


alternate Newsletter

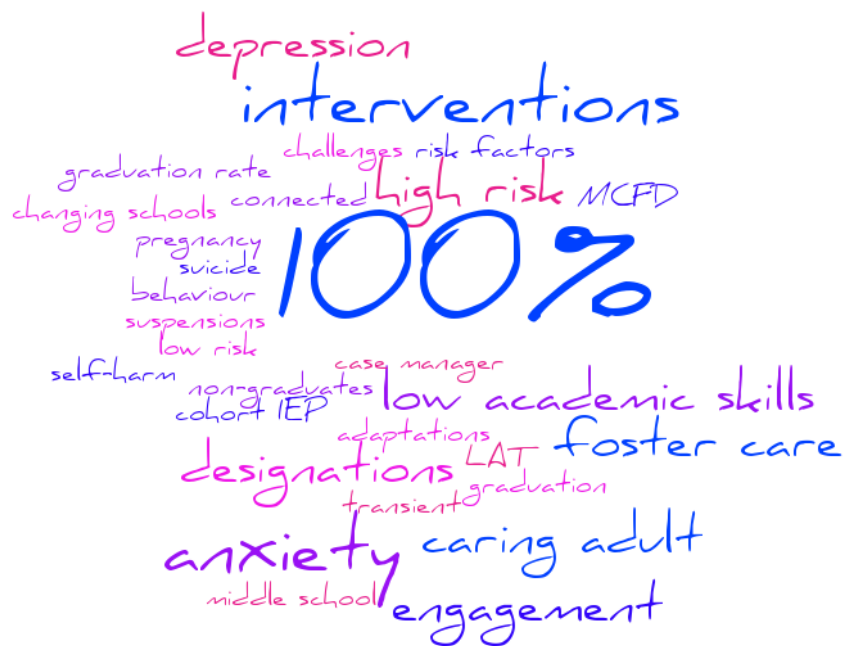
The BC Alternate Education Association: A PSA of the BCTF 

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The 100% Project

Kathryn Edwards

This report is an abbreviated summary of the data collected for the 100% Project, a project born out of the School Completion Committee in spring 2008. The initiative involved examining a cohort of grade 8 students in the Abbotsford School District and flagging those who research suggested were most at risk of not completing grade 12.



Each high school had a point administrator assigned to the project to monitor this cohort, tracking interventions used to support students and reduce risk, and to follow up on any transitions these students faced as they grew through the years. The team of school administrators and district personnel met several times a year to update the progress of this cohort and to report out on effective interventions and observed needs. June 2012 represented the intended graduation month for this cohort and the study started to focus on which students completed high school, which students did not, and what patterns

and trends existed for both groups.

Team

Kathryn Edwards: District VP and Coordinator for Student Transitions, Report Author, et al. [Kanta Naik, Perry Smith, Carla Campbell, Marlene Funk, Michael Hendricks, Brad Hutchinson, David DeWit, Bal Sehkon, Linda Pollestretti, Jacqueline Hall, Gary MacDonald, Shelley Wilcox].

Students identified as needing ongoing support for social/emotional needs at the school level.

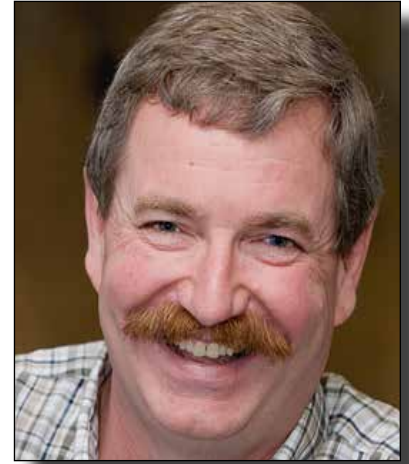
...continued on page 3

Inside:

- 2 President's message
- 4 Netflix: 13 Reasons Why
- 7 2018 Keynote Speaker
- 10 Bursary Winners
- 12 Dev. Award Winners
- 19 Contact Information
- 20 The Last Word

President's Message

Mike Shaw



I have a poster I made hanging on the wall in my classroom. It is a quote from Rita Pierson that I found years ago and that has informed my practice and approach to teaching in an alternate program. It goes like this: *“Every child deserves a champion – an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.”* It is a great sentiment, and I find myself reading it at least once a day.

It reinforces the findings Kathryn Edwards et al articulated in the 100% Project: *It is important to note that every student who completed grade 12 shared two contributing factors: a connection to a significant adult in the building and the personal desire to graduate, both 100%.*

A perfect example of this philosophy in action is a student that I've worked with for the last two and a half years. It hasn't been easy as she wrestled with her demons and tried to find her way in life. She left home several times, was hospitalized for attempting suicide, struggled with opioid addiction, and at various times left the school system entirely, only to pop up and return once more.

This last time on her return, she expressed a desire just to do the bare minimum to fi-

nally achieve her Adult Dogwood. We've had a good relationship over the years. So that connection came in to play as she worked on her last course for grad. At first the goal was just a passing mark and the bare minimum of effort needed to achieve that. But that quickly morphed in to doing a bit more, and then a bit more, and finally, completing the entirety of the course to the best of her ability. She ended up with a final mark of 90% in Math 11 A&W, a triumphant finish to her high school career. There were tears (from both of us), hugs, and being the person she is, threats of bodily harm if I didn't show up at her graduation!

A caring adult is crucial to the success of the kids we work with, but it alone is not enough. Unless the student also has a fire in their belly and wants to graduate, all the caring adults in the world won't make it happen. In the case of the student mentioned above, I was the cheerleader and support person, but she did all the work.

Teachers end up in alternate because it is simultaneously the most difficult and rewarding teaching there is. For me, the rewards are more than worth it—my recent grad is a perfect example—and I am sure they are for you, too! Have a great summer! ♦

100% Project

(continued from page 1)

The team worked with a point person at each middle school to categorize students into two groups: high risk (two or more indicators of risk) and low risk (one indicator). Students with no indicators of risk were not included. The first list of students

at risk comprised of over 375 students.

The Grade 9 year brought many changes to the lists of students as their level of risk fluctuated. Of 126 students, 11 students moved from unidentified to low

| Indicator | Description |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. Attendance | Students with more than 20 absences, excused or unexcused in their Grade 8 year. |
| 2. Designations | Aboriginal or any special education designation. |
| 3. Foster Care | Students in a temporary or permanent care agreement with MCFD. |
| 4. Grade 7 English/Math mark | Students with a final grade of C- or lower in both English and Math at the Grade 7 level. |
| 5. School Moves | Four or more school moves by Grade 8. |
| 6. Social/Emotional concerns | Students identified as needing ongoing support for social/emotional needs at the school level. |
| 7. Suspensions | Two or more suspensions at the middle school level. |

risk, 25 moved from unidentified to high risk. 36 moved from low risk to high risk, and 54 students moved from high risk to low risk.

The changes within the first year and the large number of students made tracking and managing the data complicated and confusing. The team also noticed that by the end of Grade 10, few changes were taking place between students switching between levels of risk. In fact, the team noted at the end of the project that schools and adults had little to no impact on changing behaviour for students once they were in grade 11 or older. Therefore, the team decided that for the last two years of the project only high risk students and relative interventions would be tracked: 188 students.

Key findings

Table A, which follows below, summarizes the key findings of the study, breaking the cohort into various high risk groups and tracking their success as defined by graduating with a Dogwood or Evergreen (School Leaving Certificate) in June, 2012. An additional category called “Connected” indicates how many of the cohort who did not graduate are still connected to a school in our district and remain on the path towards graduation. Most significant is the finding that only 41% of the cohort completed in four years. Encouraging is the fact that of the 111 students who did not graduate in four years, 56 (51%) are still connected to school and working toward that goal. If all 56 students graduate in June, 2013, the five year graduation rate for the cohort will be 71%. *...continued on page 8*



Adults had little to no impact on changing behaviour for students once they were in Grade 11 or older



Netflix: 13 Reasons Why

National Association of School Psychologists

The Netflix series 13 Reasons Why has certainly stirred up its share of controversy. This timely article is an excellent resource for alternate teachers.

Schools have an important role in preventing youth suicide, and being aware of potential risk factors in students' lives is vital to this responsibility. The trending Netflix series *13 Reasons Why*, based on a young adult novel of the same name, is raising such concerns. The series revolves around 17-year-old Hannah Baker, who takes her own life and leaves behind audio recordings for 13 people who she says in some way were part of why she killed herself. Each tape recounts painful events in which one or more of the 13 individuals played a role.

Producers for the show say they hope the series can help those who may be struggling with thoughts of suicide. However, the series, which many teenagers are binge watching without adult guidance and support, is raising concerns from suicide prevention experts about the potential risks posed by the sensationalized treatment of youth suicide. The series graphically depicts a suicide death and addresses in wrenching detail a number of difficult topics, such as bullying, rape, drunk driving, and slut shaming. The series also highlights the consequences of teenagers witnessing assaults and bullying (i.e., bystanders) and not taking action to address the situation (e.g., not speaking out against the incident, not telling an adult about the incident).

CAUTIONS

We do not recommend that vulnerable youth, especially those who have any degree of suicidal ideation, watch this series. Its powerful storytelling may lead impressionable viewers to romanticize the choices made by the characters and/or develop revenge fantasies. They may easily identify with the experiences portrayed and recognize both the intentional and unintentional effects on the central character. Unfortunately, adult characters in the show, including the second school counselor who inadequately addresses Hannah's pleas for help, do not inspire a sense of trust or ability to help. Hannah's parents are also unaware of the events that lead to her suicide death.

While many youth are resilient and capable of differentiating between a TV drama and real life, engaging in thoughtful conversations with them about the show is vital. Doing so presents an opportunity to help them process the issues addressed, consider the consequences of certain choices, and reinforce the message that suicide is not a solution to problems and that help is available. This is particularly important for adolescents who are isolated, struggling, or vulnerable to suggestive images and storylines. Research shows that exposure to another person's suicide, or to graphic or sensationalized accounts of death, can be one of the many risk factors that youth struggling with mental health conditions cite as a reason they contemplate or attempt suicide.

“
Many teenagers are binge watching without adult guidance and support”
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What the series does accurately convey is that there is no single cause of suicide. Indeed, there are likely as many different pathways to suicide as there are suicide deaths. However, the series does not emphasize that common among most suicide deaths is the presence of treatable mental illnesses. Suicide is not the simple consequence of stressors or coping challenges, but rather, it is most typically a combined result of treatable mental illnesses and overwhelming or intolerable stressors.

School psychologists and other school-employed mental health professionals can assist stakeholders (e.g., school administrators, parents, and teachers) to engage in supportive conversations with students as well as provide resources and offer expertise in preventing harmful behaviors.

GUIDANCE FOR EDUCATORS

1. While we do not recommend that all students view this series, it can be appreciated as an opportunity to better understand young people's experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Children and youth who view this series will need supportive adults to process it. Take this opportunity to both prevent the risk of harm and identify ongoing social and behavior problems in the school community that may need to be addressed.

2. Help students articulate their perceptions when viewing controversial content, such as *13 Reasons Why*. The difficult issues portrayed do occur in schools and communi-

ties, and it is important for adults to listen, take adolescents' concerns seriously, and be willing to offer to help.

3. Reinforce that school-employed mental health professionals are available to help. Emphasize that the behaviour of the second counselor in the series is understood by virtually all school-employed mental health professionals as inappropriate. It is important that all school-employed mental health professionals receive training in suicide risk assessment.

4. Make sure parents, teachers, and students are aware of suicide risk warning signs. Always take warning signs seriously, and never promise to keep them secret. Establish a confidential reporting mechanism for students.

Common signs include:

- Suicide threats, both direct ("I am going to kill myself." "I need life to stop.") and indirect ("I need it to stop." "I wish I could fall asleep and never wake up."). Threats can be verbal or written, and they are often found in online postings.
- Giving away prized possessions.
- Preoccupation with death in conversation, writing, drawing, and social media.
- Changes in behavior, appearance/hygiene, thoughts, and/or feelings. This can include someone who is typically sad who suddenly becomes extremely happy.
- Emotional distress. *...continued on page 6*



Make sure parents, teachers, and students are aware of suicide warning signs



13 Reasons Why

[continued from page 5]

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Focus
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5. Students who feel suicidal are not likely to seek help directly; however, parents, school personnel, and peers can recognize the warning signs and take immediate action to keep the youth safe. When a student gives signs that they may be considering suicide, take the following actions.

- Remain calm, be nonjudgmental, and listen. Strive to understand the intolerable emotional pain that has resulted in suicidal thoughts.
- Avoid statements that might be perceived as minimizing the student's emotional pain [e.g., “You need to move on.” or “You should get over it.”].
- Ask the student directly if they are thinking about suicide [i.e., “Are you thinking of suicide?”].
- Focus on your concern for their well-being and avoid being accusatory.
- Reassure the student that there is help and they will not feel like this forever.
- Provide constant supervision. Do not leave the student alone.
- Without putting yourself in danger, remove means for self-harm, including any weapons the person might find.
- Get help. Never agree to keep a student's suicidal thoughts a secret. Instead, school staff should take the student to a school-employed mental health professional. Parents should seek help from school or community mental health resources. Students should tell an appropriate care giving

adult, such as a school psychologist, administrator, parent, or teacher.

6. School or district officials should determine how to handle memorials after a student has died. Promote memorials that benefit others [e.g., donations for a suicide prevention program] and activities that foster a sense of hope and encourage positive action. The memorial should not glorify, highlight, or accentuate the individual's death. It may lead to imitative behaviors or a suicide contagion [Brock et al., 2016].

7. Reinforcing resiliency factors can lessen the potential of risk factors that lead to suicidal ideation and behaviors. Once a child or adolescent is considered at risk, schools, families, and friends should work to build these factors in and around the youth.

- Family support and cohesion, including good communication.
- Peer support and close social networks.
- School and community connectedness.
- Cultural or religious beliefs that discourage suicide and promote healthy living.
- Adaptive coping and problem-solving skills, including conflict resolution.
- General life satisfaction, good self-esteem, and a sense of purpose.
- Easy access to effective medical and mental health resources.

8. Strive to ensure that ...continued on page 7

all student spaces on campus are monitored and that the school environment is truly safe, supportive, and free of bullying.

9. If additional guidance is needed, ask for support from your building- or district-level crisis team. The team may be able to assist with addressing unique situations affecting your building.

See *Preventing Suicide: Guidelines for Administrators and Crisis Teams* for additional guidance. Suicide Awareness Voices of

Education [SAVE] and the JED Foundation have created talking points for conversations with youth specific to the *13 Reasons Why* series, available online. ♦

Reprinted by permission. National Association of School Psychologists. [2017]. 13 Reasons Why Netflix series: Considerations for educators [handout]. Bethesda, MD:

Dr. Martin Brokenleg

2018 Keynote Speaker

We are absolutely delighted to announce that our 2018 Keynote speaker will once again be Dr. Martin Brokenleg. His addresses are always thought-provoking, inspirational, and always well-received by conference attendees.

Dr. Brokenleg is co-author of the book *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future* and provides training worldwide for individuals who work with youth at risk. He

is a retired professor, and he was a director of The Neighborhood Youth Corps, chaplain in a correctional setting, and has extensive experience as an alcohol counselor. He is an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. ♦

100% Project

[continued from page 3]

| Breakdown of Total Cohort (Table A) | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>High Risk Cohort</i> | <i>Total</i> | <i>Graduated</i> | <i>School Leaving</i> | <i>Completed¹</i> | <i>Not Completed¹</i> | <i>Still Connected²</i> |
| <i>Total</i> | 188 | 71 [38%] | 6 [3%] | 77 [41%] | 111 [59%] | 56 [51%] |
| <i>Male</i> | 101 [54%] | 34 [34%] | 4 [4%] | 38 [38%] | 63 [62%] | 31 [49%] |
| <i>Female</i> | 87 [46%] | 37 [43%] | 2 [2%] | 39 [45%] | 48 [55%] | 25 [52%] |
| <i>Aboriginal</i> | 51 [27%] | 18 [35%] | 0 [0%] | 18 [35%] | 33 [65%] | 18 [55%] |
| <i>ESL</i> | 2 [1%] | 1 [50%] | 0 [0%] | 1 [50%] | 1 [50%] | 0 [0%] |
| <i>Special Ed. in Gr. 9</i> | 59 [31%] | 21 [36%] | 3 [5%] | 24 [41%] | 35 [59%] | 17 [49%] |
| <i>Special Ed. in Gr. 12</i> | 89 [47%] | 29 [33%] | 6 [7%] | 35 [39%] | 54 [61%] | 31 [57%] |
| <i>Designation Gr. 12³</i> | 140 [74%] | 47 [25%] | 6 [7%] | 53 [38%] | 87 [46%] | 49 [56%] |

¹ Percentages in Completed and Not Completed columns relate to the group, not the total number. ²The "still connected" column represents those students from the total number of non-graduates who are still connected. ³Designation Gr 12" is a total of students with Aboriginal and Special Ed. Designations.

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By grade 12, 140 students were identified by either a special education category, or as aboriginal. These students make up 3/4 of the cohort, at 74% [Table A]. 87 of these students did not graduate, counting for 78% of non-graduates. However, the promising news is that while identified students make up most of all students who did not complete grade 12, they do make up 88% of those students who are still connected to a school and, as mentioned earlier, show promise or intentions to graduate within the next couple years.

This suggests that while students may not benefit from graduating on time if they are in an identified category, they do appear to show promise of eventual school completion and they stay connected to schools, while those unidentified students may not. This could be attributed to the fact that identified students are assigned a case manager to connect with and track them. Seventy-one percent of the cohort either

completed grade 12 or are still connected and intend to complete within the next couple years. Those students who were identified by a special needs designation or as aboriginal by grade 12 make up 72% of this category. By being identified by grade 12, school connection increases by 14%.

Indicators of Risk

A question the team asked as the project progressed was whether or not the right indicators of risk were being used to predict which students were most at risk of not completing grade 12. The following is a breakdown of data and key findings by each indicator of risk.

1. Suspensions

Only 10 students were flagged as being high risk due to middle school suspensions [5% of cohort], though the data is quite telling. Of the 10 students, only one completed grade 12 with an Evergreen School Leaving Certificate. 9 students [90%] did not com-

plete grade 12; 3 are planning to return to school in the fall.

2. Attendance

Sixty-one students [32%] were flagged for having significant attendance problems in middle school. Most students continued to struggle with attendance until their grade 12 year, though exact data on this is not clear. 70% of middle school non-attenders did not complete grade 12, while 30% managed to graduate.

3. Foster Care

Only 15 students were identified as being in a foster care situation by grade 9, though community feedback suggests several more students from the cohort had MCFD involvement as they grew older. The actual number of students identified seems quite low. This could be due to lack of information being communicated to the middle schools at the time of identification, or a lack of this information being transferred to the data. Regardless, the data collected does suggest this is a student population at risk of not

completing school. Of the 15, only 5 [33%] finished grade 12 [one Evergreen, 4 Dogwood] while 10 did not [67%]. 5 of the non graduates are still connected to a school. This is mostly due to advocacy by their social workers and strong connection between MCFD and the district/schools.

4. School Moves

Forty-seven students [25%] were flagged as being high risk because they faced 4 or more school moves prior to their grade 9 year. Of the 47, 16 [34%] finished grade 12 and 31 [66%] did not. Of those who did not complete high school 18 are no longer attached to a school.

Twenty-one out of the 47 students [45%] carried on to have at least one more school move in their high school duration. Of these 21 continuously transient students, only 2 completed grade 12 [10%]; 19 of the 21 [90%] did not complete grade 12. The 2 students who did graduate did so from a mainstream school.

The data on school *...continued on page 16*



70% of middle school non-attenders did not complete Grade 12



| Indicators of Risk: Listed by Impact on School Completion | | | | |
|---|------------|------------|---------------|--------------|
| | Cohort 188 | Completed | Not Completed | Significant? |
| 1. Suspension | 10 [5%] | 1 [SL] *0% | 9 [90%] | Yes |
| 2. Attendance | 61 [32%] | 18 [30%] | 43 [70%] | Yes |
| 3. Foster Care | 15 [8%] | 5 [33%] | 10 [67%] | Yes |
| 4. School Moves | 47 [25%] | 16 [34%] | 31 [66%] | Yes |
| 5. Designation Gr. 9 | 110 [59%] | 42 [38%] | 68 [62%] | Yes |
| 6. Social/Emotional | 157 [84%] | 62 [39%] | 95 [61%] | Somewhat |
| 7. Grade 7 Math/English | 86 [46%] | 42 [49%] | 44 [51%] | Somewhat |

\$1000 Bursary Award Winners

Leanne Hagglund, BCAEA Awards Chair

We are pleased to present to you the following bursary and student development award winners, each of whom has overcome a multitude of challenges in their personal and school life through a combination of a supportive program and the determination and a drive to change for the better. Sharp-eyed readers will note that we have awarded six bursaries this year instead of our usual five. We felt that these six were too closely matched to exclude one of them. We applaud them for their achievement and wish them all the best in their future education. ♦



Raven Conlinn

Raven is an eighteen year old, full time student in the Young Parent Program. She is a single mother of a one year old son, and is a remarkable young mother; she is kind, caring, determined and resilient. Raven is passionate about pursuing a career in the Classroom and Community Support Program at Douglas College.



Alesya Emelyanova

Alesya is a seventeen year old student at CAFE Secondary School. She is actively involved in both the school and her local community where she has been spending numerous volunteer hours reading to children. She will graduate this year and hopes to start her Human Resources program at BCIT in the fall.



Nicoline Ip

Nicoline Ip is a seventeen year old student at who also works part time. She has a thirst for expanding her knowledge and a passion for the culinary arts. She also enjoys participating in Leadership because it allows her to help out in the community. Nicoline will graduate from CAFE Secondary in 2017 and hopes to pursue a degree in education.



Jenna McPherson

Jenna is a role model for young people as she demonstrates that there are alternative educational paths to success for students. Her commitment to maintaining positive mental health while continuing to strive for high academic standing shows that all things are possible if you work hard.



Angeline Moodie

Angeline has been a participant in many of our extra-curricular offerings and has demonstrated leadership in our school volunteering program. Angeline is also very involved in helping others outside of school, and as she prepares to graduate we are excited to see how she applies her caring nature and diligent work ethic in the future!



Michael Vacchiano

Michael has risen above several challenges in both his personal and academic life and is ready to move forward past graduation and work towards achieving his goal of Red Seal certification in the trades. Michael has a passion for the Great Outdoors, and has a smile that brightens everyone's day on a regular basis!

\$200 Student Development Award Winners



Faith Adams

Faith is a seventeen year old student at CAFE secondary. She works part-time and has several passions including outdoor education and snowboarding. Faith will graduate from CAFE secondary in 2018 and hopes to pursue a degree in psychology.



Kenzie Allen

Kenzie is a quiet, understated, athletic young man who has grown enormously both physically and emotionally since entering high school. He has developed persistence and endurance through his involvement in sports [both hockey and track and field] that has translated into improved academic performance.



Tiara Canute

Tiara was an extremely shy and anxious student when she started at CVOLC. She would get upset and couldn't speak to anyone. Over the last two years Tiara has grown in her studies and life, and now she is one of our top attenders, completing courses at a high level. She plans to attend post-secondary for Early Childhood Education.



Jessie Currie

Jesse is a seventeen year old student at CAFE secondary school. She resides in Coquitlam with her family and spends many hours exploring the outdoors and volunteering her time with various leadership initiatives. She hopes to attend Douglas College in the fall to pursue a career in Dentistry.



John Dutchak

Jon is a Grade 11 student at Highland Secondary who is going places. He is determined, organized, and focused. When he sets his mind to a goal he does everything in his power to reach it. He is also a stellar baker with a fabulous sense of humor. He is a leader in our program who will no doubt go on to university and thrive.



Rylan Edwardson

Rylan is a seventeen year old student at CAFE secondary. He enjoys the outdoors and has a passion for working with animals. Rylan will be graduating in 2017 and hopes to complete the heavy duty mechanics program at BCIT in the following year.



Sabrina French

Sabrina is a Grade 12 student at the Community Learning Centre in Merritt. Despite everything life has thrown at her, she has pursued her education and is looking forward to graduation. She plans to enter the field of blueprint architecture design artist after graduation.



Brennan Jack

A challenging home dynamic made learning difficult during his primary and middle school years and he struggled in regular school. Brennan embraces the flexible model of learning that Open Learning encourages. A hands-on learner, he has used his skills to be successful in school, and plans on becoming a heavy-duty mechanic.

\$200 Winners (Cont'd)



Talisa Jones

Talisa is a Grade 10 student at the Community Learning Centre in Merritt. She is an active participant in the lunch prep/cafeteria program. She takes advantage of the extra workshops offered and appreciates how they enhance her life. She has a keen interest in woodworking.



Ibrahim Khoja

Ibrahim was born in Turkey and came to Canada at eight. He was in ESL classes for several years. In grade 7 things started to fall apart for Ibrahim, but he has excelled in the alternate setting, catching up with his school work, volunteering, and becoming a positive, engaging young man who wants to become an elevator technician.



Emily Linton

Emily is a seventeen year old student who came to CAFE from Burnaby after struggling to succeed in her classes. She lives with her mom, who is currently expecting another child, and spends her time doing gymnastics, hiking and cooking. After graduation, she hopes to study Kinesiology and later become a physiotherapist.



Anna McLeod

Anna is a resilient young woman who knows how to advocate for her learning needs. She is compassionate, thoughtful, and patient. She also has amazing artistic abilities. She always reaches out to include others who are struggling. After high school she will go on to post secondary to pursue a career in Counselling.



Shania Normey

Shania is a nineteen year old, full time student at CABE Secondary School in the Young Parent Program. She is a single mother of a three month old daughter who resides in Port Coquitlam. Shania is passionate about pursuing a career as a Youth Worker at Douglas College. She is kind, caring, determined and resilient.



Jeannette Page

Jeanette is a shining example of how flexible, student-centered learning, can help turn a student's life around. Jeanette has overcome many personal life obstacles and now attends school every day, sets high expectations for herself, excels in academics, and has found her voice. She plans to start her ECE through VIU in September, 2017.



Trent Wicklund-Shemluk

Trenton is a seventeen year old student at CABE Secondary. He is actively involved in the trades and will be working towards an apprenticeship in metal fabrication. Trent is a friendly and helpful leader in his school community and he enjoys assisting with schoolwide events and projects.

Every year, the BCAEA awards a number of bursaries, developmental awards, and student activity grants. As a teacher, and current member of the BCAEA, you are eligible to sponsor up to five of your students for a bursary or student development award, or to apply for a student activity grant. Full details are on our website: www.bcaea.com. ♦

100% Project

[continued from page 9]

moves suggests transitions play a huge role in school completion. Students who are not able to settle in a school environment, cannot develop healthy attachments and therefore school engagement and is difficult to take place.

5. Any designation, including Aboriginal

This indicator risk was the most challenging to understand, as the total number of designated students increased by 30 by the time they were in their grade 12 year. Looking at this category meant examining what type of impact identifying a student early, versus identifying a student after grade 9 might have. 110 [59%] were flagged as having any special education designation or as being aboriginal by grade 9, the second largest identifying factor for the cohort. Of these students 42 [38%] completed grade 12 [3 with school leaving certificates] and 68 [62%] did not complete grade 12.

By Grade 12 there were 140 designated special education and aboriginal students in total. This is an increase of 30 students. All increases came from special education designations, mostly in a behaviour category. Of those 140 students 53 [38%] finished grade 12 [6 through school leaving certificates] and 87 did not complete grade 12 [62%]. It's surprising to see there was literally no impact to school completion rates on time, regardless of the increase in designating. However, as earlier mentioned, designated special education

and aboriginal students make up 88% of all students who are still connected to a school and plan to return next year. This suggests this group of students takes longer to graduate, but remains connected. This is most likely because they are attached to a program and case managers through their designation.

6. Social/Emotional Concerns

This indicator captured the largest number of students, flagging 157 [84%]. Of these 157, 62 [39%] completed grade 12 and 95 [61%] did not. Of those who did not complete grade 12, anxiety and/or depression was noted as a reason by the school. Attendance for those struggling most with social/emotional concerns played a huge role. It is suspected and noted by many schools, but not officially tracked, that many students in this category struggled with addiction and attendance issues, as well as a general lack of school engagement.

7. Grade 7 Math and English Marks

Almost half the cohort [86 students] was flagged for reasons pertaining to low academic skills. It was almost a direct 50/50 split among school completers and non-completers. Roughly half those students flagged for academic reasons had or went on to have a special education designation. This area didn't prove to be a strong indicator for high school completion or dropout in isolation. However, when looked at separately there are some suggestions:



Attendance
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those

struggling
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role



the students in this category who completed grade 12 were engaged in at least one school program focused on academic support (LA block, Homework Club, TAs, IEP, student watch lists), while those students who did not complete grade 12 did not buy-in or become engaged in such programs. Instead, they became involved in school refusal behaviours, struggled with attendance and overall school engagement. Therefore, academic support plus attendance and personal engagement in such programs is key for students in this category. If a student struggles academically, they must have the desire to engage and access help in order to find success.

Additional Risk Factors Added by Grade 12

As students aged, faced challenges, and ultimately did not collect enough credits to complete school on time, several new risk factors became evident:

1. Outside Factors

“Outside factors” is the term provided for students who did not complete grade 12 due to reasons in their home, family, or personal life. This data couldn’t be tracked accurately because of issues around privacy and disclosure. What is certain is that several students face challenges in their home including physical and/or emotional abuse, substance abuse, illness of family members, death or suicide of family members, and divorce. Many students also struggle with their own personal issues

around substance abuse, loss of relationships, and thoughts of suicide.

It is estimated that at least 65% of non-completers struggle with issues in the home that contributed to their school failure.

2. Teen pregnancy

At least 6 students (5%) did not complete high school due to teen pregnancy.

3. Safety and school suspensions

Some of the students who did not complete grade 12 were involved in threat assessments or suspensions related to violent incidents and they were therefore removed from a campus for safety reasons. While they may have had the opportunity to complete schooling via online or home-based packages, many did not engage in such opportunities. From this cohort at least 24 students fit into this category, making up 22% of all non-completers. Many students in this category also have involvement with youth probation.

4. Substance abuse

This is a challenging category on which to find accurate data. However, at least 10 students have been identified as a non-completer due to reasons of substance abuse (9%). All students flagged for this reason also struggled with other factors, such as attendance problems, academic struggles, suspensions, and home issues.

...continued on page 18



Those students who did not finish Gr. 12 did not buy in



100% Project

(continued from page 17)

Contributing Factors

It is important to view the contributing factors individually as well as in groups, as not one student had only one intervention along their road to success. It is important to note that every student who completed grade 12 shared two contributing factors: a connection to a significant adult in the building and the personal desire to graduate, both 100%.

| Individual Contributing Factors | | |
|---------------------------------|--------|-----|
| Total Completers: 77 | Number | % |
| LA block | 44 | 57% |
| Parent Involvement | 37 | 48% |
| Progress Monitoring | 33 | 43% |
| IEP/Adaptations | 32 | 42% |
| Alternate Ed. Program | 29 | 38% |
| YCW, TA | 29 | 38% |
| Timetable Personalization | 28 | 36% |

The remaining research of total completers included eighteen more categories. They are: Timetable personalization (28 students) 36%, School based team (27 students) 36%, School counselling (26 students) 34%, Extra Curricular/engagement (24 students) 31%, Leadership/Link Crew (20 students) 26%, Watch lists (20 students) 26%, Homework Club, Help [(19 students) 25%, care team meetings (18 students) 26%, In-School Suspensions (17 students) 22%, Attendance contracts (17 students) 22%, Aboriginal Support (13 students) 17%, Breakfast/Lunch Program (12 students) 16%, Literacy classes/program (12 students) 16%, Saturday School (10 students) 13%, Mediations (9 students)

12%, Work Experience (9 students) 12%, Calls home (5 students) 6%, Psych testing (5 students) 6%.

The Top 5 Individual Contributing Factors

1. A Block of Learning Assistance 57%

Students had access to a block of LA support on a regular basis. Such blocks are typically offered to students with identified academic needs once per day for one semester in a school year. Some students may need or have access to LA support throughout the school year, either in the form of two blocks a year, or pullout support or exam studying and writing support.

2. Parent Involvement 48%

Parent involvement includes school meetings and integrated care team meetings, and regular communication with teachers, administrators and other staff via emails, phone calls, check my mark, and visits. Engaged parents often lead to engaged learners. The home-school connection is valuable at all grade levels, even as children approach graduation.

3. Progress Monitoring System 43%

Check My Mark is one example of a progress monitoring system. This is an online system for students and parents to log in and check their marks and missing assignments. It helps students from falling behind. It is also an effective tool for parents to communicate with teachers and engage in their child's schooling.

4. IEP and Adaptations 42%

Individual Educational Plans that address student needs with specific goals and objectives, as well as adaptations to coursework, are crucial for students to find success. A strong connection between academic success and school completion (as well as attendance, effort and engagement) exists.

5. School-Based Alternate Programs 38%

Each mainstream high school in Abbotsford runs a program for high risk students that offers social/emotional support, strong adult advocacy, counselling services, community support, and academic support. Many students connected to alternate programs also receive YCW/TA support [38%],

timetable changes [36%] interagency care team meetings [23%], and meal programs [16%]. ♦

Editor's Note:

As a result of Kathryn's research, twelve recommendations were made to the school district. Abbotsford school district has hired a teacher and YCW responsible for building capacity in Social Emotional Learning k-12, implemented two high school "anxiety" management programs, two Reach programs (classrooms meeting in the community)- one secondary (year 4) and one middle (year 2), and a full time CYMH clinician.

Kathryn Edwards is a district vice-principal and coordinator for student transitions in the Abbotsford school district. Adapted and reprinted by permission.

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The Last Word

Liz Louwersheimer



Years ago, when I was completing a Masters in counselling psychology in a Multi-systemic Therapy program, my mentor coined the phrase, “Do whatever works.” I think that is the same mantra that most alternate teachers subscribe to. Many of us go above and beyond our teaching job to “Do whatever works” to help students succeed. From driving around the community to find students and bringing them to school, to feeding hungry students, attending ceremonies [graduations, blanketing ceremonies, funerals, weddings, baby showers], helping students move, providing bus tokens, or giving student rides [to jobs, medical appointments, the food bank, etc]. Years ago, I had a colleague house a couple of students for a weekend when MCFD was unable to find emergency shelter. That is going above and beyond!

That is what drew me to the 100% research project spearheaded by Kathryn Edwards. It looked at what helped students succeed, and some of the possible barriers to graduation. What was telling in the research were some of the roadblocks that divert students from graduation. Ninety percent of the students who did not graduate on time were suspended in middle school [in

Abbotsford middle school is grades 6-8]. Add the trifecta of attendance problems [70% of the not graduating students], living in foster care [67%] and school moves [66%], and it is easy to see how difficult the road to graduation can be for students identified as at risk.

So how can alternate programs help? I think we already know some of the answers. Try to keep kids in school- examine the suspension policies, try alternatives to suspension, get parents involved, use alternate timetables, engage with community support services, individualize instruction and most importantly, connect. Kathryn’s research highlights the concept that 100% of the at risk students who graduated had a connection to one significant adult in the school.

It is difficult to know which adult in the school made the difference in a young person’s life. All I know is that most of us hope that at one time or another, we did whatever it took to contribute to our student’s success.

Have a great summer and I hope to see you at the next conference! ♦