrators to discuss what these changes look like. When we know for certain the structure of the dates, we will be communicating to parents. This news does not mean a shorter school year; what it likely means is more “full” days in session in the coming year. Again, the full details are to be discussed and will be communicated.

For those headed to post-secondary institutions, we have worked closely with our post-secondary partners and these changes were considered in light of recommendations from an [Advisory Group on Provincial Assessments](#) (AGPA) that was co-chaired by representatives of UBC and Simon Fraser University. Not only has post-secondary been part of the conversations, they have helped shape these changes and have been important partners in the process.

There are other changes, but we wanted to communicate this piece to parents as soon as possible so they are aware of the Ministry changes to provincial exams and the implications for next year. As stated above, teachers have always been central to the process of creating and marking provincial exams and the bulk of student marks were always based on classroom assessments. Students will still have standardized assessments in literacy and numeracy before they leave secondary school. We trust our teachers, we stand by the quality of their work and their classroom assessments and, from a district perspective, the changes to exams are welcome changes indeed.

Sincerely,



Jordan Tinney
Superintendent of Schools/CEO