

# Carihi Secondary

by

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SD 72

## Helping Grade 9 Students

### Rationale

Experience shows that a substantial group of incoming grade nine students, during their transition to high school, struggle to remain engaged in their learning. For many of these students, the struggles continue into their later grades: they fail courses, begin to self-identify as poor students, and perceive secondary school as too difficult.

In Campbell River School District 72, as students transition from Phoenix Middle School to Carihi Secondary School, we are exploring the benefits of a program based on supporting transitions for students who might fit this profile. With our Tyee program, the intent is to support students within a cohort of a smaller student/teacher ratio, with a primary focus on self-efficacy as a learner, and as a Carihi Secondary student.

"Tyee feels like a normal school day in this pandemic. I don't feel like going crazy because it alternates subjects."

- Tyee Student



# Tyee Program

## Find Support on Their Path

### PROGRAM

#### Program in Year One (2019/20)

Disengagement from their learning is a common occurrence within this student population, leading all too often to students dropping out of secondary school. The Tyee Program is intended to increase engagement for students through focusing first on social and emotional needs, while reducing the pressures and demands of high-paced academic courses, especially in semester-based timetables. The Tyee Program creates an environment where students are encouraged to express their thoughts and emotions, and to address the hindrances and obstacles that can get in the way of being successful in secondary school – often occurring away from school, but tend to follow students to school.



"I wish there was  
another  
Tyee Program  
for grades  
10 and 11."

- Former Tyee Student

### Year One Program Structure

- 30 to 40 students spent their mornings in their Tyee Program cohort for semester one
- Over the semester, the Tyee Program covered Social Studies 09 and Mathematics 09, with a focus on readiness in those courses for the grade ten level
- For afternoon classes, students were scheduled into two blocks per semester along with the general school population
- The teacher team was comprised of three teachers, with two teachers being assigned to individual blocks at any time
- The scheduled morning time allowed students to benefit from a soft start on days when that was needed, without the consequence of a lost lesson
- Teaching the two courses in a cohort model allowed for flexibility in daily schedules, but also in course delivery and completion over the semester
- The cohort was supported by a learning assistant teacher, an education assistant, the school youth worker, and the youth worker for Indigenous students
- The Program included a partnership with a neighbourhood elementary school for buddy activities, plus regular visits to – and participation in – an industrial sewing program

### Observations During Year One

During its first year, the Tyee Program was scheduled for the mornings of semester one only. While this format showed positive results, especially in the areas of attendance and student engagement, we found that in the following second semester, without this daily support, some students fell back into the struggles previously observed in this student population.

While we did not apply any kind of structured research to Year One, our observations showed that students stayed connected and identified with their Tyee cohort, and attendance did improve. Our follow-up conversations with students revealed that the possibility of a soft start removed the stress of being late in the mornings, or of missing crucial instruction time. Instead of staying away for the whole first block, or giving up on the day, students felt safe to join the class. Having students in class allowed us to work on skills such as punctuality, or to support students in their needs and make it possible to be at school more regularly and on time.

### Program in Year Two (2020/21)

Our observations in Year One demonstrated the need for the Program to be available for the whole school year. In the current school year (2020/21), we expanded the Program and moved it into a linear schedule for the morning blocks in semester one and two. We had a team of four teachers who planned for the year, with two teachers scheduled into the Tyee Program classroom on a rotation base. The teachers in the cohort had strong backgrounds in physical education, mathematics, language arts, and counselling. The Program remained focused on taking care of social emotional needs first, and making learning possible second.

## Year Two Program Structure

- 30 to 40 students spend their mornings in the Tyee Program cohort all year
- Over the year, the Tyee Program covers Mathematics 09 and English 09, Physical Education 09, and Learning Strategies 09, with a focus on readiness for the grade ten level
- For afternoon classes, students are scheduled into two blocks, per semester, with the general school population
- The teacher team is comprised of four teachers, with two teachers being assigned to individual blocks at any time
- The scheduled time in the morning allows students to benefit from a soft start on days this is needed, without the consequence of a lost lesson
- Teaching the four courses within an all-year, linear cohort model, allows for flexibility in daily schedules, and in course delivery and completion over the school year
- The cohort is supported by a learning assistant teacher, an education assistant, the school youth worker, and the youth worker for Indigenous students

## Observation during Year Two

The second year of the Tyee Program has been overshadowed by COVID-19. Secondary schools had to re-adjust their schedules to meet the health and safety requirements of this current reality. The district decided to go to a one-eight model of course delivery, meaning each course is taught over five weeks in a full-day format.

For the Tyee Program, which was scheduled into the two morning blocks, this means that the cohort was together over the first five weeks and will continue being together for every second five-week course period throughout the school year.

As we have moved through the one-eight rotations of this very different school year, we have made some interesting, school-wide, observations of the intensive full-day, five-week course delivery model. Initial observations have shown that for many students – beyond the students in the Tyee program – the full-day delivery model has helped with both attendance and course completion. While these are early observations, we see trends that show students feeling more connected to that one course and to the teacher of that course. The perceived ‘competition’ between courses throughout the day has fallen away, eliminating the need some felt to ‘sacrifice’ one block for the supposed importance of another course.

We also feel that being primarily with one teacher all day has made students more visible in the classroom, and removed the option or temptation to skip one or the other block. These experiences have revealed the value of a program like the Tyee Program, bridging that transition from middle to secondary school with more time together, and resulting in closer connections between students,

teachers, and support staff. Students from last year's Tyee Program are still connecting with those teachers, and talk about the positive impact the Program had for them.

As we navigate the very different experiences of altered schedules – especially at the secondary level – we see a need and a great opportunity to revisit and reflect on the ways we schedule secondary schools as we move into the future. While we are in the very early stages of this school year, and much observation and data-gathering lies ahead, we can see the potential for new opportunities and learning that is emerging from our current emergency situation, for our Tyee Program and beyond.

"Tyee provides an opportunity for kids to find success where they may have had a difficult time elsewhere. The Tyee program accepts kids for who they are and where they are at with their learning. Each day is an opportunity for students to feel supported and to obtain skills that will help transition them into the high school world."

*- Tyee Staff*

"Better connections with students. More time for conversations with students. Continuity for students for a full year in a regular school year."

"Programs like Tyee should be available at every grade level to meet the diversity of students learning and the diversity of their backgrounds. "

*- Tyee Staff*

