

alternate Newsletter

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Love Bombing

Michele Genge

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In the midst of the darkest days of last winter, when students and staff were struggling to rise above the undertow of anxiety and depression gripping our community, an idea was born – love bombing. With Valentine's Day nearing

and wishing to reach out to Tinney, our beloved grandmother who used to live near the school and waved to all the kids coming and going, Ms. Hood-Tanner or H-T as she is affectionately known, created Highland's love bombing ...continued on page 3

President's Message

Mike Shaw



This is the craziest time of year in alternate so far as I am concerned. Between pushing some to get the last requirements for a course or for grad done, planning with a few to celebrate graduation because they have finally met that milestone, breaking it gently to a few more that they have to come back next fall to complete the last of their course requirements, or helping yet others make plans to transition to the local high school for September, the days are a whirlwind in these last few months of the school year.

And what a year it was! The pandemic continued, at times seemingly without a glimmer of an end. The new normal was masks, hand sanitizer, and poorer student attendance. In fact, I haven't seen attendance so spotty on the part of most students ever before in my career. Sadly, for some the year was a write-off.

And yet despite the stress, strain, and uncertainty, there were bright spots. Anxious students tentatively engaging in an SEL activity for the first time. Students planting seeds and watching impatiently for the tomatoes, peas, and other plants to sprout. Grinning faces at the end of the day returning from taking part in hiking and rock

climbing. They'll miss class, but not that weekly activity! And not to mention the student who finally says hello and good-bye after only nine months in the program. A major breakthrough!

And through it all, my colleagues and I have managed to keep our senses of humour intact. We've kept ourselves kid-focused, met the ever-changing safety protocols, taken part in more Zoom meetings than any single person should ever have to, and taken pleasure in the little victories each day. A particular bright spot is when grads from past years stop by to update my teaching partner, Christine, and me on what they are up to now.

So as the year comes to a close, we can celebrate making it through a bizarre year, and hope that things will be much closer to normal when we reconvene once more in September. I am sure that you, like I, are looking forward to time off. Time to relax, time to rejuvenate, and time to put the worst of this pandemic behind us. I long for a return to normalcy (or as close as we can get to it) in September. I'm sure you do, too!

So hang in there! Just a few more short weeks, and summer will be upon us. Take good care of yourself. ♦

Love Bombing

(continued from page 1)

kit of 150 pink hearts using recycled milk jugs and wire hangers.

From creator to animator, the bin was passed along. My Child Development class of 17 students became the couriers of love in our community. Decked out in pink hats and scarves my grade 11 and 12 students hopped in cars and zoomed off to stake out Stevenson Place, home of Tinney. Undaunted by the snowy weather, the class sprang into action planting the hearts all around the grounds of the building and looking up to wave at the seniors in the windows. The staff cried when they realized what we were doing. They had not been forgotten.

In a year when no teams were playing, no bands travelling, no field trips happening, we found a bit of space and momentum grew. Picking up the hearts from one location to

plant them at another we did weekly road trips. "Can we go to my mom's workplace?" asked Marina, so the next week we went to the Views, a long-term care home with a palliative unit. Glacier View came next. Students combed the grounds, planted, waved and even sang Happy Birthday to one of the residents via outside speakers. "We're getting to know where all the homes are in the Valley", said Aerin. At Cummings Home the two staff brought out the resident dog and all four residents. Tears flowed as she read the card aloud. To be remembered in your darkest hour - that's what we all want.

"Can we go to Tiger Too?" So off we went to a daycare that many of the class had attended themselves. Students spent as much time chatting to the toddlers through the fence as planting hearts. Shy Virgil instinctively squatted down ...*continued on page 18*

To be remembered in your darkest hour - that's what we all want



The Grading Conundrum

Karen Gadowsky

I have long deliberated about assessment and grading practices. And recently I have been discussing the merits of a variety of assessment practices in response to a growing number of high school teachers who are considering going 'grade-less.' It was, however, when a colleague of mine blogged about "happiness" in school being connected to the growth mind-set, that I was moved to add yet another layer of complexity to my "Grading Conundrum." A conundrum much more personal as I pondered how happiness and school were diametrically opposed for my youngest. And from what I understand, for many more students than just him.

For my son, who graduated in the "unprecedented year of 2020," unhappiness in school had nothing to do with COVID-19, his fabulous teachers, the building size, the number of kids in his school, or his classmates. His unhappiness was directly connected to how he had come to interpret the letter grades and numerical values that were assigned to him. He took his grades to heart despite his denial, and my primary and continued expressed focus on effort and self-evaluation. Right from first grade, I watched his heart grow heavier and heavier each and every year that passed while he was in school.

From the conversations I have had with him more recently, when he was willing to share with me his self-reflected insights, the root of his gloom stemmed not from the fact he was assessed, but in the manner in which he was expected to demonstrate his learning for

assessment and the subsequent finality of it. This is because my son has a text-based processing disorder (think dyslexia) accompanied by severe written output challenges. With the exception of his music and drama classes where "good grades" came from the ability to improve performance, the majority of assessments he took required that he type his answers on a computer (quite the nightmare for people who can't spell) or handwrite his ideas on paper (an even worse nightmare for those with written output issues) in what could be considered a "one-and-done" assessment opportunity.

Despite there having been much talk over the past decades about performance standards being authentically situated and connected to the BIG Ideas communicated in an updated and "re-visioned curriculum," and despite the world being in the middle of a pandemic which has demanded that online options for learning and assessment are more readily available, writing on a test paper continues to be the primary mode of assessment for all students (even for those with identified written output issues) in high schools, colleges and universities across the nation.

What I think many of us don't see is how our favour toward text-based assessment can emotionally impact kids who legitimately struggle with putting pen to paper. Though many students interpret their inadequacies harshly, it is my experience that kids with obstacles in written communication have a

Text-based
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kids

double whammy to contend with. As they deal with their peers bugging them gently or otherwise, these kids seem to fight with their own feelings and then try to shield the impact of the unspoken messages being directed their way: the sighs they receive from teachers and support staff when they ask for more time, the eye rolling when they ask how to spell an easy word and the harsh tone of voice quipped when they hand in a test unfinished, not because they don't know the material, but mostly out of frustration from not being able to get what is in their head, out onto the paper. And don't forget those whose spewed comments bleed innuendo that kids who go to Learning Assistance (or some alternate supportive program) get unfair advantages.

But the education community has known for years the negative effect assigning only number scores to student work has on student engagement and motivation to improve achievement. Carol Dweck and Alfie Kohn (to name but two researchers in the field) have spent over 30 years attempting to convey the data in this regard. Dweck's work centers around what she calls the "growth mind-set" (an understanding that intelligence can be developed) and is compelling. It draws a connection between how the demand that students re-work assignments to achieve the best product they can is associated with increased motivation and deeper learning. Keeping expectations high, and allowing students to improve upon the work they have initially done, helps them to see that their capacities can in-

deed change, if they persist! Kohn's work supports this notion of development and shows how the education community's relentless focus on grades and test scores serves to demotivate, if not debilitate, many students from learning how to develop their skills.

Watching youth in school who feel more shame than inspiration when demonstrating their learning, constantly misrepresenting what they know because they are expected to "perform in text," has helped me to see more clearly how the grading structures I choose to use can have a negative impact on student learning. Incorporating performance standards and a "growth mind-set" approach into practice can work to reverse this negative impact but does require a teacher to more thoroughly examine the reason for assessment and to ensure that the work requested of students is aligned with specific outcomes that are truly important for the time that they will spend revising their work. It also requires that the work that students do goes beyond the worksheet, knowledge based, get-information-and-answer-questions approach to determining competency with conveyed curriculum.

For those of us who are at the beginning of re-focusing our teaching onto the "big ideas" of a revisioned curriculum but are still grappling with significant overwhelm with the recent changes demanded of us in response to the COVID pandemic, we can start gently by doing one or more of the following five things: *...continued on page 19*

These kids seem to fight with their own feelings



Embedding SEL

Ashley Taplin

Embedding social and emotional learning [SEL] into instruction is a powerful way to help students connect and engage in learning. According to CASEL, one of the leaders in school wide SEL, explicit SEL instruction requires “consistent opportunities for students to cultivate, practice, and reflect on social and emotional competencies in ways that are developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive.”

Critical to that approach is sharing with our students the why behind SEL content, just as we do with academic content. Explaining why we check in, why we ask students to pair up, or why we work through different problem-solving strategies is core to meaningful and successful SEL.

I've found that when I'm intentional about the language I use when I'm infusing a lesson and my practice with SEL content, students respond with more buy-in and motivation to learn. Furthermore, SEL becomes a seamless part of the classroom's culture, rather than one more thing to do, so the connection between academic practices and social and emotional learning deepens.

Done right, embedding SEL into our instruction builds a more supportive and equitable classroom environment. Both teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions improve as the focus is on developing relationships through awareness, communication, and reflection.

SPECIFIC SEL STRATEGIES

Explicitly sharing why you ask students to do certain SEL activities can be even more powerful when you place it within the context of SEL core competencies. To do this, teachers can intentionally plan how a specific SEL skill or core competency relates to an instructional strategy and then verbalize this directly with students.

Here's how sharing the why might sound with several core competencies.

Self-awareness: Starting a lesson with a check-in is a great way to help students practice self-awareness (an understanding of one's inner life and how that affects behaviour and decision-making); doing so also gives teachers a sense of students' emotional entry point to learning. To be explicit and help students understand how a check-in activity builds their SEL skills, try saying, “We're doing this check-in as a way for you and me to be aware of your energy level before beginning today's lesson.”

I recommend Checking In starter screens from Desmos and SEL templates from Pear Deck for models that teachers can adapt to work in a virtual or in-person environment and allow students to engage through the technology.

Self-management: Guiding students toward setting goals and defining actionable steps to achieve those goals is one way to cultivate a student's sense of self-manage-

*SEL
becomes
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culture*

ment—the ways in which they manage their own learning. As students plan for and take initiative toward that goal [such as keeping track of when assignments are due and managing their time], they demonstrate key aspects of self-management.

To be explicit, try saying, “When you set a goal based on today’s target, we will be working on self-management to achieve it.”

Responsible decision-making: Students tend to respect the rules and expectations for classroom learning, whether virtual or in person, when they understand how rules and expectations are connected to responsible decision-making.

One of the best ways to forge that connection is to explicitly ask them to co-construct those rules and expectations; when they work on collective, responsible decision-making to arrive at a consensus, it reinforces their consciousness of their personal decision-making process.

Try reminding students of their role in creating rules for the class, and be explicit about how that connects to their social and emotional learning. “When we discuss expectations for virtual learning, we’re going to use responsible decision-making and think how others might react if you don’t follow the rules.”

Relationship skills: When students are purposefully grouped for instructional

strategies such as during write-pair-share or Jigsaw, they work on their relationship skills. Teachers can support students as they develop these skills with group work that includes ice breakers and community building activities, as well as student conversation prompts (e.g., “What makes a good team?”).

Same thing with pairing students: To verbalize the reasoning behind having students interact and to encourage students to work together, try saying, “I’m pairing you so we can develop your communication, collaboration, and relationship skills.”

Social awareness: Students can practice social awareness, which relates to students’ ability to empathize, when teachers highlight various ways to approach a problem and show the value of multiple perspectives.

Next time you give a problem that can be solved in different ways (e.g., solving a math problem by talking through various approaches), begin a class discussion by saying, “Someone might not have seen it the same way you did. When we talk about different strategies and perspectives, we’re working on social awareness.”

REPHRASING QUESTIONS

As with instructional strategies, the language we use when asking questions can be framed with an SEL focus to foster an environment that is supportive and equitable. Here are some ideas for re- *...continued on page 16*

*Explicitly
ask
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Student Awards

Tianay de Andrade, BCAEA Awards Chair

One of the highlights each year for the volunteers that make up your BCAEA Executive is reading the amazing success stories of the students enrolled in alternate programs and the positive changes that has made in their lives. The resilience demonstrated, growth achieved, and obstacles overcome are always inspirational. Congratulations to the winners, and kudos to the dedicated teachers and support staff that make it possible. ♦

\$1000 Bursary Award Winners



Leif Arneson

Leif is an inquisitive, creative, and has worked hard to surmount his difficulties. His growth in self-advocacy and ownership of his learning needs has been truly remarkable, including success in his Camosun College South Island Partnership [SIP] courses. With his strong verbal abilities and passion for technology and music, his next steps are pursuing post-secondary options related to computer technology.



Kai Reid

Kai is a good-natured and motivated student whose work ethic and commitment to his education are exemplary. Before attending ILC, he avoided school and fell behind; now he has near-perfect attendance and excels in his courses. He has completed two Trades programs in high school, developing a passion for carpentry. Next year Kai will enrol in the Carpentry program at Camosun College.

Every year we award fifteen deserving students \$200 to recognize the positive changes they are making in their lives since enrolling in Alternate. This year, we had seventeen great applicants, and in true Alternate fashion, we decided to award \$200 to each of the seventeen! ♦

\$200 Student Achievement Award Winners



Emma Bartleman

When Emma arrived in 2018, she was quite disengaged from school. She started in a small group cohort and built from there, entering into our full-day trades foundation program this school year. In that program Emma thrived, both in terms of her success with the learning, and also in the way she modelled positive coping skills to support her peers. We are so pleased with Emma's success!



Jesse Biegun

Jesse is a dedicated student who is willing to challenge himself in a wide range of subjects but always maintains a positive and optimistic attitude toward his work. His teachers have thoroughly enjoyed Jesse's quiet humour. Through significant health challenges, Jesse has attained excellent grades all the while bringing a positive and accepting energy to his school.



Raven Bramadat

Middle school was not always a positive experience for Raven. She felt isolated from her peers and surrounded by negative influences. Since attending ILC and she enjoys being able to work at her own pace. Her feelings of connectedness with peers and staff have improved, and she is now more goal-oriented, taking on new challenges and "healthy risks" to get into our Trades program in the fall.

\$200 Student Achievement Award Winners

(Continued from previous page)



Ethan Boyce

Ethan Boyce is a grade 12 student in the Advantage program at Highland Secondary who dislikes polynomials and vegetables but loves history. He is a perfectionist who likes to work solo. Post-COVID he is going to take a trip to Russia with his grandmother to tour the Kubinka Tank Museum in Moscow and the Central Naval Museum in St. Petersburg.



Madison Burgess

Madison is a grade 12 student who has completed nearly all of her senior academic courses at alternate school, while also being cross-enrolled at her local neighbourhood school. Madison has found ILC to be a place where she can thrive; not only academically, but social/emotionally as well. Madison has her sights set on the Community, Youth and Family Studies program at Camosun College next year.



George Carter

Although George came to us with some disruption in his school history, he quickly became one of our strongest attenders, and has consistently demonstrated his ability to go above and beyond our expectations, joining extra-curricular activities, attending training opportunities outside of his school day, and modelling strong engagement to his peers. George has plans to cross-enrol next school year.



Riley Derkson

Riley is a kind, considerate soul with a creative nature and has overcome many barriers to accessing her education. She has experienced great success in the Dual Credit VIU Hair Stylist Program and with her work experience opportunities. She demonstrates resiliency and strength, and her future plans after graduation include completing her Hair Stylist training and working in a hair salon.



Shianne Hamilton

Shianne struggled to engage at her neighbourhood school, and attendance was low. She felt as though she was not receiving the academic and social/emotional support that she needed. She has accomplished so much in a school year that has brought so many challenges. Shianne has exceeded all expectations around her grad timeline, with graduation and cosmetology school waiting for her in the fall.



Malachi Hartley

Malachi has demonstrated the tenacity and resilience of a student determined to meet his goals. He has impressed us with his ability to stretch beyond minimal expectations and follow through on commitments to strengthen attendance. He is cross-enrolled at a neighbourhood school, while working part-time and volunteering once a week. Malachi has goals of working in the graphic design field.



Eric Howarth

Eric is a Grade 9 student who attends the Individual Learning Center. Eric is a curious student who thinks outside the box, is passionate about video games, and has a terrific sense of humour. He is a keen participant in the classroom, a valued member of the school community, and has shown great commitment to learning. Eric plans to pursue a career in Underground Utilities with his father's company.



Damien Jones

Damien came into the Alternate Education system three years ago after experiencing difficulties socially and motivationally at the neighbourhood high school. In this new environment he eventually developed trust, formed solid relationships and found his passion. Last year Damien successfully completed the Camosun College Level 1 Cooks Training and intends to start his Level 2 training this fall.

\$200 Student Achievement Award Winners

(Continued from previous page)



Carson Kennett

Carson is a grade 12 student who initially found it difficult to transition to alternate, because at the time, a combination of mental health and substance use were barriers to trying something new. Carson has a natural charisma and energy that draws in fellow peers. He strives to find healthier coping strategies and to find balance in his life, and is looking forward to working in the tech field after graduating this year.



Nicella Lewis

Nicella is a grade 10 student at Individual Learning Centre in Saanich. She is a skilled artist and talented field hockey player. Before coming to ILC, the pressure and pace of a traditional school setting was having a negative impact on Nicella's mental health. However, since beginning her alternate ed program, Nicella has regained confidence in her own abilities and made fantastic progress in her education.



Alexis Norman

Alexis Norman is a grade 12 student in the Advantage program at Highland Secondary. Upon graduation, she is hoping to pursue a nursing degree at NIC. Her work ethic, organizational skills, and desire to help others will serve her community well. She has become a role model in Advantage and is ever eager to help younger students.



Tyson Pridge

Tyson Pridge is a grade 12 student in the Advantage program at Highland Secondary who is hoping to go to BCIT to train to be an architectural engineer. He is a quiet young man who works with focus and determination. A long-boarder and snowboarder he also excels in his trade classes - Woodwork and Jewelry. He will graduate in June.



Willow Webb

Willow came to learn about alternate from her neighbourhood school counsellors. At first hesitant, Willow has grown to embrace her new experience in Alternate, and is giving it her best shot. Willow enjoys feeling a new connectedness towards school and has the long-term goal of getting into the hairdressing program at her school.



Nakeeya Williams-Bob

Nakeeya is a committed, hard working young lady from the Pauquachin First Nation, located in the WSANEC territory. She struggled with her course work in the neighbourhood schools, leading to attendance problems and anxiety. But the alternative school gave Nakeeya the extra support necessary for her to grow and thrive. She is an active member of our Indigenous Leadership group.

Student Activity Grant

As a teacher member of the BCAEA, you are eligible to apply for one of four Student Activity Grants awarded each year to a total of \$4000. This year, sadly, we only had one application [stupid pandemic!], but are delighted nonetheless to announce that the School District #63 Individual Learning Centre's Yetsa Project has won a grant. Their proposal aims to engage male-identifying Indigenous students at ILC with programming that offers opportunity for cultural connection, leadership mentorship, and wellness oriented activities. We wish them much success!

Note that Student Activity Grants have no application deadline. They are reviewed upon receipt. We encourage you to apply on behalf of the students in your program.

Developing Empathy

Maurice J. Elias

High school students spend a lot of time thinking about who they are and who they will be in the world. They think about their upcoming decisions about college and careers. All this naturally pushes them toward a lot of concern with “I.” Educators need to help ensure that the “we” stays in the picture as well. And that’s why it’s necessary to encourage empathy in high school.

8 WAYS TO HELP SHOW EMPATHY

1. Give students a chance to express their feelings about losses. When adolescents don’t feel like they belong, they feel great despair. Now more than ever, adults must be sensitive to how much loss can destabilize high school students because it shakes their feelings of belonging. Losses in their families, not being able to interact with friends, missing teams and performance groups... these and more are being carried by high school students all the time. Particularly when students return in the fall, very early in the school year, show your empathy toward students by giving them an opportunity to write about losses. You can make it personalized, or you can allow it to be hypothetical, in which students will pour their actual feelings into prose, poetry, or other forms of artistic expression.

2. Use the prompt, “How do you think that person/those people felt?” Regardless of subject area—reading a novel, talking about scientific accomplishments, reviewing events in history, reading stories about

the contemporary world—asking students to understand the emotions of the people involved exercises their empathy muscles. After a while, they will start asking themselves this question without your prompting—a key aspect of empathy.

3. Create an exchange program. Empathy and taking others’ perspectives go hand in hand. So arrange for your students to have regular exchanges—via class-to-class Zoom or the pen-pal approach (whether via old-fashioned paper or email)—with people who come from different backgrounds and situations. Consider partnering with a school overseas. Help with this can come from the European Network for Social and Emotional Competence or the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders through Rutgers University Professor Ronald Quincy. He can help connect teachers with Mandela fellows who are often teachers in Africa. You can also make arrangements with senior citizen centers, youth detention facilities, Veterans Administration centers, the Wounded Warrior Project, and related organizations. The possibilities are endless.

4. Have students occupy characters from books. Your students will have fun and learn if you ask them to occupy or become characters they’re reading about. Ask them to portray their posture, speech patterns, and perspective. Then have students compare their classmates’ perspectives on the same characters and discuss why they made their interpretations. For an added challenge, ask your stu-

Give
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dents to create and enact the dialogue they anticipate might happen in upcoming chapters.

5. Listen, really listen. It's natural and all too common for students in classes and groups to worry about what they're going to say and not listen to others. Here is a simple antidote: Ask students to repeat the response of a classmate before giving their answer ["Afg-houli said, 'I think...'"]. Cognitive psychologist Irv Sigel, who studied question asking and answering extensively, noted that there is no need to do this all the time. Once you intersperse this kind of request regularly and at varying intervals in a class, students will start to anticipate and listen more carefully.

6. Assign an essay on "me at my best." To help leaven "I" with "we," ask students to write an essay (in whatever format they are learning in their English classes) with this focus: When am I at my best? With whom and when? How and why does the presence of others help me be better?

7. Ask students about the movie that moves them most. Then, ask them to do the following assignment about it. Once they have done so, they can share in pairs and small groups and report out on one another's perspectives. This definitely has a broadening effect, as students tend to think everyone will see a "moving movie" the same way that they do.

- What is the movie?
- Summarize the plot.
- Name the main characters and de-

scribe their personalities, especially how they treat others.

- Identify three parts of the movie that gave you the strongest emotional reactions. What emotions did you feel and why?
- What was it about the movie that led you to empathize with it so much—to have the reactions intended by the writer, director, and actors?

8. Show students how to succeed and fail at interviews. Throughout high school, students will find themselves in interviews for various kinds of positions, and this will lead to college and career-related interviews in their senior year. Lynne Azarchi, author of *The Empathy Advantage* and inspiration for this blog, believes students need to know that interviewees are most successful when they can take the perspective of the interviewer. In advisories and group-guidance experiences, time can be devoted to these questions: What are interviewers looking for? What do they not want to see? After getting some discussion by students, be sure these key points are covered:

Desirable qualities:

- Good formal email communication
- Respectfulness during the whole interview process, including to all staff
- Preparation—knows about the company, business, or school
- Commitment to being a team player
- Willingness to go out of one's comfort zone

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**Assign
an essay
on "me
at my
best"**

Embedding SEL

[continued from page 7]

phrasing that can make students feel invited to participate rather than put on the spot.

“Do you have any questions?” → “Who has the first question?” or “Ask me two questions about...”

“What did you get?” → “How did you start? Talk through your thinking.”

“What didn’t you get?” → “What do you know?” and “What do you wish you knew?”

“What are you working on?” → “What are you learning?”

“Where were you?” → “We missed you. Is everything OK?”

“What do you want to talk about?” → “What’s on your mind?”

“How are you?” → “What are your top three feelings today?”

“What do you have to do today?” → “What do you get to do today?” ♦

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Developing Empathy

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- Concern for others; can speak about interest and involvement in some social, environmental, charitable, or service causes

Undesirable qualities:

- Wandering eyes
- Weak handshake
- Very short answers

Inability to read and match the interviewer in terms of loudness of voice, speed of

speech, posture; disinterest in a long response.

The importance of empathy—and its close cousin, compassion—is becoming more and more clear as we see what’s happening in the world around us. Let’s be sure to prepare our high school students to contribute as more considerate and caring citizens. ♦

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George Lucas Educational Foundation*

Student Showcase

Sean Blake

Reese Yue is a grade 12 student at the Rutland Learning Centre. She recently completed a novel study on *Three Day Road* by Joseph Boyden and was very interested in the real life WWI sniper one of the characters was based on. She decided to take the novel study a step further and do a research project on Francis "Peggy" Pegamegabow. Writing a paper was not good enough for this eager young lady, so she opted to display her research on a visual representation of a sniper rifle she made out of soda cans. Here she is proudly displaying the finished product. ♦



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Love Bombing

[continued from page 3]



and quietly drew out a meek four year old. Jenna, bursting with love, gave her undivided attention to a gaggle of 3 year-old's eager to fill the airways with their tales of adventure. Rain or shine we ventured forth. Just before spring break we headed to Kinnikinnik Day-care. We planted the hearts at the perimeter while the wee ones clad in their onesy rain-suits waddled around to inspect at them.

All went well until we returned from spring break with just two weeks left of class time. "I think the hearts are gone, Ms. Genge". When I called the base, they informed me that they had thrown them out as they were falling down. They didn't realize we were coming back to get them. We were surprised and disappointed. "How will we tell Ms. H-T?"

It was then that the true Highland has Heart moment occurred. The next morning, Sophie voiced her concern about losing the hearts and rallied the class to remake the love bomb-

ing kit. The grade 12's hopped in their cars and took off. We foraged for milk jugs from local coffee shops and purchased flagging stakes from Home Depot. When I returned with my carload, Sophie and Emily already had the group organized and in full production mode – half the group cutting milk jugs and the other half twisting metal stakes. Tunes played and in two hours we had remade the kit. Even reluctant Jayden participated and proudly displayed his blistered fingers. Kim, the EA in Advantage, spray painted the hearts. The kit was good to go, and H-T would be none the wiser.

It was only fitting that upon H-T's return to school in May, we mounted an H-T Day. Among all the kind gestures to celebrate this teacher, Maya mounted the hearts on clay in her classroom. The love bomb came full circle! ♦

Michele Genge teaches in the Advantage Program at Highland Secondary in Comox. She is also the BCAEA Secretary.

Rain
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Grading Conundrum

1) Spending class time talking to students about the importance of understanding concepts and developing skills as opposed to memorizing information and chasing immediate perfection.

2) Using the demonstration of development as the main focus for reporting Work Habit grades.

3) Making as much room as possible for formative assessment practices that make it mandatory for students to address teacher feedback and demonstrate an attempt to improve the quality of product before receiving an official performance standing.

4) Making sure that other ways to demonstrate learning are regularly included in as-

signment choices aside from methods requiring text-based communication.

5) Working with colleagues to design performance rubrics that specifically, yet simply, describe performance levels.

If how we choose to design learning sequences positively impacts student development we are doing a good job, but how great would it be if what we choose to do also helps them to increase their feelings of happiness at school? ♦

Karen Gadowsky is the BCAEA Speaker Coordinator. She teaches in the Delta School District.

Talking to students about the importance of understanding concepts

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The Last Word

Sean Blake



Deep exhale. Where to start? It has been a marathon school year and even though it is not over, it feels as if the days have stretched into an eternity. I think we have a lot to be grateful for, including our continued employment during uncertain times, but I am ready for this pandemic to be in the rear-view mirror.

Many of you have undoubtedly been juggling online and offline courses whilst managing ever-changing health and safety protocols and restrictions. You all deserve an award and I know your students and their families share that sentiment. Hopefully by the time you are reading this most of you who want it, have received the vaccine and we are one step closer to renewing some sense of normalcy.

I never realized just how much I would miss the simple things like a crisp high five or a heartfelt hug, not to mention large gatherings and schmoozing with all of you fine folks at the Challenge & Change conference.

It was a very lackluster February for us without a conference and we are actively

planning a triumphant return as soon as we get the go ahead from the powers that be. We have contingency plans in place if this pandemic and its restrictions carries on for another year, but we are hoping and planning to see all your smiling faces in person in 2022. I may even set-up a high five booth to get my fix!

I hope that all of you are maintaining your mental health in all the creative ways we have had to come up with. I know my bikes have never seen as many kilometers as they have this past year, and my yard has never looked better. Have a great rest of the year, and a relaxing and enjoyable summer! ♦

Sean Blake is our Newsletter Editor, and teaches at the Rutland Learning Centre, part of Central Programs and Services in Kelowna.