

ACEbc NOTES

Association for Community Education in British Columbia

January 2017



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LEAVING A GREEN LEGACY



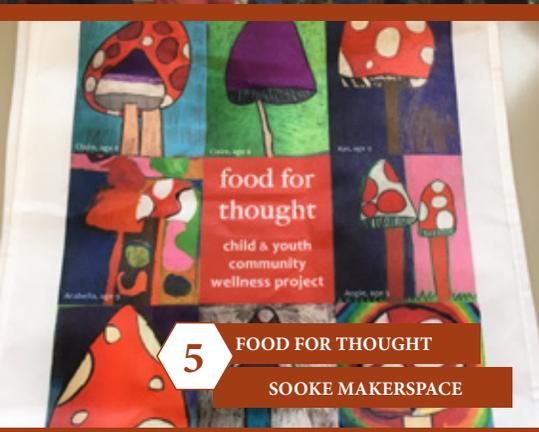
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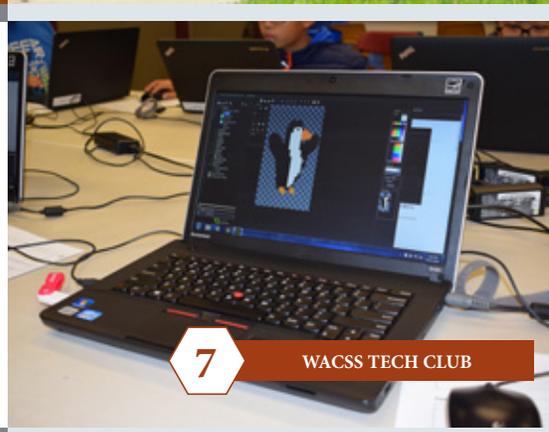
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A Message from the ACEbc Board

Steve and I are honoured to be sharing the role of president for 2016-17. We thank Janey Talbot and Lawrence Ryan for the outstanding work that they have done as president. Our board is made up of members with less than one year to more than thirty years of experience in Community Education. We represent rural and urban school districts. It is an exciting time to be a part of British Columbia education; as a board we are looking to the future and working together to foster improved student learning, stronger families and vibrant, healthy communities.

Robin Stewart
ACEbc President



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HEROS HOCKEY
REACH

The Association for Community Education believes it takes a whole community to raise a healthy child. Healthy children and healthy families in turn build healthy communities...

Want to learn more about the work we do? Check out www.acebc.ca

Leaving a Green Legacy

With climate change arguably emerging as our present world's greatest challenge, what might be the contributions of community schools? How do we bring a dark issue into the light, examine and acknowledge it, and be the very sparks of change that we know these times demand? Roberts Creek Community School's response is to equip our children and our community members with the tools that they need to live resourcefully and intelligently in a changing world. Out of a vacant lot dominated by invasive species, a quintessentially Roberts Creek community garden is emerging. We collectively dream of a vibrant gathering space exploding with art installations, an outdoor learning area, permaculture features, water conservation systems, meandering paths, indigenous plants and a rustic Creeker-worthy entrance that beckons you in. We envision a community hub supported by local sustainability mentors, elementary school educators, seasoned traditional gardeners and progressive permaculturists. Our students and the community at large are poised to be part of ongoing interactive and meaningful learning experiences that honour our local ecology and foster our citizens along a path of sustainability and self-sufficiency.

The garden site is located on an empty lot in the heart of the community adjacent to Roberts Creek Community Elementary School (RCCES) playground on School District (SD) 46 property. Through the dedication and vision of a former Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) Director, Grants in Aid seed money in the amount of \$10,000 has been set aside since 2011 in hopes that a community garden could one day exist. Because of the complicated partnerships involved, it took several years of negotiations to reach an agreement between the three primary partners: Sunshine Coast Regional District, Roberts Creek Community School (RCCS) and School District 46. With a Community Garden License signed by RCCS and SD46 in the spring of 2016, the project was finally able to move forward. RCCS has stepped up as the coordinator of the project and RCCES has embraced the project as a school initiative – which was critical in freeing up the School District to sign off on the agreement. Guiding the entire process is an excellent Steering Committee comprised of RCCES Principal, Christa Rive; a local arborist/garden designer; RCCS

Coordinator, Sheila Wilson; 3 teachers who act as avid proponents within the school; a highly competent volunteer coordinator; and 3 parents/community members who possess expertise specific to this project. With an abundance of creative minds and engaged citizens, Roberts Creek is the perfect setting for a project requiring plenty of volunteer support and a variety of skills and backgrounds to pull everything together.

Anyone who has taken a new project from visioning to implementation understands the complexities involved. The critical path can feel more like a hologram than like anything linear. Early garden committee members recognized that while eliciting and integrating input from the school community and the community at large felt somewhat daunting, public process is and continues to be imperative. In early 2014 a community visioning session was convened. It was facilitated by Dr. Leta Burchailo, a founder and coordinator of a parallel project in Powell River. The gathering was attended by over forty SD46 administrators, School Trustees, teachers, politicians, gardening experts, and citizens at large. The room was buzzing! It was unbelievable to witness the creative ideas that percolated that afternoon. Not that there was one harmonious voice - permaculture, biodynamic agriculture, traditional gardening – well, there were a lot of different ideas floating around, but that was what made the discussions so rich. The resulting information has been synthesized into a few documents which clearly articulate the project's philosophies and goals. These documents were translated into mind maps which are proving indispensable as we move forward.



and needs? Parents, elders, community groups and even corporations have begun to step up and offer what they can. A Sunday afternoon work party succeeded in manually clearing most of the tenacious blackberry vines from the site while the school hosted a student work party of its own, with all classrooms rotating through invasive plant removal and garden visioning activities. The work parties followed in the footsteps of a BC Hydro in-kind donation to remove a stand of scraggly trees that stood beneath the telephone lines. Fleming Tree Experts removed and mulched a bulk of invasive laurel trees that remained. On-site wood has been milled into boards by a local sawyer. SD46 has even offered up a day of machine work to remove an old septic tank and unearth the blackberry roots. We have been on the receiving end of so much generosity and as a result, the once shady, bramble-ridden site has been transformed and the ultimate goal of a rich learning space for the community and for the school is becoming a much more tangible reality. We are in the process of hiring a garden designer, applying for grants, and expect to have our first planting in the ground by spring. Our mind maps and our plans are fluid, reshaping as new information presents itself or new ideas emerge. The community at large and the school community will continue to be partners in the visioning and design of the garden and will be actively engaged in its construction and maintenance. We are already deeply immersed in discussions of sustainability and ecology and look forward to all of the learning yet to come. It's a long and crooked path ahead, but what an inspiring project it is!

For more information, email Sheila Wilson at rccs@dccnet.com

So where are we now in this layered set of partnerships and complex stew of dreams

BICS Earth Labyrinth

The BICS Earth Labyrinth project was about mindfully thinking about and connecting to place. It was about the clay of Bowen Island and that which connects past to present, and humans to the land and a new way of looking at how we are connected to celebrate Earth Day 2016. The project connected many elements of the community: parent and community volunteers, including the local Museum and Archives and Bowen Heritage, the school's Parent Advisory Council, Community School Association, local geologists and artists.

The BICS Earth Labyrinth was a full-scale, whole-school interactive art installation and learning project. Students got their hands into the clay and minds into learning about local geology, history and geography as well as the history of labyrinths and mazes.

Inquiry-based learning infused the project as we explored questions such as: Can you imagine what it would have looked like to have thousands of bricks traveling from Bowen Island to Vancouver and beyond? We learned that sixty-eight acres of clay deposits were discovered on Bowen Island in the 1880s and used to make bricks that built many historic elements of Vancouver and Gastown. At least one load of bricks was reported to have tipped over and sunk into the sea. The students would like to know if any local divers have found underwater piles of bricks and also would be keen to see photos of the local water wheel or the brick-yard horses. If anyone has any old Bowen brick photos, please share them with us!



The Project began in February 2015 when students learned about local history and Bowen Island geography as well as meeting local ceramic artist Susannah Montague. Students created a small clay sample which inspired them to think about their larger



clay art works. Thanks to a generous Bowen Islander who had heard about the project, some local Bowen clay was excavated and the students hand-processed the local clay to incorporate a small amount of local Bowen clay into their artworks. The purchased grey clay turned white and the dark blue-grey Bowen clay turned red in the kiln, making for a dramatic-transformation of the art works. To enhance the natural colours of the clay the ceramic hemispheres were dipped in a clear glaze and fired.

In March artists, students and volunteers sewed and hand painted a 2,500 square foot reusable canvas labyrinth base that was the base of the ceramic artworks and over 300 battery-operated tea light candles. Students worked with a ceramic artist and a multi-media First Nations artist and used natural materials and their hands to create a clay hemisphere that symbolized their connection to their community, and their place on Earth. Students worked with sound technicians to record the sounds of Bowen Island at each of the cardinal points. Students experienced the sounds of their community whilst thoughtfully walking their labyrinth. What does Earth Day look like, sound like and feel like? How do we connect to the earth beneath our feet and know we are connected to the land and our past?

The collaborative art installation was experienced by 350 students, staff and community when they walked the BICS Earth Labyrinth on April 20th.

After Earth Day, students kept their ceramic piece of the labyrinth as a take-home memento of the art project and as a reminder of their connections to Bowen Island and Earth Day. The school kept the re-useable fabric drop-sheet labyrinth for future use by the students and community.

So why do such a project? It is important to build community by making meaningful connections between a sense of place and a sense of self. Experiential hands-on learning with the chance for individual creative self-expression is an in-depth multi-modal way to learn and to build capacity to generate inquiry to desire to learn more. Plus, the project was a thought-provoking, engaging and fun way to creatively celebrate Earth Day by looking through various local lenses. Can you imagine a new way to celebrate Earth Day that reflects your community?

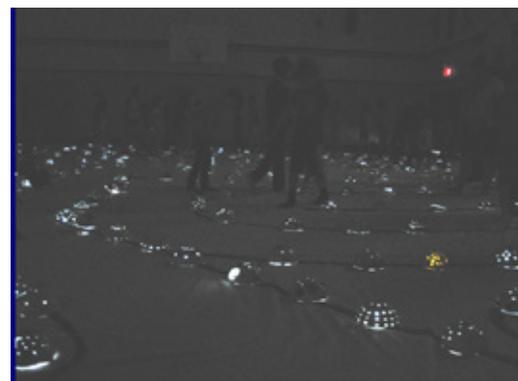
Project Artists/Credits

Susannah Montague, ceramic artist –main project ceramic artist.

Gerald Morrisseau, multi-media First Nations artist –overall project assistant.

Additional Project soundscape created by students working with parent volunteer Shawn Cole and music teacher Cynthia Fairbank –sound recordings of the cardinal points of Bowen Island.

This project was made possible thanks to funding from ArtStarts, the Community School Association (CSA,) the BICS Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and Opus Art Supplies. The BICS Earth Day Labyrinth project concept and coordination by Sarah Haxby, Community School Coordinator in collaboration with West Vancouver School District staff, students, community and parent volunteers.



Run and Read

Students from École Qayqayt Elementary School in New Westminster had some special visitors at one of their after-school programs this past Fall.

CTV News Vancouver featured the Run and Read program to showcase the contributions that the United Way has made in schools throughout the Lower Mainland.

Run and Read is facilitated by teachers, Audrey Roy, Danielle Senyk, and Florence Pistor, along with Community School Coordinator, Rick Bloudell. The program takes students in grades 3-5 on a run through a nearby park followed by a reading session at the school's library. The \$5 registration fee goes towards a healthy snack after each of the six sessions.



"The teachers' generosity and dedication allows me to operate the program at such a low cost for students. This is by far the most popular after-school program that Community Schools offer in New Westminster."

Rick Bloudell

Run and Read was created by former Community School Coordinator for New Westminster and current Manager of Community Connections and Healthy Living for Maple Ridge, Drea Owen. The program is in its second year and fourth season and has grown from around twenty students to nearly fifty. The forty-nine students were eager to share with CTV the many reasons why they love attending Run and Read. These reasons included being outside, getting exercise, but mainly just spending time with friends outside of the classroom.

A few lucky students even got the opportunity to assist the filming crew with the camera, lights, and speakers.

The full news story which aired on November 25th can be found at <http://bc.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=1003801&playlistId=1.3177859&binId=1.1184694&playlistPageNum=1>



Shine On

Many schools offer food programs that provide meals for students in need, including Chatelech Secondary Community School. The school has expanded its program with a twist. For the past 2 years, their ShineOn students have been making muffins, pancakes, waffles and scones for the breakfast program. In addition, they have openly invited all students in need of food to come to their room and learn how to make their lunch or meal. This has created a school wide connection and an opportunity for ShineOn students to learn some life skills, while helping fellow students in need of food.



Cool School

Cool School was founded in 1996 by Roy Boutilier at Chatelech Secondary School and has been operating successfully ever since. Its goal is to give students exposure to machining and metal work with the aid of certified trades persons. Wood, Metal and Automotive shops are opened once per week after school for use by students who desire instruction in workshop practices by responsible and skilled mentors in a facility with tools and workspace. The program attracts students because of its social environment and relative informality: it has been run on a drop-in and sign-in basis, and tries to fit the participants' needs and desires more than conforming to a curriculum.

A wide range of ages are accommodated. The program functions thanks to donated time, funds, and materials. Recently, the program has also come under the umbrella of the Alternate School program, through which it receives additional funding. Alternate School students are given credits for their participation.



Over the years, the program has added more locations and has expanded to include Jewelry making. We have also opened the program up to students starting in grade 7 (as long as they are accompanied by an adult). The purpose is to encourage Grade 7 students to come check out the school that they may attend the following year, giving them more comfort and familiarity for the next year.

Food For Thought

The Pender Harbour Community Schools' Junior Kids Art class has been meeting after school on Tuesdays since September. Eight creative and fun young girls learn about different artists and art forms through a variety of mediums. One of our favourite mediums to work in is oil pastels on paper. We have created many pieces of art in this manner from Modigliani-style self-portraits to super-heroes.



In October, a long-time friend of our art class, Anne Harmer, asked us to contribute artwork for display at the 17th annual International Funghi & Fibre Symposium being hosted in Pender Harbour this year. Anne had previously taught us about mushrooms and how to use them for dyeing and fibre arts. The students were excited about this opportunity and decided to create mushroom designs with oil pastels. The pieces were large, bright and very attractive, each one unique.

While we were creating these mushroom pieces, our youth worker, Darcie Murray, saw them and loved them! She came up with the idea of creating a reusable grocery bag featuring the mushroom images and selling them as a fundraiser. This fit perfectly with the Community School's new Food for Thought initiative:

A child and youth community wellness project that involves intentional acts of kindness. This new project is entirely community-based

and community-funded. Funds raised will be used to offer a neighbourly hand to children, youth and families who might benefit from an expression of care. Our belief is that even small acts of caring can ensure that our children and youth thrive.

The Community School team had been trying to find a way to be more responsive to individual, one-time needs within our community – anything from obtaining a piece of equipment or assisting with some unexpected cost that is well beyond the family budget – we wanted a way that we could help. The team met for a brainstorming session to pull out the values around the project and to develop a mission statement, resulting in the statement above.

We ordered 100 bags as a test and received them in early December and by mid December we were completely sold out! The response has been so positive as community members proudly sport their joyful, colourful bags while out shopping. The kids are absolutely thrilled to not only have had the opportunity for a public art exhibition, but to see their artwork on these bags!
Submitted by Patti Soos, Art teacher

Francine Clohosey, Manager
Pender Harbour Community School Society
Box 232 Madeira Park, BC V0N 2H0
p: 604.883.2826
w: www.pendercommunity.ca



Sooke Makerspace

Offers community tool sharing, education, collaboration and innovation at EMCS.

Imagine the ideal workspace that's part workshop, part computer and electronics lab, part tech shop, and part arts and crafts room; a workspace with a great complement of conventional tools and equipment, combined with cutting-edge technology; a place where people can socialize and work individually or collaboratively on projects and share skills and knowledge, all of which are intended to facilitate the making of things.

That's the appeal of the Sooke Makerspace, a community initiative opening in the new year at Edward Milne Community School. It will be the first local example of the growing international "MAKER" movement in which tools, equipment, resources and expertise are shared among a group of people, whether they are DIYers, hobbyists, tinkerers, artists, budding entrepreneurs or anyone curious about the latest computer-generated design software and 3-D printers.

"The goal of Sooke Makerspace is to promote, support, and advance technical, scientific and artistic skills, innovation, and invention in Sooke. This will be done through individual and collaborative projects, community building, and access to tools, equipment, resources, education and mentorship." explains founding organizer Peter Powell, a Sooke resident [and member of Victoria Makerspace in Saanich's Vancouver Island Technology Park]. "Members can socialize, learn new skills, develop prototypes and work on their own or collaborative projects in a welcoming, fully equipped work environment."

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Sooke Makerspace will be operated and managed by a Committee of the EMCS Society, which will include representatives of the Society, EMCS, and members of the Makerspace.

Powell approached EMCS principal, Patrick Swinburnson, earlier this year. "It's an exciting, expertly conceived and nicely funded concept that aligns with the school's mandate of sharing facilities with the community at large," says Swinburnson. "Students will benefit from the Makerspace during school hours, and Makerspace members will have access in the evenings, weekends and holidays and be able to take advantage of a shared work space, tools and equipment."

Each makerspace is unique. The tools and equipment in the Sooke Makerspace will be dependent on user interests, ages, and skills, as much as available space and funds permit. Equipment can range from traditional hand and power tools such as saws, routers, drill press, sewing machines to such modern innovations as micro controllers, 3D printers, CAD/CAM programs, CNC machine, and computer controlled laser cutters.

"The EMCS Society is pleased to join with local residents and EMCS in the development of a community makerspace at the school. Sooke Makerspace, with its goal of promoting activities related to Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math fits well with the goals of the Society and is a good complement to the EMCS Community Theatre and its contribution to the artistic community"

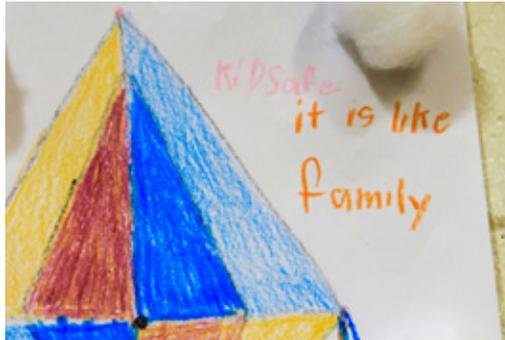
Jeff Bateman
President of the EMCS Society

Initial funding [for a basic makerspace equipment, which will include woodworking, computers and coding, electronics, robotics, and art activities] has been provided by a donation made to the United Way of Greater Victoria specifically for the Sooke Makerspace. The United Way has determined that the Makerspace is consistent with many of its existing programs for youth and communities and will help promote the project and refer potential donors to it and process all donations designated to this project and provide receipts.

Sooke Makerspace is working on obtaining additional funding specifically for a CAD/

CAM Program consisting of 3D printer, Laser Cutter and CNC Machine. They are also soliciting donations of tools, equipment, and materials.

The development of Sooke Makerspace is still in the early stages. Public meetings will be organized to provide more details on what is being proposed, to get input from the community on interest in participating in making activities and to find volunteers to help in development of Sooke Makerspace and to act as instructors, teachers and mentors at the Makerspace. Those interested in attending a meeting to learn more about this project, participating in making activities, or volunteering to help with this project can contact the Sooke Makerspace at info@sookemakerspace.ca or www.sookemakerspace.ca.



KidSafe

Beyond school break: KidSafe helps vulnerable students develop skills for life.

With the winter holiday now behind us, many of us recall a time of prosperity and joy. But the holiday season can be experienced quite differently by children living in vulnerable circumstances. When school doors close, many must go without the nutritious meals, adult supervision, and educational activities they need and deserve. The result is that school break can be a time of loneliness, hunger, and instability for thousands of local children.

Local charitable organization KidSafe helps make school break a time of health and happiness for Vancouver's vulnerable children. KidSafe keeps school doors open at five Vancouver elementary schools each weekday school is closed, and welcomes 340 children who need a safe, supportive place to spend their holidays. This past winter break alone, KidSafe provided over 19,000 total hours of programming and 5,400 nutritious meals.

"KidSafe's impact really is remarkable. On one-hand, we're able to provide vulnerable children with essential services crucial to their immediate health and well-being. At the same time, we also know that by providing important interventions during a child's formative years, we're helping them become better-suited for a happy, healthy future."

Gerhard Maynard
Executive Director

And KidSafe has learned that this future is happening now. With 23-years experience serving Vancouver's vulnerable families, the organization is seeing its participants come full-circle. One of these participants is "Hailey," a senior in high-school who participated in KidSafe throughout her elementary school years. "Hailey" shared this of her experience with KidSafe:

"Being a part of KidSafe was one of the best decisions of my life. The summer I was in grade 7, I got the chance to participate in KidSafe's leadership [mini-program]. It was decision that I wasn't sure about, because I was a very shy and timid student, and the word "leader" was completely opposite of what I imagined myself I could be. Turns out, I didn't have to worry about a thing! KidSafe exposed me to a variety of activities that I had never tried before, as well as taught me leadership, communication, and teamwork skills, from trying these new things. Just from going out and exploring the community, I gained a lot of experience, which I would not have been able to do if I wasn't a part of the program, since I usually stayed home. Thanks to KidSafe, I was able to overcome some of my shyness, and it was definitely a confidence booster! I really enjoyed being with my friends, the staff, and the volunteers, who played a large part in helping me get where I am today. The relationships and the connections that were made through KidSafe continues to this day, as I continually reminisce all the fun we had together."

When I graduated from elementary school, I was introduced to a new [KidSafe] program which helped me immensely in my transition from grade 7 to grade 8. Of course, I had many worries, since I had applied to my school's mini program.

continued...

I wanted to challenge myself, as the mini program offered accelerated math and science courses, and enrichment in other courses. The worries soon grew into more of an excitement, as I received support from [the KidSafe Program Coordinator]. I was provided with a monthly bus pass for my whole grade 8 year, which made travelling to school easier and more convenient. I had always walked with my siblings to school, so being by myself was different. It also fueled my desire to travel and explore the city, as I had done in KidSafe [Break programs]. In addition, KidSafe helped me join music classes when I expressed my passion for music, and helped me by providing things like program equipment and school supplies, when I could not afford it. Similar to KidSafe [Break programs], I also had chances to try new things such as go-karting!

Now, as a [KidSafe] alumni in grade 11, the impacts that KidSafe had on my life are still apparent to this day. It's been four years, but I continue to involve myself in ways where I can give back to the community, including volunteering for KidSafe, for the Boys and Girls Club, and for my local community center. I am never too far away from KidSafe, as I still keep in touch with some of the staff, and the friends I've made during that time, keeping the KidSafe memories alive.



I am very thankful that I was able to participate in KidSafe. Because of KidSafe, I've developed maturely, into an active member of the community. It was important because it guided me in my youth, to become the person I am today. As I look back upon these experiences, it's always bittersweet, because I'm sad that the time has passed, but I also appreciate every moment I was a part of KidSafe, which is why I will not leave with a frown on my face, but rather, continue with a smile, because all of this happened."

To support KidSafe and the children and youth it serves, visit www.kidsafe.ca.

WACSS Tech Club

At West Abbotsford Community School Society, we are always looking to create cool new programs that not only keep the kids super excited but also provide real applicable knowledge to them. With the out of control rise of technology, electronics have become a part of most children's everyday lives. So, five years ago, we decided to take advantage of this trend and created our tech program.



We created the program with the goals of being engaging, applicable, challenging, but fun all at the same time. This is called "Hard Fun". We wanted to strengthen STEAM education in children as well as provide programs for those children who may not be excited about sports.

The timing for the project was perfect, as we had a surplus of just over \$6000 in our budget that year and it was around Boxing Day. We quickly used this to our advantage and ordered 10 high end laptops for just under \$5000, a trolley, mousepads, mice, and all the other great things necessary for a mobile computer lab. All of our software was open-source (free) and all the setup was done in house by our tech person, so the startup cost was within our \$6000 budget.

One of our staff has a computer programming background, and has taught game design, 3D animation, robotics, electronics, and other techy programs for years, so we had everything we needed for the program.



Then came the real test. Would parents and children be interested in these programs? Well, we can't say we were surprised. Ever since day one, the program has had full classes every single semester. The program has become extremely popular, and it's almost like a right of passage for many grade 5s. It is something that they all must do before going to middle school. They all must create a video game, a 2D or 3D animation, or do all three of these. As a result of this high demand, the poor laptops have been working their butts off every semester, every school break, and even during the summer months.

The outcome has been lots of fun, lots of brainstorming, lots of art, lots of ideas, lots of problem solving, and a new generation of young kids who have gained a head start in an industry that is booming in BC.



West Abbotsford Community School Society is small, but as we grow, we hope that programs like this will grow and other organizations will be able to take our model and create their own similar programs so that in every community, every child who dreams of becoming a computer programmer has the chance given to them.

To get more information about West Abbotsford Community School Society, visit: www.westabby.org

HEROS Hockey

Students score with HEROS hockey.

Thirty-six students from four Surrey elementary schools are getting the chance to hit the ice for a free weekly hockey program – with brand new equipment!

Hockey Education Reaching Out Society (HEROS) is a volunteer-driven charity that uses the game of ice hockey to teach life-skills and empower Canada's marginalized youth through free programming that provides young people with a team for life, from celebrating in their first goal on the ice and assisting in their dreams off the ice.

HEROS uses mentor relationships between dedicated volunteers and each participant, as well as peer mentoring of older participants with their younger counterparts. By providing a safe and stable environment for young people to succeed and connect, HEROS guides participants to become constructive citizens within their communities.

Grade 4-7 students from Prince Charles, K.B. Woodward, Old Yale and Cedar Hills elementary schools were fitted head-to-toe with gear, from skates to pads, helmets to jerseys, at Sport Chek in Guildford Town Centre and of course, a big black hockey bag to put it all in.



"It's like Christmas," said Grade 6 student Noveleen as she packed her new helmet alongside other gear in her hockey bag. She and friend Zaara have never played hockey and were excited to try it.

After being outfitted on the first day, the three dozen Surrey students headed to North Surrey Arena to test their new gear – and skating skills – accompanied by Vancouver Canucks Sven Baertschi.

"The ability to give youth from families who can't afford the cost of minor hockey, for

whom our program can provide mentors who can use the game of hockey to impact their lives off the ice, happens only when the community comes together as it has here in Surrey."

Norm Flynn

Executive Director and Founder of HEROS

As a privately funded charity, HEROS relies on the generosity and kindness of national corporations, regional businesses and individual donors to create a supportive environment each and every week for our participants. Through the generous support from those who share our goals, we are proud to be able to support our kids as we engage, educate and inspire Canadian youth.

REACH

Partners Come Together To put Surrey Youth To Work

REACH (Recreation, Employment Readiness, After-school, Citizenship and Health) is an employment readiness program that develops pro-social, sport & recreation skill development, leadership and employment skills for Grade 11/12 students.

One student's story from REACH:

In grade 12, I was so excited to get real things done. I wanted good marks but I was always a B and C+ kind of student. After 4 years it was bothering me- how much work I was putting in only to receive a mediocre grade. I had spent most of my free time either studying or playing sports. In grade 8, I had wanted to receive the 100+-point plaque. I was in my final year and I still had not received it so I had thought, "Maybe I won't get it." My biggest concern of all was, if my family is living pay cheque to pay cheque, how am I going to pay for graduation? What about post-secondary? I can't let my parents pay thousands of dollars, after they have given so much to me and my siblings. I didn't want to put that burden on them. At that point in time, I felt there wasn't much I could do but get the year over with.

Then an opportunity came up, R.E.A.C.H. This program was exactly what I needed when I felt there was so much I couldn't be in control of. Yes, the certificates were the main hook but I somehow looked past that and wanted to learn more. I wanted to become more involved, to broaden my

learning and to gain valuable life experience. REACH showed me that even though things get tough, as long as you persevere, do well and have grit, the more you could get out of the program. As I continued with REACH, I became more mindful of everything around me, I noticed things that I would have never noticed before, such as the fact that this program had stretched my mind and I now viewed my community differently. I just had to keep going. I felt a sense of self worth because everything I was getting out of the program was because I put 100% of my effort and attention into it. I went from being invisible to being confident; to speak to groups and to motivate students to work hard and to keep working hard.

By the end of my final year, I was on the first class honour-roll. I received the 100+-point plaque in athletics, I was coaching a team for a local elementary school and I had multiple certifications completed. I was more confident about life after high school. All because REACH had taught me to be a leader for my own path.

Now, a year and a half later, I could not be happier. I pay for my college tuition learning what I like to do, I help my family as much as I can and most importantly, I got a fulfilling job with Community School Partnership, the very department that provided this program directly in my school. Through this process, I discovered just how much of an impact I could make in my community and for those around me. I rediscovered myself. Regardless of those endless hours of sweat, frustration and tears, I finally reached optimal happiness.

For more information about the REACH program, please contact Jeff Randhawa with Surrey's Community Schools Partnership department at 778-772-3844 or via email at randhawa_j@surreyschools.ca

