

SD42 CYBERSCHOOL

THE SD42 CYBERSCHOOL program has attracted a lot of attention. Open to every grade 6 and 7 student in the Maple Ridge - Pitt Meadows School District, Cyberschool offers students a new flexibility by allowing them work from home, online, two days a week.

The program is the brainchild of Maple Ridge teacher Dave Dixon, who found his inspiration at an Edmonton Online Learning Conference ten years ago.

“At the time,” says Dixon, “Alberta was a hotbed of innovation in online learning.”

Dixon attended the conference with another Maple Ridge teacher, Keith Rajala, and both men were amazed by the innovations that Alberta had begun to introduce.

Even as they recognized the great potential of online learning, however, Dixon and Rajala agreed they wouldn't want to sacrifice the face-to-face part of a classroom.

“Back in our hotel room, we excitedly mapped out what would soon become the Cyberschool model,” Dixon recalls. “When we approached School District No. 42 [with the idea], the reaction from the superintendent was simply, ‘Why not?’”

And with district approval, the implementation of the *Cyberschool* program began.

The program started out at Yennadon Elementary School, where it quickly grew to two full classes. Dixon then began the *District Cyberschool* program at Alouette, which also soon saw a steady growth from one class of twenty students to two full classes. In 2012 - 2013, the popular program was made available at Fairview Elementary under the direction of one of Dixon's former



Dave Dixon with a few of his Cyberschool students at Alouette Elementary.

student teachers, Jeff Conway.

A total of 150 students are now registered in the *Cyberschool* program across the three schools.

The popularity of the *Cyberschool* program doesn't surprise Dixon. He notes that *Cyberschool* has many benefits that both parents and students appreciate. Students learn to become independent learners, they learn to set their own goals, they become skilled at collaborative work, and they become proficient in using technology to support their learning.

And while the task of working independently can initially be a challenge for some students, Dixon notes that students soon catch on and learn to embrace and enjoy the freedom of being able to set their own goals.

“*Cyberschool* students are all engaged in what they are doing,” says Dixon. “They are all motivated because they have chosen the program themselves.”

Particularly encouraging is the great feedback that the program has received from both parents and students.

“The *Cyberschool* program is great,”

testifies Alison Turner, parent of a child enrolled in the program. Noting that *Cyberschool* has taught her son how to learn independently, manage his time better, and think outside of the box, Turner sees the program as an answer to the challenges and opportunities of the modern world:

“In today's world where everything is technology driven, this is the perfect learning environment of the future.”

Learn more about Cyberschool at <http://schools.sd42.ca/cyberschool>