

destination

## High schools in British Columbia

Schools in this province make efforts to ensure their international clients integrate and learn many skills.

International students choose to study in high schools in British Columbia largely because of the high level of education they receive, states Tony Carrigan from Richmond School District. "Amongst students in all Canadian provinces, students in British Columbia score the highest on academic measures," he says.

At West Vancouver School District, Rod Matheson also highlights the academic advantages for international students of studying on a high school programme at one of their three secondary schools. "Seventy per cent of our graduates were admitted to the University of British Columbia last September – UBC is the 35th-ranked university in the world," he says.

However, academic success is just one factor taken into consideration by students and their parents and British Columbia has much else to recommend itself. Clemens Rettich from Cowichan Valley School District points out that Canada has a reputation for safety and acceptance as well as physical beauty. "Students choose to study on Vancouver Island, particularly Cowichan Valley, because we have the best weather in Canada, very high academic and athletic standards and the perfect balance of a peaceful rural lifestyle in close proximity to exciting multicultural cities," he says.

A high school student's experience of the wider surroundings of their study destination is largely reliant on the activities provided by either their school or their host families. Scott Stewart from Grand Forks Secondary School in Grand Forks says that they offer international students "a blend of strong academic as well as athletic and musical opportunities". He explains, "We have a recreation facility as well as a skateboard park and other amenities. Our students get involved in musical and theatre productions as well as participate in numerous trips." The school also plans to offer a baseball sport academy for the 2007/2008 school year that will be available to international students.

Canada is well known for the wealth of outdoor activities it offers and the city of Vancouver is a good destination for those wanting to experience city life while still being able to explore the great outdoors. "There are times in the year when you can ski in the mountains, mountain bike through the hills, play a round of golf and go sailing on the ocean – all in one day," relates Matheson.

Lovers of winter sports are also particularly well catered for in British Columbia, he continues. "There are world class ski areas in West Vancouver and Whistler Mountain, site of the 2010 Olympic Games, is only one-and-a-half hours away," he says.

International students also get the chance to compete in their school sports teams, Carrigan notes. "All possible sporting activities from swimming and ice-skating to school sports teams are available in Richmond," he says. "In addition there are many entertainment options there. Richmond has cinemplexes, many shopping malls, bowling alleys, indoor swimming pools and ice arenas."

Steve Hutchison from St Johns School in Vancouver says that trips to athletic competitions across Canada are organised by his school, which also offers trips to "leadership conferences for students in various areas of Canada" and numerous local field trips and outdoor activities such as camping. He adds that active involvement with the wider community is encouraged among international students. "St Johns has developed an atmosphere where service to the community has enabled students to recognise the impact they are able to make on the community beyond St Johns," he explains.

Many schools in the province provide opportunities to get involved with local organisations, according to Rettich. "Students can become involved in the community by joining sports teams, musical organisations, volunteer organisations, students' government and working with the local multicultural organisations," he says.

## All these educators are members of the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics of New Zealand



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