

The Dover Bay Mirror

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From the Editor

Hello readers! It gives me great pleasure to give you the third issue of the Dover Bay Mirror, and the first of our topic oriented issues. The topic that this publication concerns is exam week, and inside the issue you will find a wide range of articles concerning how to prepare for exam week, the controversy concerning the removal of exam week, and even such articles as what to eat while studying. It is our hope that by providing this variety of articles on exam week, school awareness of skills and topics concerning exams will increase, and thus hopefully aide students during the trials of the end of the semester. Aside from this, I would like to thank all of the people that contributed to this paper, as well as Mr. McPherson, our teacher sponsor, and Mr. Blain. I hope you enjoy this publication, and that you find it to be a helpful tool during the trials of exam week. Thanks for reading!

-Aaron Mishkin

Issue of the month: Exams

Section Editor: Jay Herringer

For almost all secondary students, exams are part of the reality of the end of every semester. For teachers, and the education system in general, exams are tools which ensure that the material taught has been learned. For students, exams can prove to be anything from just an annoyance to a roller coaster of frustration and stress. When they are finished, they leave students with mixed feelings; some are left with a sense of pride in their accomplishments, while others find themselves disappointed in their academic results. One emotion, however, is constant among all students at the conclusion of exam week: relief – at least for a while.

Exam Week Cancelled by SD68 for 2012

In a decision that took many by surprise, the Nanaimo-Ladysmith school district announced last fall that it would be cancelling exam week for both semesters of this school year.

Normally, the last weeks of Semesters One and Two have been non-instructional time, with students being required to attend school only to write their scheduled exams. This time was utilized by students as a time to study, and prepare for the upcoming semester. The preparation time was also used by teachers to prepare their courses and teaching materials for the start of the next semester. Teaching was required by teachers during this week was non-linear, meaning catch up work, study sessions etc.

This year, however, what was normally exam week has now been mandated by the school board as an instructional time, meant for use as catch up, and completion school time. Students and teachers will be required to attend school through that entire week and take their exams at some point during that time. The administration of the exams is to be organized by each individual school. At Dover Bay, the Monday and Tuesday of that week have

been designated as regular school days (with the exception of provincial exams. while the schedules of Wednesday and Thursday have been altered to accommodate full-length examination sessions by scheduling only two periods per day of these two days as opposed to four. the Friday of that week is also a scheduled as normal instructional day.

The school district has said that its decision was made as a result of the BC Ministry of Education's recent cancelation of all optional provincial exams. The board says that because the optional exams have been eliminated, fewer students will be writing exams. There are only five provincial exams taking place this year (English 12, Social Studies 11, Math 10, English 10, and Science 10) and thus, as goes the board's rationale, it is unnecessary to take an entire week off from instruction to accommodate the remaining provincial exams. The board's explanation on the number of exams taking place, however, does not take into account the numerous school exams which are also written during exam week. The board says the extra week of instructional time will be valuable for students' learning needs.

-Jay Herringer

The decision to cancel exam week has been met with mixed reviews. Last month, about 150 students participated in a rally outside the School District's Administration Office to protest the cancellation of exam week. Meanwhile, around the school, some students began circulating petitions to challenge the decision. Despite this, a month later, it seems the board's decision still stands, and it appears that the normal exam week is still set to be replaced with instructional time for this year.

As the new exam week drew closer, the Mirrors own Devin Green asked students and teachers around the school what they thought about the changes being made:

Students and Teachers React to Exam Week Decision

As a majority of the student body and the teacher staff already know that School District 68 has removed the break usually given to students during Exam week. As a result the majority of people are reacting negatively toward this. However there are both pro's and con's to this situation. On the positive outlook, Students who have fallen behind on their work have the opportunity to use the in class time to complete this work and get caught up in their courses. Furthermore, students who require more one-on-one time with their teachers to prepare for their exams now have this opportunity as the exam week is now instructional time. Looking now at the more negative results of this decision reveal problems such as this; teachers who would normally have used this time to prepare for semester two miss out on that opportunity and are left with more work to complete on their own time. As on teacher put it, "I am confused about what seems like a misunderstanding about how much time teachers actually put in preparing for the next semester. For example, I finish on Friday with semester one, I am supposed to be ready to deliver quality education for my seven new subjects on the following Monday." This decision to remove the exam week break definitely created more work for the teachers, the students, the administrators, and all the rest of the faculty, but

trying to imagine what type of impact this holds for the Graduating students of 2012 is terrifying. These students have to come to school, achieve as high grades as possible, while at the same time working for the money necessary to pay for post-secondary education. All this effort is time consuming enough as it is without taking away their time to study for their Final Exams. Another notion which is frustrating to the average student is the lack of a break between semesters. Although some student's say that the first week of school is as good a break as needed, the majority of the students have said that the transition between semesters will be stressful and exhausting. In the past, the break between semesters offers students a chance to wind down before beginning a load of new courses, especially with academic courses, and how they sometimes go unbalanced between semesters. Even though the days in the exam week are instructional days which require Teachers and Students to be in class, the result of the changes of Exam week have brought about mainly negative responses.

-Devin Greene

OPINION

“The New Exam Week”:

As this semester draws to a close, one thing has become abundantly apparent. The two sides of conflict, those who believe that exam week is necessary, and the others that believe in cancelling it, both have failed to consider the other side. This means that while a person who believes in retaining the exam week may understand the reasons for keeping it perfectly, they probably don't understand reasons for disposing of it to nearly the same degree. According to this supposition, taking some time to try to realize the ideas that propel the other side is not only important, but necessary for developing an informed opinion of the issue.

Removing exam week, while often criticized, is not as completely poor an idea as some describe. There are quite a few gains to it. Firstly, it removes the issue of school responsibility. When students are off during exam break, the school is still responsible for the safety of students during normal school hours. This is because the week is still technically school time. If we are in school during this time, the administration does not have to worry about liability issues. Secondly, there is the possibility of more instructional time. If students are studying in class, teachers will be able to help solve issues that may arise, which is not the case for students studying on their own. An example of this can be simply put. If someone has a problem factoring with the Vietnamese method, how do you fix it? If you are studying in class the solution is simple. Ask your math teacher, and he will show you. However, if you are studying alone, learning to factor could be a much harder hurdle to jump. Otherwise, the last advantage of not having an exam week is simple. No more missed exams. If everyone is in class when the exam happens, how can it be missed? It can't, is the answer.

However, despite these gains, there are still cons to the removal of exam week, especially for those who are able to study without guidance, those who are self-directed. This, simply put, is because those who don't need to be forced to study, those who can make themselves study, will be hurt by having to stay in class. Remaining in class will do nothing but hurt their ability to study, and damage their marks as a result. Having no exam week also hurts

the teachers. Determining what they should do during the final week of term is now difficult, and unplanned for. Do they teach more lessons, or give students study time? It's a difficult question that just adds to the troubles that teachers have during the end of the year. The last issue with removing exam week concerns how we regard the end of one semester, and the beginning of the next. Without a break between the two, how are students and teachers supposed to mentally reconcile the end of one period of work, and the beginning of another? It is yet another troubling question.

While there are many issues concerning exam week, some for, some against, one thing is certain. Nothing else has caused such deliberation, and conflict at Dover Bay in a long time, and while conflict can seem bad at the time, it teaches important skills such as critical thinking and independent thought. Not many things are as important as possessing those faculties. So, whatever outcome there is, be careful to consider both sides, and understand both the pros and the cons.

-Aaron Mishkin

Though the administrative stand on exam week has changed this year, the exams themselves have stayed the same. Exams must be written by every student, and like any institution, they have a certain relationship with those who are affected by them. To help reduce the impact of this relationship, Marissa Gibbard and Katie Birchard offer valuable information exam preparation, while Jay Herringer presents his view on the content of those exams:

Tips and Tricks

Exam Week Study Tips

The most stressful week of the school year is advancing fast. Exam week is on the horizon for students of Dover Bay Secondary. Some students have good study habits, and prepare diligently for exams, while others prefer to just write the exam totally unprepared. Instead of procrastinating and having that fear and utter guilt consume you because you haven't even cracked open a text book yet, follow these easy tips that can guarantee better focus and intake of information during a study session.

#1. Learn how to manage time appropriately.

To help manage time and keep on track, one can make a study schedule to follow. Make sure to spend time wisely and efficiently as possible.

#2. Motivation.

To ensure a productive study session, remember to keep motivated. Breaks, music, and fun activities after a long period of studying can help one keep motivated and increase brain activities. Just don't go near the television, or a break can turn into a distraction.

#3. Concentrate!

Try not to get distracted by other people, loud music, or electronics. Drinking water can help keep your brain hydrated and focused so you can keep studying prolifically.

#4. Smooth out any wrinkles in knowledge.

Before the exam, one should make sure to know everything that is testable. If there are any misunderstandings or gray areas in a student's knowledge, it's best to get everything cleared up beforehand.

The most important thing is to just stay calm while writing the exam. The worst distraction from the right answer is stress. Despite the popularity of cramming, especially all night, it is the worst way to study. Barely any of the information taken in while cramming stays in the brain. Start studying a good week before the final exam and make sure to have a good night's sleep.

Good Luck!

-Katie Birchard

Food for Thought

Although it may seem like the only way to do well on an exam is to study for hours on end, many other factors, not involving study or review, can actually have a great impact on performance during a test. There are certain "brain foods" that improve brain function and can help the mind work well in times of stress and pressure, such as exam week. However, the first thing to do is avoid eating junk food. This may seem like a broken record because every one is being told to eat healthfully and avoid junk these days, but the number one thing to keep in mind when aiming for excellence in anything is that good food means a good mood and optimum body functionality. When a person eats food lacking in sufficient nutrients, the body cannot turn the food into proper, hearty or long-lasting energy. Instead, the body uses up the little energy that these foods provide very quickly. This means that while chowing down on delicious snack food may seem all right at first, it will only increase drowsiness, decrease brain function and put the body in a state not optimal for retaining information or test taking. Sugary foods, including all of those specialty coffees and colas, and salty and simple carbohydrate foods, such as chips, pizza and cookies are major things to avoid due to lack of nutrients they provide and the quick drop in energy your body experiences shortly after eating them. Now, avoiding the bad things is all well and good but not always possible, or

what anyone wants to do, so besides eating a generally healthy diet, there are foods that one can eat that are actually proven to benefit the brain.

Interestingly enough, there is a lot of “brain food” out there if one knows what to eat. First, wild salmon is excellent for the brain and all across the body. Salmon is one of the best sources of omega-3, a fatty acid essential for the body, which has been proven to help regenerate nerve cells and improve mood and overall brain function. Another brain enhancer is green tea. Although it seems like just another drink, green tea is full of the amino acid L-Theanine, which stimulates the brain and helps it focus. Very surprisingly, another food excellent for the brain is cocoa, however; this does not mean that a chocolate bar or giant piece of cake is going to help with brain function. Cocoa beans alone have antioxidants, flavonoids and catechins, which are fancy words, but all are nutrients proven to enhance brain function. Although most people do not think of plain cocoa when they think of chocolate these days, it is worth looking into if craving a treat during exam week. Blueberries also have brain-booming potential, as this low-glycemic fruit can actually ward off memory loss and improve short-term memory. Finally, while pulling all-nighters with a textbook and numerous cups of coffee the night before an exam is not recommended, the cups of coffee may not actually be so bad. Like cocoa, coffee beans are packed with antioxidants, amino acids and various vitamins and minerals that significantly help the brain function. Even though food cannot do the impossible and provide an amazing memory or super-human brainpowers, if combined with good rest, healthy and nutrient packed foods can help keep the mind and body functioning well and with limited stress during such high pressure times of the year.

-Marissa Gibbard

Special Interest

Geo-Caching

Geo-caching is one of the fastest growing sports in the world. It involves GPS users and adventures seekers locating hidden treasures which are known as geocaches. The sport has spread around the globe and it is estimated that there are 5 million geo-cachers currently on the move. A number of these are students at Dover.

Geocaching involves finding a hidden container (a geocache) which contains a log book and/or trading items. The person who hides and is responsible for a cache posts the coordinates of the cache online and then other geo-cachers can head out on a treasure hunt to find the cache.

The rules of the sport are easy. If you take something, leave something else in the cache for future finders. Also, record your visit in the log book of the cache. Finally, re-hide the cache exactly as you found it! You may also want to log your cache finds.

Within one mile of Dover Bay, there are currently 37 geocaches waiting to be found. Some of these may be as small as your fingernail or as large as a bucket. They may be hidden in trees, under benches, under boardwalks, or any suitable place. Within Nanaimo itself there are hundreds of caches - these may be at the top of Mt. Benson or on the beach at Pipers Lagoon.

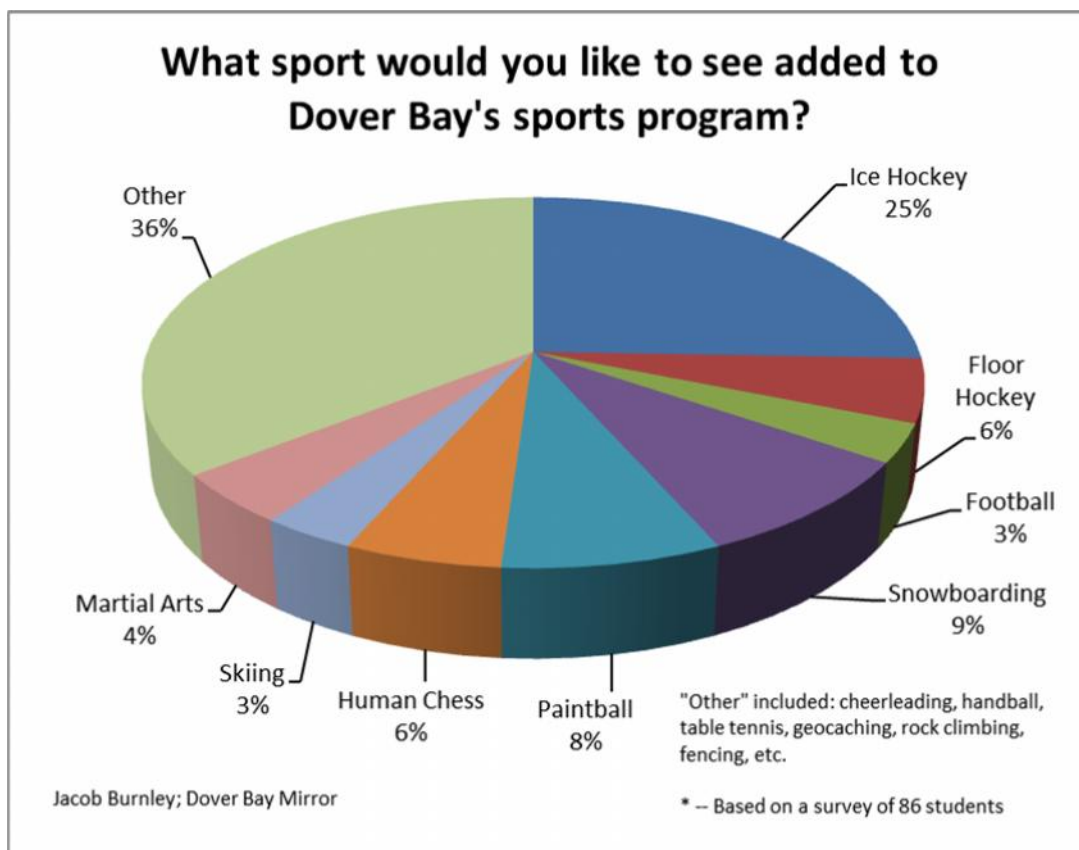
Amongst the students at Dover, there are some very active geo-cachers. For example, one who goes by the nickname “WestCoastKid”, has found over 900 geocaches. He thinks “it’s a great sport because it gets you active and outdoors”.

All you need to get started is a GPS unit and there is plenty of information on the sport and the local caches at: www.geocaching.com

Now what are you waiting for, head outside and find a geocache!

-Jacob Burnley

Sports Poll



The Mirror

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