THIS IS SYNERGY

OUTLINE OF POWERPOINT

- Program Overview
- Portfolio Application
- FAQ
- Student Voices
- Questions

With deep gratitude and respect, we are honoured to be learning and unlearning on the ancestral and unceded lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) & səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh Nation).

SYNERGY MISSION STATEMENT

"To meet the unique needs of highly capable learners and to foster curiosity, social responsibility, personal and intellectual growth, and leadership."

WHAT MAKES SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL SECONDARY GREAT

- One of largest schools in Vancouver, with about 2000 students
- Comprehensive education offered, with wide range of course options
- One of top IB schools in the world
- Variety of extra-curricular opportunities – sports, clubs, student council…

Sir Winston Churchill
SECONDARY SCHOOL

SYNERGY PROGRAM

- A Grade 8 and 9 learning cluster program designed for students "who have demonstrated excellence, have a positive attitude toward learning, are highly motivated and reliable, are curious, critical and creative thinkers" and "are open to learning in new ways and places" (VSB, 2012).
- 28 students are accepted into the program in Grade 8
- Is **not** a district program, so students in catchment area have priority. In the last few years, no out-of-catchment students have been accepted.

SYNERGY COURSES

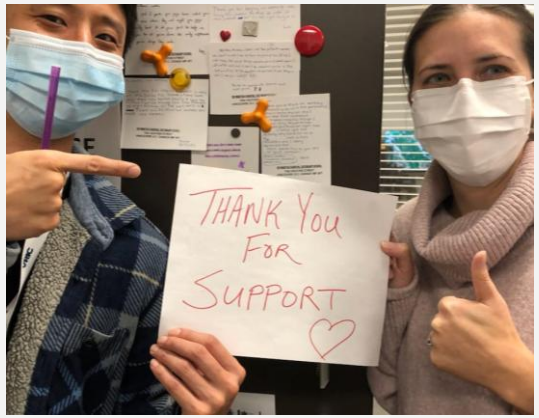
- Students take Synergy Science, English, Social Studies and ADST (Applied Design, Skills & Technology) as a ‘pod’ in both Grade 8 and 9. (This year with the Semester system, Synergy students are taking two Synergy courses each semester.)
- Other 4 classes are with general school population – e.g. Math, P.E., Languages, Music/Fine Arts
- Synergy teachers try to make learning interdisciplinary and tend to focus on project-based and group learning.

BENEFITS TO SYNERGY STUDENTS

- Team dynamics and building social skills
- Gaining skills related to academic inquiry
- Smaller, tight-knit community – school within a school
- Unique challenges
- Excellent preparation for Churchill's Prelude and IB programs.
- Leadership opportunities – Synergy Council

OTHER SYNERGY ACTIVITIES

- Synergy Camp – usually in late Sept/early Oct.
- Winter Celebration – Secret Santa and team-building activities for Synergy 8s and 9s
- Practicing Philanthropy – such as designing and selling Winter Cards as fundraising activity. Also, writing and sending Thank You cards for healthcare workers. And Buskerfest!
- End of Year Activity – ICE/D Presentations and Celebration



I.C.E./I.C.E.D. PROJECT

- Is a year-long Inquiry project that encompasses all Synergy subject areas.
- Are given one class a week as I.C.E. time.
- In Grade 8: I.C.E. = Initiate, Coalesce, Express.
- In Grade 9: I.C.E.D. = have added the component of Do Something (invent, apply or create) related to their topic that helps their larger community.
- In the planning stage (Initiate), students work individually to select, examine and research a central question that they are curious about.
- In the second stage (Coalesce) students are placed into small groups and work together to refine/redefine their individual questions into one larger inquiry question.
- They research and examine this question further and finally explain their process and learning in their year-end presentation (Express).

APPLICATION PROCESS

DEC 17, 2026
Application Portfolio due to Main Office by noon

JAN 6, 2027
Synergy Assessment 4-5pm in Caf

FEB 17, 2027
First Offers must be accepted by Feb 19.

FEB 25, 2027
Second Offers must be accepted within 24 hours

FEB 26, 2027
Ongoing Offers as needed.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THE PORTFOLIO

- Program Application Form (found on school website), print out and put in portfolio
- Table of Contents
- Summary of Who You Are
- Statement of Personal Goals
- Educational Résumé
- Report Cards (Grade 6 and 7 as available**, first Grade 7 report card this year should be available near beginning of December.)**
- Up to two Certificates
- One Example of Excellence
- Two Reference Letters (cannot be from VSB employees such as teachers or principals)
- One document to confirm applicant's residential address (e.g., copy of Hydro bill)

PORTFOLIO GUIDELINES

- On paper, 8 ½ x 11 inches, no digital submissions accepted.
- Photocopies only, NO original documents. You do not get them back.
- No fancy covers and no binding
- No strings, ribbons or other such embellishments
- No clips or page protectors
- Take photographs of items larger than 8 ½ x 11 inches
- Put items in order, make a Table of Contents
- Reference letters need not be sealed in envelopes
- Must hand it to Main Office by noon on Dec 17, 2026

PORTFOLIO COMPONENTS

Program application sheet

- All information must be accurate, up-to-date and truthful
- Must include student's PEN number (found on their report card)
- Need student's MyEd number
- Parent and student's email required
- Home and cell phone numbers required

PORTFOLIO COMPONENTS

Statement of Personal Goals

- Written from the applicant's point of view, in the student's own words.
- Explain your short term, medium term and long-term goals
- Why would Synergy be a good fit for you?
- What do you expect from the Synergy Program?

PORTFOLIO COMPONENTS

Educational Résumé

- Schools attended
- Extra-curricular activities
- Volunteer work
- Interests and hobbies
- Sports
- Arts
- Travel

Report Cards

- Need to clearly show marks achieved and comments given by teachers
- Include Grade 6 and 7 report cards

PORTFOLIO COMPONENTS

Certificates

- Up to two copies of awards/certificates achieved for recent activities

Example of Excellence

- An example of something that demonstrates a level of excellence in some area of study or personal endeavor
- Many different ways that this can be demonstrated
- Best if it demonstrates long-term commitment to achieving a goal

PORTFOLIO COMPONENTS

Reference Letters

- Should be written by someone who knows the applicant well.
- Preferably from someone who has known applicant over a long period of time.
- Must be written in English.
- Can be from sibling, parent or other family member
- Must be written by a non-VSB employee (i.e. not a teacher or principal)

SYNERGY ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- Can't study for it!
- Tests critical and creative thinking skills.
- Are no right answers – assessed based on how the student works through the question.
- Will take place in Churchill's cafeteria from 4-5pm on Wednesday, January 6th, 2027
- Please bring a pen to write with.
- No need to pre-register.
- Will not be any alternate dates.

SYNERGY ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- Based on Fermi style questions that measure intelligence, imagination and problem-solving ability such as;
  - How would you move Mt. Fuji to Vancouver?
  - If you were completely covered by mosquitoes, how much more would your mass be?
  - How many piano tuners are needed in Canada?

HOW WILL THE PORTFOLIO BE ASSESSED?

CRITERIA	RATIONALE
Is there evidence that the student followed instructions about what to include in the Application Portfolio provided by the *This is Synergy* Info Night PowerPoint?	Student's ability to read and follow instructions is a basic skill that will help them succeed in the Synergy program.
Is the student's own, personal voice clear in the "Statement of Personal Goals?	The student's goals should be clear from the student's point of view, demonstrating writing fluency and ability to express one's own thoughts and opinions.
Is there some diversity in the reference letters provided, reflecting the student's various interests and abilities?	Diversity in refence letters indicate a student's various interests and abilities. The range of letters also show the amount of community involvement from the student, which is emphasized in the Synergy program.
Is there evidence of positive community involvement from the student?	Working collaboratively with others and being engaged with the community beyond oneself are key goals of the Synergy program.
Is consistent academic achievement demonstrated in Grade 6 and 7 based on the report card?	Consistent academic achievement will help student work at a stable pace in the Synergy program as students meet meaningful challenges through the Synergy courses.
Is there evidence that the student can sustain interest over a period of time to reach a goal in the "Example of Excellence"?	Some projects in Synergy require consistency and effort over a long period of time (6 months to a year).
Is there evidence that the student is open to challenges and willing to take creative risks or move beyond their "comfort zone"?	The Synergy program will require students push beyond their comfort zone, which will lead to growth and learning as a student.

HOW WILL THE PORTFOLIO BE ASSESSED?

Criteria	Rationale
Is there a sense of value in process and experience rather than focusing on solely on the "destination"?	Learning in the Synergy program is based upon continuous reflection on feedback from self, peers and teachers.
Is there evidence of participation in group-learning and/or leadership?	Synergy teachers try to make learning interdisciplinary and tend to focus on project-based and group learning.
Is there an element of open-mindedness demonstrated?	Synergy students will be challenged to practise depth of inquiry about topics where there is no one right answer.
Do the answers provided to the Synergy Assessment Questions demonstrate critical thinking?	Critical thinking is a main skill that students will develop in the program.
Do the answers provided to the Synergy Assessment Questions demonstrate creative problem-solving?	Problem-solving is another main skill that students will develop in the program.

GETTING ACCEPTED

- Placement offer email will be sent to parent email address
- No paper letter will be sent
- To accept, a parent/guardian must return the email showing an image of a signed acceptance form.
- If this is not done within the time limit given it will be assumed that you are declining the position, and we will offer the spot to another student on the wait list.

NOT GETTING ACCEPTED

- There is a second round of offers, sometimes even a third or fourth
- Rankings and names on waitlist are not disclosed
- Not all qualified applicants will be accepted
- Not all offers are accepted

STUDENT'S ON-GOING COMMITMENT

- Acceptance to the Synergy Program is an on-going commitment
- Students must maintain a Developing average in all their Synergy courses to remain in the program
- Students need to learn how to balance their academic and group project commitments with out-of-school activities
- Need to contribute positively to the learning environment
- If student fails to meet these criteria, they may be asked to leave the program

IMPROVING YOUR CHANCES

- Don’t just apply for Synergy!
- Apply to 2-3 programs that suit your interests
- Be sure that your application suits the program being applied to (don’t use the same answers for each application).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1. Can students be in the French Immersion and the Synergy Program?

> **No.** If a student is offered a placement in French Immersion and Synergy, they must select only ONE program to be a part of. We cannot timetable students to be in both programs at the same time.

Q2. Does being in the French Immersion Catchment guarantee a student is also in the Regular Churchill Catchment? Regular Catchment Map- https://www.vsb.bc.ca/_layouts/vsbwww/arch/default/files/school-files/Resources/VSB_2016_General.pdf

French Immersion Catchment Map https://www.vsb.bc.ca/_layouts/vsbwww/arch/default/files/school-files/Resources/VSB_2016_FI.pdf

> **No.** If a student is in the FI catchment and not in the regular catchment, they are only offered a placement in FI.

Q3. If a student has been in French Immersion in elementary school and they enter the Synergy Program, can they skip French 8 and take a higher-level course?

> **Possibly.** They will need to schedule and take an oral French test with the Modern Languages Dept Head. Due to the hesitancy of younger students to participate orally (a requirement of language classes) when in a class with older students, we do not recommend Grade 8 students take courses above Grade 9. This will also depend on whether spaces are available in French courses. Students in Grade 9 would get priority for Grade 9 courses.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q4. If a student has taken advanced Math classes in elementary school and they enter the Synergy Program, can they skip Math 8 and take a higher-level course?

Possibly. Students are only allowed to skip ahead to Math 9 if they have Math 8 credit. Doing Math 8 content with their Grade 7 class does not count. During articulation with the incoming schools, our counselling team will inform each interested student to get a Math 8 credit (often through VLN) by the end of the summer if they wish to move ahead to Math 9 in September. Otherwise, they will be enrolled into Math 8. There is neither placement test nor workaround for this. Again, this will also depend on whether spaces are available in Math courses. Students in Grade 9 would get priority for Grade 9 courses.

Q5. Do all students excel in the Synergy Program?

No. While the majority of Synergy students do appreciate and rise to the challenges of the program, some students find the demands and social dynamics involved difficult to handle. It is VERY important that a student be intrinsically motivated to be in the Synergy Program and not feel pressure from parents to apply. If it is the student's own choice, they will be motivated to work hard and overcome potential difficulties. In addition, if a student has many scheduled activities outside of school, they may find it difficult to balance schoolwork, group work communication and their out-of-school activities.

Q6. Does being in Synergy ensure that students will be accepted into the Prelude or IB Programs at Churchill?

No. While many Synergy students do go on to be accepted into Prelude and/or IB there is not an automatic acceptance for Synergy students. In addition, some Synergy students may decide that they are more interested in being part of the Regular school program once they reach Grade 10 or they may decide to apply for the Trek Outdoor Education program run through Prince of Wales Secondary.

THANKS FOR YOUR INTEREST!

- Please refer to Synergy area on Churchill website for most info (Go to Teaching and Learning Tab, then Programs, then Synergy)
- Questions to Ms. Smedley ksmedley@vsb.bc.ca

STUDENT VOICES

- Laurence & Sarah– Grade 12
- Viyanna & Agatha – Grade 10
- Cathy & Lucy – Grade 9
- Carissa & Hailey – Grade 8