

## The Gateway Program

Rob Law

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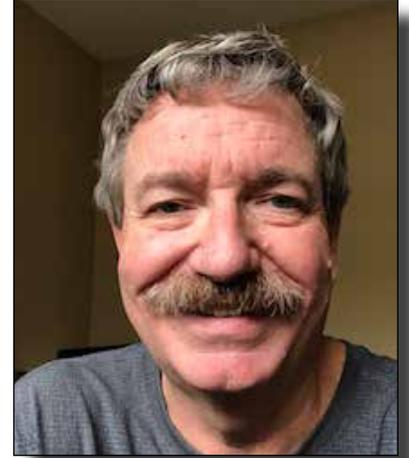
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For the last number of years, Central Programs and Services, a Tier 3 Alternate School in School District 23 [Central Okanagan], in partnership with Okanagan College, has offered an exciting initiative for at-risk grade 10-12 students called the Gateway Program. For students in general, the pursuit of graduation and the transition to post-secondary education can often be difficult. *...continued on page 3*



# President's Message

*Mike Shaw*



I have the best job in the world. A bold statement perhaps, but after 27 years as an alternate program teacher, I still go to work with a smile on my face. I look forward to each new school year and the students and challenges it brings. And I feel just a little sadness at the thought of the school year drawing to a close once more.

Maybe its just me, but the years seem to be getting shorter and shorter. I no sooner return to work after Spring Break and it somehow is Grad already, with what seems like just a week or two between the two events.

The challenge every year is to get to know the kids in your care, to make that connection, to be the calm, caring adult that so often is sadly lacking in their daily lives. That is part of the fun and part of the challenge! Each kid is different, of course, and there is no universal method that will work with them all. You have to take the time to get to know them, because without that connection, there is little hope of making academic progress with a kid who lives with anxiety, dysfunction, addiction, chaos, and drama.

This is also the time of year when many of the students in my charge start to fade. It feels like a lot of kids in my program are

coded for a school year that runs for 8–8½ months, not the ten months the school system says they should be able to manage. The weather is getting better, entry-level jobs are more readily available, and those pull factors conspire to make school less and less of a priority, which is understandable; school hasn't always been a place of success for many of them.

I have the distinct pleasure this year to have a teaching partner, Christine Thygesen, to share the workload. It is great to have another person on site every day, another calm, cool voice for our kids to hear, a choice of teachers for our kids to talk to and work with. Thanks to our admin team for making this happen; the benefit to our kids is tremendous!

So as yet another school year draws to a close, remember to celebrate the successes you had. Take time to reflect on what went right and where you could improve. But most of all, be sure to take time over the summer to recharge and renew yourself. Working in Alternate is simultaneously incredibly rewarding and incredibly draining. I salute you for choosing to work with our most disadvantaged youth. Have a great summer! ♦

# Gateway Program

*(continued from page 1)*

For at-risk students who deal with a myriad of obstacles including learning difficulties, substance issues, poverty, broken homes and mental health concerns, this transition can seem insurmountable. The Gateway Program strives to provide at-risk student the necessary supports to successfully transition to college and, ultimately, sustainable careers in the trades sector.

The Gateway initiative encompasses three progressive stages. As students move through Stage 1 to 3 the demands of the program increase. The aim of each stage therefore, is to help them acquire the necessary skills to be successful at the next level.

Students begin by taking a five-week Pre-Gateway program at Central school that focuses on readiness skills, including time

management, communication, problem solving, trades math and team building. Team building exercises include camping and hiking [the cover photo is taken from the top of Mt. Boucherie], as well as volunteer activities in the community. In the photo below, Gateway students are shown with their reading buddies at a local elementary school.

Those students who are successful in completing Pre-Gateway move on to Stage 2, attending Okanagan College for an extended 10 week period where they explore a variety of trades including carpentry and joinery, plumbing, electrical, welding, automotive, metal work, collision repair and culinary arts. Students get a taste of what is involved in each of those trades, which is a great way to help them narrow their focus on what interests them.

*...continued on page 4*



*The aim of each stage therefore, is to help them acquire the skills to be successful at the next level*

# Gateway

(continued from page 3)



In Stage 3 students select a specific trade and enter the Dual Credit Foundation Studies program for an extended 20-40 weeks depending on the trade selection.

job work experience in addition to networking with potential employers. They also benefited from the mentorship they received working closely with someone currently in the industry. This new initiative was extremely well received by students, employers and Okanagan College. Some of our students were even offered employment opportunities.

**At-risk youth require a tremendous support network to be successful**

At-risk youth require a tremendous support network if they are to be successful transitioning to college life. Students in the Gateway program struggle to varying degrees with learning disabilities and mental health issues. The support staff, including learning assistance teachers, resource teachers and counselors, work closely with their colleagues at Okanagan College to ensure that required learning adaptations and mental health supports are in place for students.

A goal of the program is to continue developing partnerships with local businesses as well as with community agencies such as MCFD, Youth Probations, CYMH and the Boys and Girls club. We truly subscribe to the belief that it takes a community to raise a child. ♦

A 5-day co-op work experience component was added to this year's Gateway program. Students were able to gain valuable on the

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**Rob Law** is the Gateway Program teacher at Central Programs & Services in Kelowna.

# Composition 10 and Drug Literacy

Oliver Penner

I've been an alternate education teacher for nine years. We are in the 'business' of putting ourselves out of business.

If an alternate educator works hard, and applies intelligence intelligently, they will succeed in returning all of their students back to mainstream education. This, of course, is dead wrong!

In my first few years of teaching I generally avoided discussing topics revolving around drugs, opting instead to have the counsellors and mental health clinicians cover this with my students. Having since read books on addiction and trauma by Dr. Martin Brokenleg, Dr. Gordon Neufeld, Dr. Gabor Maté, and Dr. Marc Lewis, I am convinced that the more we directly engage in topics of addiction and trauma with our students, the better.

It is good to believe in the power of our students to grow and to achieve. Many of our most vulnerable youth struggle with significant mental health, physical health, and addiction issues. And one way to help them grow and achieve is to provide them with drug literacy knowledge while also getting course credits.

With the newly overhauled BC curriculum, we've seen the addition and deletion of entire courses. [Don't get me started on the deletion of Communications 11 & 12!] The addition of Compositions, Literary Studies, and New Media does give us something to

celebrate, though. There are lots of opportunities there for innovation.

I decided the time was ripe for me to create a course that contained both composition and drug literacy outcomes for the benefit of my students.

UVic's Helping Schools iMind's Program/website contains multiple lesson plans as part of its drug literacy curriculum; that's a good starting point. As many in alternate education already know, our students vote with their feet. Either deliver a relevant, engaging lesson, or contend with small classroom numbers. You can teach Composition 10 as you would before, only now you can import highly relevant and engaging material into your lesson.

I've met very little resistance from anyone by hybridizing ministry curriculum with drug literacy outcomes. My student numbers are good and the students are visibly engaged with their learning more than they were before.

In many cases the classroom teacher is a protective factor in the chaotic lives of their students, perhaps the only positive adult in a young life. As such, we have to go into uncharted territory to innovate, to advocate and to educate our students. ♦

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**Oliver Penner** teaches in the Connections classroom at Central Programs & Services in Kelowna.

In many cases the classroom teacher is a protective factor

# The Power of Mentors

Kim Ondrik

I entered the circle late that morning and didn't even notice Brad. I found a vacant spot on the carpeted floor. He had buried himself in the couches amongst these forty vibrant teens. And so his voice caught me off guard—"I'm excited to be here today with you"—it was deep and unfamiliar. He looked rugged with a toque and tattoos. I was intrigued. Who was this mystery man?

Brad is a professional writer, interested in teaching, who learned about Vernon Community School from one of our school's secretaries after moving to town. Like most mentors, he had contacted Murray Sasges, a founding teacher of VCS, and they met for coffee at a local cafe. After hearing Brad's ideas, Murray extended an invitation to visit VCS and make a pitch to the students, telling the story of his passions and what he was willing to offer the students.

Nothing is promised to mentors at this stage. Students are invited to take or leave the suggested engagements offered by each mentor—our bias at VCS is respect understood as deep commitment not as compliance or politeness. When a learner selects a mentor, they are making a very important promise to learn from them for the entirety of the year (and sometimes longer).

Because each of the forty mentors we have enjoyed and appreciated over the past 3½ years—since the beginnings of VCS—are volunteers, our slogan is 'mentors trump

all.' We adapt our schedules and agendas around each mentors, no matter what. Sometimes assessments are even rescheduled to respect mentor time constraints.

This hospitable ecology seems to have created sustainability, positive word of mouth stories in our community, and a steady flow of curious mentors. Since the genesis of the school, we have probably had ten mentors who have not connected to our students' interests or passions, and although thanked for their time and effort, their pitches were not taken up. Some have returned with revised plans and attracted students the second time, which also provides astonishing modelling of persistence for our students and teachers.

Brad's pitch was very powerful. He spoke with confidence and certainty: "I know what it's like to earn a living writing. Here are some magazines that have included my writing. I can help you become a better writer." To be honest, I thought his pitch would intimidate many of our vulnerable learners. Busy with self-directed work, when the circle dissolved, only Nick stayed behind to talk with Brad. My heart sunk as it always does for those who come, pitch and don't receive much attention. Nick had been avoiding writing and really anything that led to vulnerable feelings for the past 1½ years, and I didn't know how to reach him yet, nor did the other teachers at VCS. Thankfully Brad had the morning to hang around, so he asked Nick to show him any writing that he had done. Nick pulled

I know what it is like to earn a living writing



out a story that I didn't know existed, and they spent all morning together chatting, attending to the text, and chatting some more. It was heart warming. And remarkable, when Brad informed me that Nick was a gifted writer. Nick became alive in a way I had never seen before. I was humbled, and delighted.

We have noticed that one of the unintended outcomes of mentors at Vernon Community School is that students have the opportunity to learn and interact with all kinds of diverse adults. Most teachers, like Murray and I, are people who generally did well at school stuff. Mentors, on the other

hand, can be people who didn't succeed in school, and have found success in the world—who inspire students to reframe their potential.

Mentors can be people who are rough around the edges, and who mirror and affirm a child's personality or life experiences. And mentors can be people who through their passion, give time and attention to a child who needs this kind of care before they can sustain interest in other academic challenges. Mentors bring the world into the classroom; students' lives are changed, and teachers no longer have to represent all things to all students. *...continued on page 19*

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# Conference Musings

Sean Blake

It was my first time attending the BCAEA conference this year and I was somewhat overwhelmed by the quality and variety of the various presenters. I found myself struggling to choose sessions and would have seen them all if I had the power to manipulate space and time; sadly, I'm only a mere mortal.

One session I did get the chance to attend was *Understanding the Brain of Challenging Teens*, facilitated by Eva de Gosztanyi of the Neufeld Institute, and I was not disappointed. I remember first being introduced to the works of Gordon Neufeld during my teacher education program at UBCO and having it really resonate with me. We spent the first two months of that program diving into many different theoretical frameworks for adolescent development and, although at the time I thought they all seemed extremely relevant, once out in the field actually practicing this vocation, very few of them stuck with me.

That being said, the works of Dr. Neufeld always kept creeping back into my mind when working with students, especially once I started working in an alternate program with at-risk youth.

With this in mind I was admittedly disappointed when I heard Dr. Neufeld was not going to be at the conference this year as I very much would have liked to hear him speak. That disappointment vanished less than 5 minutes into Eva de Gosztanyi's session.

It was very refreshing to hear many of my own beliefs and experiences articulated back to me with empirical evidence and data to support those claims. As a teacher with a science and psychology background, it was extremely powerful to hear the research around the constant struggles we deal with on a daily basis.

de Gosztanyi talked about the maturation process as something that cannot be rushed. As an avid gardener, she likened it to the practice of growing tomatoes and said, "if you want a good one, you have to wait." Not only can the process of maturation not be rushed, but it can also become stuck due to trauma and vulnerability. She talked about how, in times of vulnerability, the brain will protect itself, and when it does this it has less plasticity and cannot grow.

In her studies she found that this lack of growth in developing brains causes issues with impulse control in males and emotional regulation in females. This speaks volumes about the demographic of students we teach in alternate programs and explains a lot of the behaviours seen on a daily basis.

I hear so many teachers talking about curriculum, course content and "getting through the material," and I wonder how this is benefiting our students. Many students enrolled in alternate education programs have experienced trauma that most of us have no ability

Lack of growth in developing brains causes issues with impulse control

to comprehend, let alone relate to, and we're worrying about teaching them trigonometry?

de Gosztanyi also brought up a study where children exposed to family violence showed the same pattern of activity in their brains as soldiers exposed to combat! For these kids, we may be the only positive role models in their life and we need to be there for them, form positive relationships built on trust, and offer a safe space for them to occupy before we can even begin to think about academics.

Although the curriculum is changing and there is a larger emphasis on social-emo-

tional learning, I believe this should be at the forefront and should underline every decision we make in the classroom. To quote Dr. Martin Brokenleg at the conference, who was quoting Urie Bronfenbrenner, "every child needs at least one adult who is irrationally crazy about him or her." ♦

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**Sean Blake** teaches at Central Programs and Services in Kelowna and is also the newly elected newsletter editor. He has single-handedly brought the average age of the BCAEA Executive down by several decades!

*We may  
be the only  
positive role  
models in  
their life*

## **PRO**Active CURRICULUM

Course rewritten for the new curriculum have been newly added or are under development. ProActive Curriculum has produced self-paced, and mastery-based courses for Grades 7-12 since 1998.

Visit our website:

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for course samples, textbook lists, individual course and bundle pricing. Or drop me an email:

[mike@proactivecurriculum.com](mailto:mike@proactivecurriculum.com)

# \$1000 Bursary Award Winners

*Leanne Hagglund, Vice President and BCAEA Awards Chair*

**W**e are delighted to present to you the winners of the 2018 BCAEA Bursaries and Student Achievement Awards. Each of the winners can be proud of the positive changes they have made in their lives since joining an alternate program. Their stories of triumph over adversity and life's many obstacles serve as an inspiration to both their teachers and other students. Bravo! We wish you much success in the future. ♦



## **Cheyenne Chamberlain**

Cheyenne felt overwhelmed attending a large high school. Transferring to ILC in Saanich helped her focus, develop a sense of belonging, and attain nearly perfect attendance while holding down a job and meeting the requirements for grad, including taking a psychology course at Camosun College. She plans to attend Camosun in the fall.



## **Samantha Gillian-Kennedy**

As a young mother of two, Sam works extremely hard to raise her daughters and to commit time to her education. With determined effort, she has completed her graduation requirements in a single school year. Next September, Sam plans to take the Early Learning and Care program at Camosun College as she would like to work with preschoolers.



## **Meaghan Kirby**

Meaghan has lived independently since she was 16. She works full-time to support herself and yet maintains her education as a priority. Keenly interested in environmental issues, she will graduate in June and plans to pursue a career in Environmental Technology by attending Camosun College in the fall.



### **Cameron Mawson**

Cameron is completing his second year at the SD63 Individual Learning Centre. Cam has a congenial nature and a great sense of humour. He is an active member of his WSANEC community. At school, Cam has completed the dual credit Trades, Awareness, Skills, and Knowledge program [TASK]. He plans to pursue further education as an electrician.



### **Ross Shannon**

Ross has attended alternate programs since Grade 10 and will graduate from Power Alternate Secondary in June. His school journey has not been easy but he has persevered despite many obstacles and challenges in his way. He plans to attend Langara or Douglas College to train as a counsellor.

# \$200 Student Achievement Award Winners



## **Susy Carfra**

Susy has shown tremendous growth in her time at ILC, making rapid progress through her courses during this school year. Susy has aspirations to do work in marketing or promotions in the future, and we are certain that her self-awareness, positive academic habits, and strong self-advocacy skills will serve her well in the future.



## **Keauna Celesta-Davis**

Keauna spent years in multiple foster families and schools. She has lived through a house fire, losing all of her belongings, and having to drop out of school so she could work to provide food and shelter for herself. Despite this, she has returned to school and is graduating with A's and B's, all while holding down a full-time job.



## **Daniel Duhome-Walters**

Daniel attends the Individual Learning Centre in Saanichton, BC. His excellent attendance and growth in his confidence has led him to successfully completing a dual-credit course at Camosun College. Daniel now knows he wants to enter the tech sector when he finishes school.



## **Dana Giesbrecht**

Dana attended an alternate program for middle school and now attends ILC. She is a very sociable and artistic young person. She enjoys drawing both on paper and on her tablet. She also enjoys sharing her art with others. In fact, she is part of a youth council where she works to share art with young children.



### **Elise Giesbrecht**

Elise is a dedicated, intelligent young woman. She works very hard at her school work and is not afraid to take risks with difficult academic courses. She also successfully maintains employment outside of her school work. In fact, she was named 'employee of the month' at her work because of her dedication and work ethic.



### **Nicole Glover**

Nicole is in grade 11 at ILC and she is a diligent, good-natured, compassionate, and creative student who excels in her courses. Nicole's passion is music; whether listening, playing, or singing, Happiest when surrounded by music, her future goals include studying at a post-secondary institution for a career in music performance and composition.



### **Noah Kennedy**

Noah Kennedy is a grade 9 student who loves reading anime, playing badminton, colouring intricate patterns, and gaming with his friends. He is the first to school in the morning with all the news of the goings on from the day before. He is friendly, quick footed, and resilient. He hopes to become a video game designer one day.



### **Isaac Lockhart**

Isaac has demonstrated huge personal and academic growth this year. Isaac was home schooled, but this year decided to attend ILC and cross-enrol at a neighbourhood school. Isaac is a positive social force, engaging in extra-curricular activities and bringing his warmth and good nature into the classroom every day.

## \$200 Winners (Cont'd)



### **Sydney Martin**

Sydney Martin is a grade 12 student in the Advantage program who is graduating from Highland Secondary in Comox with a full Dogwood diploma. She is the first to welcome a new student and the first to give someone in distress a hug. You always hear her laughter before you see her. She is an artist as well as a humanitarian.



### **Julia Moodie**

Julia is a student who has thrived since she came to the Individual Learning Centre. Julia had experienced some turmoil in her life previously so there were gaps in her learning. But through diligence and perseverance Julia has been able to re-engage in school and flourish. She is also an animal lover and not surprisingly, works at a pet store!



### **Carl Roxas**

Carl first came to Canada at age 16 to come live with his mother who had been working to establish herself in Canada. Things quickly spiralled for Carl as he struggled with depression and social anxiety. Carl came close to quitting school several times, but each time found the grit to keep going. He will be graduating in June.



### **Michael Sagadore**

Michael Sagadore is a grade 10 student in the Advantage program who has overcome many personal barriers to keep attending and succeeding at school. He is a very polite and cooperative young man who hopes to one day run his own business. He has lots of will power and was the first student in our program to ever truly quit smoking.



### **Noah Tiessen**

Noah Tiessen began his education home schooled. For his grade eleven year he enrolled at ILC. During his time at ILC Noah has also participated in a dual credit program with Camosun College. Noah is an accomplished violinist and hockey player. He is dedicated to pursuing a career as a mechanical engineer.



### **Lyf Tremblay**

Lyf is a young man who struggled with his health and attendance in regular high school. Since he started at ILC Lyf is now on track to graduate, has a job, is considering college programs and is generally quite satisfied with his life right now. And it's all due to school now providing him with flexible times and structures.

**O**ne of the most unpleasant tasks the Awards Committee has to undertake each year amidst the always wonderful task of reading about student success, is narrowing down the list of candidates who have applied for an award.

Lately, we seem to have more applications than we have awards available, and one way that the narrowing down of the list is done is by excluding incomplete applications. Our policy is and has been that an application missing required items cannot be considered. Although this step is necessary, this is stressful both on the student who has applied (but who is now rejected) and the committee members reading the applications of otherwise well-qualified students.

As a sponsor teacher, you can help both your student and the Awards Committee by checking for completeness before you submit applications on your student's behalf. Your student will thank you, and so will the Awards Committee members! ♦



## Problem Youth vs. Youth With Problems (EDST 497J)

There is no such thing as problem youth,  
just youth with problems.

July 23- August 3, 2018

1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. | Faculty of Education

All behavior is purposeful. Rather than labelling the symptoms we observe, we can learn to truly see and understand the underlying causes. That understanding enables us to personalize programs to improve mental health, increase self-esteem, and increase successes.

Offered through the UBC Okanagan Summer Institute in Education.

[education.ok.ubc.ca/programs/sie.htm](http://education.ok.ubc.ca/programs/sie.htm)

The "problem youth" who inspired this course and had input into its development will also be presenting to the class. They will lead a discussion about their own journeys through the school system.



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

**Faculty of Education**

Okanagan Campus

**EDST 497J (3.0) Problem Youth vs. Youth With Problems**

**Instructor:** Sandy Balascak

**Office:**

**Telephone:**

**Email:** [sandy@sandybalascak.com](mailto:sandy@sandybalascak.com)

**Office hours:** By appointment

**Classes (dates and times):** July 23-August 3, Monday to Friday from 1:00-4:30 pm

**Course Description**

The course will focus upon changing how teachers view at-risk youth, how to recognize the problems, how to help the youth overcome the problems, and how to change those who feel like failures into those who know they are successes. Real life examples and input from actual “problem students” will illustrate that there is no such thing as problem youth, just youth with problems. Teach them to cope and they will soar.

It should be noted that at-risk youth not only inspired this course, but have also been actively involved with the development of the topics.

**Course Format**

The first week will focus upon students articulating their own core beliefs and applying some theory to real life situations using examples of successful application in classrooms. Each class will consist of approximately one third lecture, one third discussion, and one third group work and idea sharing.

Days six and seven will consist of discussions about current real-world techniques and strategies to ensure the success of at-risk learners. Approximately one third of each class will involve presentation through lecture with the other two thirds allotted for class and group discussion to determine why the techniques/strategies are successful and how they can be used in a variety of environments.

Days eight and nine will be for student presentation and the questions and discussions arising from the presentations.

Day ten will have a presentation and discussion by at-risk youth who will speak candidly about what did and did not work for them in the education system, and what teachers can do to increase their understanding of youth and to have the youth increase their understanding of teachers.

**Course Overview, Content, and Objectives**

There is no such thing as problem youth, just youth with problems: teach them to cope and they will soar. Is this a nice mantra? Yes. Is this a great attitude for an educator? Absolutely. Will it work in reality? Many will say no and many more will think that getting at-risk youth doing TEDx talks, Ignite talks, newspaper columns and leadership conferences is not even remotely possible; yet, it is. It is not only possible, it is actually happening.

# Two New Awards Available

Mike Shaw

**Y**our association is in the enviable position of having a healthy financial balance as a result of the hard work of the Executive and many years of a well-attended and successful conference. We are pleased to announce the creation of two new awards available as one of the benefits of membership in the BCAEA.

The first is in loving memory of a long-serving association volunteer and Executive member who passed away last year. The **Liz Louwerseimer Memorial Scholarship** in the amount of \$1000 is awarded annually to a deserving student who is or was enrolled in an alternate education program and who is pursuing a career in the mental health or helping professions field.

The second new award honours Anita Chapman, who for many years was our liaison at the BCTF. The **Anita Chapman Alternate Curriculum Award** in the amount of \$1000, is available to a teacher, program, or school that has developed curriculum that specifically caters to or is adapted for alternate education students. The winner must provide an article for the newsletter detailing what they have developed.

As well of course, we have a number of other awards, the details of which you can see by going to our Awards page on our website: [www.bcaea.com](http://www.bcaea.com) ♦

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## Mentors

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Mentors, too, have reported that their bad experiences in school have been transformed through their valued contributions to VCS. Also significant have been the relationships developed and the gratitude extended at our yearly student-led mentor appreciation dinner and honouring. According to any data we have collected from students and mentors over the past 3½ years, it's a win-win, reciprocal relationship.

Nick's relationship with Brad was observed by more than me. Now, Brad has a weekly creative writing class where a committed group of 20, ages 12-17, spend all morning working towards writing 30 pages by spring break. Some are strong writers who are very anxious to share their thoughts. Others have limitations which have made writing almost impossible in the past who are pushing themselves far beyond my wildest expecta-

tions. And finally there are those who think Brad is so dynamic and interesting that they are willing to take up whatever challenge he presents to bask in his attention and support.

Brad demonstrates appreciative workshoping and reminds these budding creatives that in real life it's on the 8<sup>th</sup> draft that you worry about spelling, punctuation and grammar—until then you work on telling a gripping tale—which is hard work! Brad, on the other hand, now knows that teaching is his passion, and is inspired by these interesting and diverse young people. We are so grateful for him, and he can't wait to return. ♦

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**Kim Ondrik** is one of the founders of and a teacher at Vernon Community School.

*Their bad experiences at school have been transformed*



# The Last Word

*Sean Blake*



I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Sean Blake and it is an honour and a privilege to be taking on the role of newsletter editor for the BCAEA. It is with somewhat mixed emotions that I take this job as it is only open due to the passing of long-time BCAEA Executive member Liz Louwersheimer. I have some big shoes to fill. I am very new to this vocation but am excited to gain insight and expertise through making connections with the members of the BCAEA.

I have spent my first 2 years in this career teaching at School District 23's alternate school in Kelowna, BC. It has been an extremely eye opening experience working at an alternate school and has confirmed a lot of my beliefs regarding children, teaching, and learning. I understand that the term 'alternate' doesn't look the same in every district but I believe the one thing we all have in common when using the word is an idea of what it isn't. I'm sure we all have had experience in a traditional school, whether as teachers or learners, and I think it is frightening to hear how similar those experiences are. Rows of desks, a single teacher at the front, lec-

tures, questions, worksheets, raise your hand to talk, get permission to use the bathroom. Sound familiar?

I find it interesting that for so many individuals we would educate them in such a similar fashion. Alternate education may be an umbrella term for a lot of different forms of schooling but that is what makes it work. We as alternate educators have flexibility in our programs and teach to our students needs instead of following the assembly line process and churning out identical copies.

Looking at the revised curriculum here in BC it is clear that the principles we hold dear as alternate educators are the basis for the new framework; flexibility, differentiation, social-emotional learning. These are all at the core of what we do on a daily basis and it is good to see that the education system as a whole is embracing these practices.

If you have an article you would like to contribute or any feedback at all please feel free to e-mail me at [editor@bcaea.com](mailto:editor@bcaea.com). ♦

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**Sean Blake** teaches at Central Programs and Services in Kelowna