

What To Know About Choosing Courses

The courses your child takes in school are very important. Your child's choice of courses will impact their future options after high school – including their access to a range of jobs, training programs, and post-secondary opportunities.

Parents have the right to know what courses their children are taking and if those courses are going to be changed for any reason.

Remember:

- ▶ The courses children take in early grades affect which courses they are able to take later. When your children are still young, ask school staff if they are on track to take the right senior level courses.
- ▶ Your support at the high school level remains invaluable. Teens continue to need help from their parents as they navigate the secondary levels and prepare for their next steps after graduation.
- ▶ Students must take specific courses in grades 10, 11, and 12 in order to receive the BC Certificate of Graduation, usually called the “Dogwood Diploma”.
- ▶ A Dogwood Diploma is the high school graduation certificate students receive if they complete all of the provincial graduation requirements. The Dogwood should be the goal for almost all students.
- ▶ Parents should regularly check whether their children are taking courses that will lead to the Dogwood Diploma.
- ▶ If students are not taking the required courses, they may receive the “Evergreen Certificate” (the British Columbia School Completion Certificate) instead of the Dogwood Diploma. The Evergreen is intended to celebrate success in learning, but it is not recognized as a certificate of graduation.

- ▶ The Evergreen is intended for students who have very serious special learning needs. It is not meant for the majority of students. *Many post-secondary programs will not accept students who finish grade 12 with a School Completion Certificate.* The Evergreen is meant to celebrate the achievement of students who are unable to complete the Dogwood, but who have completed personal goals that will allow them to transition to meaningful options after grade 12. The Evergreen will limit what choices are open to students after they graduate.
- ▶ Some students who do not meet the requirements of a Dogwood Diploma may receive an Adult Dogwood. The Adult Dogwood may not provide students the same opportunities for post-secondary. The Adult Dogwood is meant for adult learners (18 years of age and older) who want to complete high school with a diploma. *The Adult Dogwood is not meant for school-age students.*

- ▶ If your child is on a path for the Evergreen or Adult Dogwood Diploma, ask questions.
- ▶ Who made the decision and why? Why is your child not on a path to the Dogwood Diploma?
- ▶ Your agreement is needed about any decisions that will impact your child's future choices.
- ▶ It is also important to know if your child is on a modified program. A modified program may be appropriate for *some* students who have very serious special learning needs, but it is not necessary for the majority of students. Students on a modified program will graduate with the Evergreen, not the Dogwood. *This will affect their future opportunities.*
- ▶ If your child is going to be placed on a modified program, find out why.
- ▶ Ask questions. Make sure you have a full explanation about the reasons for the decision before you agree.

And remember ...

- ▶ Just because your child meets all of the course requirements to earn a Dogwood Diploma doesn't necessarily mean that they will meet requirements for post-secondary. For example, Workplace Math 11 meets the math requirement for graduating with a Dogwood Diploma. However, it does not meet the entrance requirements of many post-secondary institutions or specific post-secondary programs.
- ▶ If you have questions about the courses your child is taking, talk to the school counsellor or the teacher.

Graduation requirements can change over time. Keep asking if your child is on track to graduate with the Dogwood Diploma and whether they are taking courses that will lead them to the post-secondary or training opportunities that are right for them.

HOW PARENTS CAN GET INFORMATION TO HELP WITH EDUCATION PLANNING

If you want to know more, you can talk to a counsellor or teacher for help with education planning.

- ▶ Many jobs require specific post-secondary education programs or training.
 - ▶ Often, specific courses are needed to access post-secondary and training programs.
- ▶ It is important that students find out early what courses they will need to achieve their goals. They also should know what grades they will need in high school courses to get accepted into the post-secondary or training programs that interest them.
- ▶ Math 12 and English First Peoples 12 or English 12 are required for most post-secondary options. Students should work toward those courses to allow them a range of choices later.

More information about planning for post-secondary and careers is available in the FNESC and FNSA publication: *Guiding Your Education Journey: A Handbook for First Nations Families* (available from www.fnesc.ca) That Handbook is intended to provide information to help families make the best decisions possible about what courses students need to take, and to help First Nations families plan for post-secondary education and training, and future careers.

