

**Description of information gathering process for 2015-2016 Student Talking Tables held Wednesday, March 4, 2015 at Salmo Secondary School from 9:30 am to 1:30 pm.**

**Attendees:**

50 - Grade 9-12 Students from JVH, PCSS, MSSS, LVR, Salmo Secondary  
4 Teachers from JVH, PCSS, MSSS, LVR  
Superintendent  
Secretary-Treasurer

A “data mining” process was used to gather student input and sort it into topics of interest/concern that students raised. The day started with a broad, far-reaching question that helped the students focus their conversation on learning needs:

*What could happen at school that you think would help you be more ready to move on to the next step like grade 11 and 12 or post-secondary or a gap year or a trade or work? Are there things the principals and teachers could be doing to make you more prepared?*

Student responses were gathered, and divided into themes that emerged from their input:

***Alternate Learning/Grad Requirements*** – *What alternative learning opportunities could be offered to meet graduation requirements?*

***Staffing*** – *What skills and abilities do instructors (teachers, EA’s, counsellors and PVP) require to meet student needs and interests and are there other people that are important to your learning?*

***Courses/Programming*** – *What changes needs to be offered in course choice & content and how will these changes make students more successful/prepared/ HAPPY?*

***Making Connections:*** *How do we find the information we need to make the transition to graduation, post-secondary and life after school and make healthy connections in and out of school?*

The students then requested some insight into the budgeting process and some details about the budget. Questions were very astute—and challenging. Students, and the teachers who accompanied them, spoke of the value of learning about schools throughout our District, and the ways that each school is working to meet the needs of students

The students’ comments, thoughts and ideas, by topic, are provided on the following pages.

## Topic 1: Alternate Learning/Grad Requirements

What alternative learning opportunities could be offered to meet graduation requirements?

- Speakers from different political/social backgrounds come into socials 11 classes. Less teaching with a textbook
- More engagement/aid from administrators/teachers for mentorship programs (example pairing kids with mentors ie novelist with interested English student)
- A more engaging grad transitions which helps you decide what you want to do in trades or post-secondary, and an option for skipping grad transitions if the student is engaged in community projects
- Volunteer and work experience during school-time to help in the community
- Using things learned in school, to apply to real-life situations (eg. Learning biochem, applying to fieldwork)
- Volunteering opportunities
- Job shadowing
- Education presented in a variety of ways dependent on what kind of learner you are
- Travelling - “the more places you go, the more you know”
- More interaction between students and the community
- Mentorships
- Grading system - less grading on tests
- Credits for sports outside of school
- Not a set time to be in school each day
- Mixed classes are confusing (11/12 or 9/10 or 10/11)
- Students more involved should be more recognized
- Credits for real work
- Don't make grad transitions mandatory
- More hands on learning; work experience
- More class choices
- More hands on work (eg doing a play to get drama credits)
- Grad transitions in grade 11 and 12 - surrounding idea of preparation for after high school
- Credit systems only good to certain extent
- Community service class and get credits for it
- Credits for extra-curricular activities (sports, acting etc)
- Better ways to test kids. Some kids simply suck at tests
- Work experience and travel credits
- Work experience
- Expand work experience opportunities
- Co-op learning opportunities to use what you've learned in class in the real world to solve problems
- Try out different professions for a little while
- Try out a university/college trip
- Work experience
- Kids get more help those failing kids need more options
- Home economics classes - mandatory grade 8-12

- Mentoring from community members
- Small group working with tutor-teacher to meet learning outcomes in whatever way works for them
- Applying curriculum learned, to help community
- Alternative requirements for learning and credits for grad
- More options for the Applied Skill grad requirement for schools with less variety. Talking or working with someone in the community; doing something you're interested in.
- More volunteer hours connected to school
- Funding to travel/to see things for kids who may not have the chance
- Sports scholarships; not just academic

## Topic 2: Staffing

What skills and abilities do instructors (teachers, EA's, counsellors and PVP) require to meet student needs and interests and are there other people that are important to your learning?

- In order to make connections teachers, counsellors need to open up to students. Be friendly, understanding
- More Education Assistant support for teachers AND kids
- Administrators (PVP's) and board members need to be in classes observing more/communicating with teachers
- Having space/time to change things/adapt to different styles
- Classes conducted standing up sometimes!
- Every student spends time with a counsellor or knowledgeable teacher or older student to plan their life after high school
- Basic counsellor training across the faculty (more counsellors as well)
- Stop forcing teachers into having too many classes to teach
- More specialized teachers
- Substitute teachers that actually know how to teach the class they get assigned to; not just randoms who don't know what they're doing
- Teachers who do not favour students, and who are patient with students
- Full time guidance counsellor
- AVID training
- Lots of professional development opportunities/mandatory so students know teachers are learning
- Teachers need a spare block to be available to kids who need extra help
- Teachers need to be committed; need teaching experience
- More teachers for schools that lack them
- Relationships with teachers in case they don't like you , automatic bad grade
- More specialized teachers for individual classes
- Teachers should be more personal; every student needs a teacher they can trust
- Teachers needs to be more devoted to the students and help them learn through one on one teaching
- Teachers are getting less involved
- Time, energy
- Background (schooling) needs to match their teaching
- Have mentors in the community
- Big math classes need at least two teachers or education assistants to help!
- Willingness/skill base to create discussions in classes; instead of reciting the textbook
- Advancing/upgrading teachers on a regular basis (extra courses for teachers)
- Less teachers assistants to grade 8 and more to grade 12
- Student support from teachers; teachers who care more ... Ms. Wierengas)
- Proper training!
- More tutoring peer or teacher
- Practical application of learning shown
- Have teacher guide rather than teach us so we can have a more custom learning journey

- For each class you would go on a trip with other school so cost is not high
- Teachers need to be more interested in what they are teaching
- Teachers need to have requirements and education that they need to teach. Eg Calculus teacher needs to know calculus
- Students need to have the determination to learn
- More professional outside help (doctors, lawyers etc)
- Academic counsellors are separate from emotional counsellors
- Class centered trips (eg go to Hawaii for biology)
- Everyone helping students' needs to have experience working with children
- Some teachers are teaching classes they don't wanna be in
- Supportive
- More teachers or people to help with computer problems
- Teachers need to be more updated with better/newer information
- After a certain # of years, teachers who teach the same subject are evaluated so that they aren't bored and students aren't bored
- I want something that will give you options on what you want to learn, so you say your interests and what you like and you get options
- More opportunities for kids who don't want to go into trades/ACE-IT for non-trade jobs
- Professionals coming into school and telling students what they do, and work hands-on (eg engineer talks to school; school does engineering project)
- Teachers trained in psychology/need basic understanding of kids' needs; more communication and support from counsellors
- Counsellors need to be informative about classes you need, other requirements for what students wants.

### Topic 3: Courses Programming

What changes need to be offered in course choice & content and how will these changes make students more successful/prepared/HAPPY?

- Courses less dependent on texts and exams; not everyone is strong in those
- Having optional question assemblies for course selection when they tell the students about specific courses and paths for jobs and university
- More AP (advanced placement) courses so there are more options for university
- Smaller classes, for more one on one time between students and teachers
- Home ec, sewing, cosmo (health and beauty)
- Real life- taxes etc
- PE made more diverse - dance, self defense etc
- Getting through the whole textbook we learn a lot
- Offering different courses more often than just every couple of years
- Block dedicated to volunteer hours
- More focus on students who are really interested in material (blocks specific to motivated senior students)
- Have an intensive “fast track” course, that allows students to complete courses quickly (ie. chem 11)
- More explanation of each elective course and counsellors should advise you on which to take to have a balanced high school experience
- Have career counsellor, more counsellors, and monthly check-in
- Make planning, grad transitions, helpful courses. Could be “pick your planning”, one who wants to learn taxes can learn taxes
- Boys/girls/groups - older students mentoring younger
- More classes on timetable, lets me learn more, therefore more prepared for future
- Let students design their own courses so they’ve prepared for their dream career
- Talk about the actual “budget”. It would be good to have student input on the money.
- Let students have individual and/or group courses so they can learn to the best of their ability
- More courses need to be offered in the smaller schools with less students attending. Every student should be offered different courses no matter how many.
- No mandatory fine arts or applied skill for graduation
- Fast track options for “review” courses like Chem 11
- Small discussion-based classes
- Students can suggest a course and run it if a teacher is willing to facilitate
- Understanding for what the problem is and no judgement/or personal opinions/be open
- School district websites should offer what courses/grades you need to get into certain schools and jobs
- Switching class orders every week (classes in the morning this week will be in the afternoon next week)
- Smaller class sizes to increase meaningful discussion and to avoid chaos. 30 kids is often too many people
- Choices given within the course: project, powerpoint etc
- Each counselor assigned a small group of students that they could coach through to graduation. The students could help each other too.

- More pathways to different goals
- Triangle Tri-trangle Haikus are easy. Sometimes they don't make sense. Refrigerator 😊

#### Topic 4: Finding Information and Making Connections

How do we find the information we need to make the transition to graduation, post-secondary and life after school and make healthy connections in and out of school?

- Create time to bond with students
- Teach us how to get from point A to point B
- International connections via e-tours, explorica ([http://www.explorica.ca/landing/educationaltravel1.aspx?channelID=1367&utm\\_campaign=br&utm\\_source=bing&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_content=4187127963&utm\\_term=explorica&mt=e&bmt=be&adid=4187127963&queryID=24469768072](http://www.explorica.ca/landing/educationaltravel1.aspx?channelID=1367&utm_campaign=br&utm_source=bing&utm_medium=cpc&utm_content=4187127963&utm_term=explorica&mt=e&bmt=be&adid=4187127963&queryID=24469768072)) and get credits for it
- Have people in planning, grad transitions classes, teach practical things like resume, taxes, insurance
- Choose your own planning - decide if a section is building a resume (some kids with jobs don't need this) or taxes, visas etc. Design your own course outline.
- Have college/university students talk to high school students, about what it's like
- If you don't understand the way a teacher is explaining something, being able to feel comfortable to ask questions and the teacher not getting frustrated when you don't understand
- Talking to community members and talking to professionals in the subject you're interested in
- Counsellors specific to Grade 12's
- We find information on the internet
- Make connections by getting kids into sports while they're young
- Combine grad transitions and planning 10 into one course
- Make planning courses teach kids how to finance
- Peer tutoring giving young kids advise and help: older kids get volunteer hours; grade 12's sign up for it
- Learn more on how to get to university and into your career successfully and helped you understand things like scholarships and applying to university
- Older (college) sports players meeting, making connection with high school players
- Sports with other schools and within our schools
- Getting older students to work with elementary and get them into sports early so they are comfortable when they reach high school
- Mandatory counsellor meetings in grades 10, 11, 12 to talk about a graduation plan for each student
- Occasional trips to universities to see what it's like/talk to university students
- Students need to know it's okay to speak to teachers
- Older students, Grade 11 and 12, who excelled in a class coming back to talk to a class
- Teachers should be trained in counselling; should go together
- Teachers know you better than a counsellor
- Respect students more and go more out of their way to show they care
- Stop teaching same subject matter every year (eve the same handouts/worksheets!)
- Some teachers need to retire
- Field trips for healthy connections within all our schools
- More teachers wanting a friendly connection/friendship rather than just professional relationship
- Activities run by senior students, with younger students, to make connections



- Teachers stating at class that they can help and support you in any matter; not just school related
- Having smaller planning classes taught by counsellors more specific like grad transitions but student directed so we can learn what we need to know
- Groups of older students, to talk to younger students, about the future
- People with different careers coming in to talk to students about how to get there!!
- Buddy relationships with younger and older youth in our school
- Having a specific counsellor talk about post-secondary options
- Having planning and grad transitions filled with more things to help students in the future (taxes, student loans and community speakers coming in to talk about careers)
- Having groups of similar interest connect district-wide
- Voices heard. Questions answered. Less booklet work. More discussion
- Outside influence
- Activities, trips involving more than one grade
- Having days where older students can involve younger students in activities (community, volunteering) to build a sense of school community
- Volunteering in foundations and non-profits (connect via school)
- Older students communicate to younger students about courses
- I make connections via internet
- Touring universities, meeting people, making connections
- Fund AVID - through our volunteer experience in AVID, it gives the students a chance to make the connections themselves
- Teachers tell the class what opportunities the teacher's class opens up
- Start funnelling into career path in Grade 10 (eg take courses that will help you in chosen career)
- Workshop given by members in the community of a variety of professions so students can see options for careers
- Sports connections with professionals or university teams