

BOARDS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

STORIES FROM YOUR COMMUNITIES

PERSONALIZING SCHOOL FOR OUR HIGH PERFORMERS

Contributor:

Malcolm Reid

Principal, Vernon Secondary School

SD22 (Vernon)

Almost 15 years ago, VSS principal Morris Vardabasso recognized that there were many students in Vernon that were so high performing in their fields of passion that their schedules had significant conflicts with traditional school. At this same time online schooling was slowly becoming an option in our province and many of these top students were either leaving traditional school for the online path or sacrificing the pursuit of their passion. Mr. Vardabasso envisioned a program that blended both models together and allowed our highest performing youth the ability to pursue their talents at the highest level and still attend VSS.

Today the VSS High Performance Program (HPP) strives to provide students with a quality core educational program while accommodating the demands of their involvement in high level performance or competition schedule. This is accomplished through the leadership of our HPP teacher Mr. Acob who creates and manages a blended schedule of on line learning, traditional classes, courses taught directly by Mr. Acob, and potentially gaining credit from their learning outside the school. Mr. Acob's role is all encompassing as he is teacher, academic counselor, school & extracurricular program liaison, and online facilitator to all HPP students. His exact role for each student varies greatly depending on each student's needs. Together with parents, community coach, and the school staff, Mr. Acob will develop a schedule that best fits what each



student needs. HPP students report to Mr. Acob's room daily for support, guidance, and course work.

Students in the HPP program are expected to be competing at a minimum provincial level competition, and in most cases they are at national or even international level of competition. They are training at least 20 hours a week in addition to their full time studies. Presently we have over 70 students in the HPP program. The activities range from, but are certainly not limited to; figure skating, swimming, snow sports, rhythmic gymnastics, acting, music, rodeo, and track & field.

Congratulations to all our HPP students who have taken this opportunity to chase their dreams! A huge appreciation to the vision of Mr. Vardabasso, and thank you to the efforts of Mr. Acob for carrying on this model for student success. Today, the Ministry of Education challenges schools to create programs that personalize schooling for the 21st century. The VSS HPP program has truly been personalized learning long before the phrase was coined.