

How Pet Therapy Helps Texas Alternate Students

Bruce Watts

As alternate teachers we have all searched for ways to reach students when conventional means are not productive. A group of innovative alternate teachers from Nederland, Texas have employed pet therapy in their programming with inspiring results. Principal Karen Bussey and teacher Ashley Massey presented pet therapy at the Texas Association for Alternate Education Conference in Austin in January.

The students play a big part in Dakota's obedience training, through which they are learning patience, how to properly treat an animal, kindness, compassion, and persistence. They are also learning responsibility through the duties they must assume each day. They are responsible for feeding

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Unlike conventional pet therapy approaches, these educators are allowing students to take an active role in the training of Dakota, the Airedale Terrier. Airedales by nature are hyper, mischievous and hardheaded, so the staff intentionally chose this breed during their program design as these characteristics are sometimes found in alternate students.



Dakota doing what he does best.

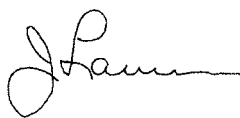
From the Editor's Desk:

As you will quickly recognize, many of the pages in this edition of your BCAEA Newsletter have been dedicated to coverage of the recent Challenge and Change Conference. This year's event highlighted Dr. Gordon Neufeld as the keynote speaker who followed up with three, very well attended, break-out sessions. Delegates were treated to a greater number of session choices than ever before. This conference truly offers something for everyone.

When you are looking for yourself in the pictures we have published here, you will certainly see that a good time was had by all those who attended the Schmooze. The food at the Schmooze was again, "to die for!" Many thanks to Joyce May and her entourage of helpers and servers from Abbotsford's ACE Program. The newly introduced two drink limit didn't dampen the spirits of those who came to socialize, network and celebrate a couple of days in the big city with colleagues and friends.

Next year's conference (January 22-23, 2009) will be yet another doozy, and will feature Dr. Martin Brokenleg as the keynote speaking about reclaiming youth.

On another note, I am pleased to introduce the newest member of the BCAEA Executive, your new Newsletter Editor, Bruce Watts (also known as TBG. I'll let him explain that if he chooses to). Bruce was elected to the executive at the AGM, held on Friday, January 25th. I am sure the enthusiasm he brings to everything he does will serve him (and you) well.



President's Message

Mike Shaw



It may seem like a small thing, but the recent election of Bruce Watts to the position of Newsletter Editor is significant in several ways.

First, it means someone other than the executive actually came to the AGM, which is a minor miracle in itself! But second, and more important, it saw the election of the youngest member to serve on the executive in recent memory. Regular conference attendees will no doubt have noticed the greying of the executive over the years.

Not to put too fine a point on it, but many of us have turned at least part of our attention to the "bucket list," as retirement is not all that far off. The consequence for the association, is that at some time in the not-too-distant future, us old timers are going to retire, so the notion of "passing the torch" has become a topic of much discussion lately.

I encourage those of you with an interest in the association and the great work it does on behalf of all of us, and our students, to take a moment to reflect on whether now is the time to get involved. In my own case, I decided about five years ago that it was time to give back something to the BCAEA after all it had given me over my then twelve years in

Alternate. It was a decision I have never regretted!

The opportunity to work with the fabulous people on the executive, both past and present, has been immensely rewarding. It has certainly been an incredible opportunity to learn, grow, and develop, both personally and professionally. I encourage you to give serious consideration to volunteering.

For those readers of my last president's message (thanks Mom!), you will remember it was a call to arms. After the fact, retroactive changes to the funding formula had a chaotic effect across the province, which was exacerbated by later waffling and reversal.

I encourage all of you to remain vigilant on behalf of your students and your programs. I fear the danger is not yet over. As always, allies are invaluable in times of trouble. Talk to your students, their parents or guardians, and other stakeholders involved in Alternate Education. Make sure they know of the issues involved and how the changes may still affect us all. It is only by presenting a united front that we are able to do our best to combat the seemingly willy-nilly changes that are going on in education these days.

I wish you all a well-deserved and restful summer! ♦

Pet Therapy

(continued from page 1)

him, exercising him, taking him through his training drills, brushing him, playing with him, and cleaning up after him. They must fill out a chart upon completing these duties each day.

It is the “hands on experience” that makes an impact on the students. They are able to draw a correlation between Dakota’s successes and failures and their own. When he succeeds, they can relate that to hard work and determination. When he doesn’t, they know it is usually because he becomes distracted and loses focus, much like they often do.

In addition to the many new teaching opportunities provided by Dakota, he provides emotional support for the students and the unconditional love many of them so desperately need.

National studies on Pet Therapy find that children who have contact with pets show diminishing emotional pain, lower anxiety levels, an increase in morale, an increase in self-worth, increased levels of trust, more positive behavior toward teachers and peers, and fewer discipline referrals.

“We’ve seen the results of those studies come to life in a much bigger way than we ever have imagined,” says Massey. “It is often our hardest students who make the best handlers. What normally happens is that we see the anger and the aggression start to subside, and before you know it, they are smiling and laughing. We see the little inner child that has been buried for so long come to the surface and show on their faces. That, alone, has made the program worth having.”

Dakota has a web page. Students can follow his journeys through his diary or send e-mail to him by going to his link on their school web site.

As the newsletter editor, I am interested in featuring projects where pet therapy is being used in alternate programs, or any other pilot projects and alternate approaches that may be of interest. I welcome any feedback on our articles, so please feel free to e-mail me at bwatts@sd23.bc.ca ♦

Bruce Watts is our newly elected newsletter editor. Portions of this article, as well as photos, are reproduced with the kind permission of Ashley Massey.



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2008 BCAEA Bursary and Award Winners

Each year, the BCAEA awards money to students who have achieved significant success in alternate education. Moneys awarded are in several categories, including four \$500 Bursaries awarded to graduating students continuing their education, four \$250 Student Achievement awards to students who are moving on to a new program, and ten \$100 Student Development awards to students who have made significant strides in their current program. This year, our enthusiasm got the better of us and we awarded more than that number! The deadline for application is March 31 each year. In addition, we have \$500 for the Kathi Hughes Innovative Programming Award. Not subject to the March deadline are four Student Activity Grants totalling \$2000. Application forms for all these bursaries and awards are available online: www.bctf.ca/bcaea ♦

Mary (Katherine) Hartel, Kelowna (\$500 Bursary)

High school was difficult for me, and, in fact, I dropped out in Grade 10, unable to focus or participate socially, and lived under government care. As an adult I returned to school, but dropped out again upon discovering I was expecting my son. I kept coming back, though, as I always dreamed of a profession helping others. Now that I am finishing the prerequisites for entry into the BCIT Cardiology technology program, my dreams are coming true.

Tamara Pelletier, Kelowna (\$500 Bursary)

My life has had many twists and turns. I was put into foster homes at age nine. By age 11 I was a ward of the court, and at 17 I was living on the street, using drugs, and selling my body. I slowed down when I was expecting my son, but soon returned to the streets. My son was taken away from me and adopted, and later my daughter was taken. I realized that if I didn't sober up and change my life, I would die. I've made those changes; I've been sober for 13 months now, and plan to give my daughter a better life than I had and to help others in my situation by obtaining a degree in Social Work.

Johnatan Zapana, Port Coquitlam (\$500 Bursary)

Two years ago I was told I couldn't return to my high school. I had made some poor choices and was involved with the courts and probation. I was working full time, and started going to the Outreach program two hours per week. In the first eight months I finished four courses, and decided to cut back on my work hours so I could attend full time the following year. I put all my effort into my courses and will graduate this spring before the end of the school year. I have been accepted into BCIT in the Piping Program for the fall.

Sheena Joly, Delta (\$500 Bursary)

I dropped out of school two years ago because I was partying and drinking too much. I soon realized that it was a big mistake, and was accepted into the Muffler Alternate Program. I work full time after school as a waitress in order to earn money for college, and have worked very hard on my school work since I enrolled in the alternate program. I will graduate on time! I have even taken some courses online to get extra credits. After grad I plan on attending the John Casablancas Institute for a career in cosmetology.

Meaghan Beattie-Audet, Duncan (\$250 Student Achievement Award)

Before enrolling in the Cowichan Adult Learning Centre, I spent three years attending Cowichan Valley Open Learning Co-operative. While there, despite facing my own challenges, I became the student council president and acted as a confidant to other students dealing with personal and academic difficulties. I am graduating in June and will attend Malaspina University-College, taking their Child and Youth Care Program.

Mimi de Bruyn, Kaslo (\$250 Student Achievement Award)

I was home schooled until Grade 5, but decided one day to try the regular school. It didn't work well for me. I have been at Lakeside for several years now, where I have come to believe I can graduate, and have overcome my shyness, lack of confidence, and low self-esteem. Lately I have taken some of my classes back in the regular school and am doing well. After graduation my goal is to become a nurse, probably by going to Selkirk College.

Jamie Fox, Surrey (\$250 Student Achievement Award)

Before attending Cloverdale Learning Centre, my attendance was very irregular and I gave up easily on courses. Over time I developed a strong desire to graduate, and improved my attendance record. I finished three courses in the first five months of this school year and will graduate in June. I learned that I like accounting, and plan to pursue further education in this area after I graduate.

Makenzie Houston, Kelowna (\$250 Student Achievement Award)

My home life was tumultuous, and by age fifteen I had tried every drug imaginable, rarely attended school, and wasn't making any progress academically. At sixteen I found out I was pregnant, and when I told my boyfriend, he left. Eventually, my parents let me move home, but I pay my own way. I work several evenings per week to support my son and I. In June I will graduate, and plan on attending UBC Okanagan in September, taking a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Elena Kenworthy, Pitt Meadows (\$250 Student Achievement Award)

I am a teen parent in the Future Steps Young Parent Program in Maple Ridge. I have been there since before my daughter was born and returned just seven weeks after her birth. I am doing well on my courses and will finish Grade 11 this year, then transfer to Maple Ridge Secondary for next year where I plan to graduate. After high school, I plan to go to university to become a teacher.

Stephanie McDonald, Surrey (\$250 Student Achievement Award)

As a teen I hated authority and dropped out of school at 17. At 19 I returned, but dropped out again when I found out I was pregnant. After the birth of my daughter, I became focussed on graduation because I realized that I wanted a better life for my child. I graduated before the end of the school year and am now attending the Dental Receptionist program at Vancouver Community College.

2008 Bursary and Award Winners

David McGiffin, Nanaimo (\$250 Student Achievement Award)

Drug use and anger issues at a young age not only got me kicked out of my regular school, but also the alternate school at one point. After a year away I decided it was time to get on with it. I re-enrolled and applied myself to my school work. I began to experience success and realized that it felt good to be getting things done. This year I have been mentoring younger students. I plan on taking the CTC program next year at Malaspina College so I can apprentice as a carpenter.

Lindsay Taylor, Tsawwassen (\$250 Student Achievement Award)

Grade 10 was a mess for me. My life was completely off track: I skipped, hated school, was in trouble with the law and addicted to crystal meth. It was hard work in detox, but I overcame my addiction. I have been in Alternate since 2005, and have done very well. I will graduate this year, and plan on going to Kwantlen College because I have an interest in psychology and business. I will take courses in each discipline to see which I like best.

Paula Baker, Maple Ridge (\$100 Student Development Award)

I started in Outreach shortly after I discovered I was pregnant. I missed a lot of days because of a difficult pregnancy and an abusive boyfriend. Eventually I was kicked out of the house and have worked to support myself ever since. As a single mom I will graduate in June, and am already enrolled in a program to earn my Early Childhood Education certificate.

Nicole Cleroux, Cumberland (\$100 Student Development Award)

Sometimes getting expelled is the best thing that can happen to you. I know it was for me! The month I was out of school made me realize that not attending school wasn't good for me. Since I was allowed back, I have changed my ways, and am now getting good grades. My teachers tell me how proud they are of the new me. And you know what? I am, too.

Lindsay Fairweather, Hedley (\$100 Student Development Award)

I started in Alternate Program in my Grade 10 year, and will graduate in January 2008, a semester early. I have worked hard since I came into the program, and act as a mentor to other students. I am also involved in two youth groups at my school, including one that organizes activities to help underprivileged families in my community.

Malcolm Hyatt, Queen Charlottes/Haida Gwaii (\$100 Student Development Award)

I was in the Living & Learning School in Haida Gwaii for my early school years, then attended Queen Charlotte Secondary for Grade 8. I didn't go to school for Grade 9 as my mother was dying of cancer and I spent the year with her. In 2006 I moved to Courtenay to attend the Independent Learning program, and I have excelled there.

Gregory Letain, Courtenay (\$100 Student Development Award)

In Calgary for Grade 8 I was sent to the hall a lot for distracting other students. I like working in the Opportunities Program because it is a place that takes away all distractions, allowing me to concentrate on my work so I do much better. In Term 1 I was failing Math, but with the help of Opportunities, I got a B in Term 2.

John Mathieson, Surrey (\$100 Student Development Award)

Before enrolling in the Learning Centre my marks weren't very good. I like the fact that all the teachers know my name and take an interest in me. My marks have improved and I have become involved in a number of student leadership activities. I will graduate this year and planned to pursue a career in photography.

Hailey Rae, Courtenay (\$100 Student Development Award)

I entered the Opportunities Program in Grade 9 as a typical rebellious teenager with a bad attitude. I was kicked out of every other school for being so abrasive. Over time, the staff won me over and I bought in to the program. Now, four years later, I am graduating and planning on going to Camosun College.

Alycia Rolston, Maple Ridge (\$100 Student Development Award)

I have gone to a lot of schools in my academic career, but I will graduate from the Outreach Alternate program this year. I have done well there, getting good marks. I would like to attend Douglas College to take pre-veterinary requirements, then attend the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in Saskatchewan.

Ryan Russell, Coquitlam (\$100 Student Development Award)

I have been in CAFE for two years, and in that time I have missed a total of four days. I have a B average in English 11 and 12 and higher marks in my other courses. I will graduate this year and after graduation plan to go into the trades because there is such a high demand and the opportunity to start your own business.

Thea Schumacher, Maple Ridge (\$100 Student Development Award)

I started in Alternate Education at 14, and became a teen parent at 16, so I enrolled in the Teen Parent program at Maple Ridge Secondary School. Having my daughter has motivated me to change my life. I will graduate this year and plan on going in to Nursing.

Kaylynn Telford-Garlock, Courtenay (\$100 Student Development Award)

Grade 9 wasn't very good for me. I skipped a lot and wasn't in a very good space. Since I got into Opportunities, they have helped me clean up my act and get back on track. I am doing really well, and my behaviour is much better. I plan to finish high school, then go to college.

Where Masculinity, Creativity, and Conflict Transformation Meet

David Hatfield

I'm a leadership consultant and facilitator specializing in masculinity, conflict transformation, creativity, and communication. The foundation of all my efforts is the belief that there is a lack of intentional forums for educational inquiry about complex and ongoing human experiences, specifically those of gender, conflict, and creativity. All my work is experiential, creative, powerfully human centered, professional and personal development. While I invite you to visit my web site www.davidhatfield.ca for full information about all of my offerings, here is a brief overview of the programs I've created that have been most requested by educators and youth:

- **Catalyst** – A powerful experience for boys to explore male identity pressures and positives. The responses and requests of 18,000 boys I've worked with resonate throughout this program.
- **Peace and Power: Working with Male Youth** – Professional development that builds abilities to engage and inspire male youth to positively embrace their scholastic and personal potentials.
- **Peace and Power: Teaching Brotherhood** – Professional development for male educators on how best to offer conscious mentorship and invite boys into the world of adult men.
- **Rite of Passage** – Professional development that explains the hallmarks of rites of passage, how to see rites of passage needs in current youth culture, and concrete ways to implement rite of passage knowledge into typical school and social environments.
- **Conflict Transformation** – Learn the required elements for interpersonal conflict and strengthen your capacity to positively transform, and ultimately, to prevent conflict. For students and/or staff.

- **Singing Soul: Improvisational A Cappella** – Improvisation is a life skill, a leadership skill, a necessity, and a liberation, and therefore, a valuable area of study. The voice is the muscle of the soul, keep it strong. No singing experience necessary. For staff and/or students. A life changer!
- **Stirred, not Shaken** – A workshop for men to explore what it's like to be a man these days. It's a powerful and transformative journey of activities and experiences from the physical to the cerebral.

My future visions include:

- Rites of Passage programs widely available in BC for boys and girls
- Developing leadership capacity for wider co-gender work via direct mentorship and facilitation trainings.
- Men and Family Centres – supporting the arts and challenges of fathering
- Men's Crisis Support phone lines
- Secondary and post-secondary level Men's and Women's studies classes
- A BC Men of Distinction Awards

I enjoy and respect the alternate school culture, as it is well aligned with the level of openness and experiential style of my teaching. I invite your collaboration on any level – if you would like to contract me, share ideas, hopes or resources, please contact me. I also seek female educators to collaborate with in co-gender work. Contact me at: david@davidhatfield.ca and or visit my web site www.davidhatfield.ca ♦

David Hatfield is a long time presenter at our annual conference. His sessions are always well received.

21st Annual Challenge & Change Conference



THE *Schmooge* MENU

Hot

Bratwurst Meatballs with
Dry Garlic
Chicken
Quesadilla

Seafood

Oysters on the Half Shell
Curry-Marinated Shrimp
Pernod-Marinated Shrimp
Oysters Rockefeller
Smoked Salmon
Prawns

Indian

Tandoori Chicken Kebabs
Samosas with Chutney
Cheese Pakoras

Assorted

Spring Rolls with Orange
Dried Apricots with Goat
Water Chestnut







*Don't miss the fun! 22nd Annual Challenge & Change Conference
January 22-23, 2009*

From Whence We Came

Kathi Hughes

The BC Alternate Education Association (BCAEA) just celebrated its 21st conference anniversary. But how did BCAEA get to where it is now? From whence grew the roots of this organization? The BCAEA saga reflects the passion and dedication of the teachers and child and youth care workers who commit to working with our most vulnerable youth. The saga of nurturing and providing opportunities for attachment through our work in alt ed programs is mirrored in the history of BCAEA.

In November, 1988, the Ministry of Education, working with the BCTF (Anita Chapman), asked for applicants from teachers and child and youth care workers from "Rehab" (now known as "Alternate") programs to form a committee to write a provincial handbook for "Rehab" programs. The idea that two professions, teachers and child and youth care workers/counselors would collaboratively work on a Ministry of Education committee together was, at that time, an unprecedented vision.

This vision emanated from Wendy Neumann of Victoria who was on secondment to the Ministry of Education. In January of 1989 the fun began: Dave Scott, Alt Ed administrator from Vancouver Island, Bill Goers and Linda Ross, child and youth counselors from Victoria, Joyce (DJ) (aka Dorothy) Pauls, Alt Ed teacher from Abbotsford, Jeff "metacognition" Diekmeier, Alt Ed teacher from Vancouver Island, Tina Quinn, Alt Ed teacher from Quesnel, and Kathi Hughes and Jay

Dahlgren, Alt Ed teachers from Prince George, formed, with Wendy as "captain," the committee. For two years, the committee worked diligently.

During that time, Alt Ed became a subchapter of the SEA because we did not have the membership to form a separate PSA; Kathi Hughes was president. The committee worked with advocates in the Lower Mainland, such as Tom Tupper, to hold the first "provincial conference" at KLASS Alternate in North Vancouver in 1987.

The roots of BCAEA embedded, were nurtured and watered, and the tree grew – with bends and gnarls and new growth as innovative neophyte members added their passion and expertise. Alas, the writing group's demise occurred after only two years; they became known as the Dead Writers' Society and

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(L-R) Dave Scott, DJ Pauls, Wendy Neumann, Kathi Hughes, and Jay Dahlgren

From Whence We Came

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(L-R) Jim Lawson, Nona Thompson, and Mike Shaw

formed the roots of the BCAEA. In 1989 - 1990, BCAEA became its own PSA with Nona Thompson as president.

Other presidents added expertise and quirks: Judy Dunnett, Wendy Neumann, Brent Herman, DJ (Dorothy) Pauls, Rob Purgavie, Jim Lawson, Rick Fitch and Mike Shaw. Oldies such as Kathi and Dave stayed on the executive for as many as 17 years. And DJ is STILL our awesome BCAEA conference coordinator...19 years of commitment...and 17 of those years as conference coordinator! The executive always combined their passion with fun (with extra expenses out of their own pockets): meetings occurred in the back alleys of Prince George, The Hills, New Orleans, and West Coast get-aways. The conference also grew – from KLASS in North Vancouver, to the Richmond Delta, to

the Bayshore, to our current home at the Sheraton Wall Centre.

The contributions of many others help the tree blossom: Joyce May, treasurer (and chef) extraordinaire whose pecuniary and culinary skills keep us alive, Mike Shaw who technologically got us into the 21st century with our newsletter, JD Duncan who spends hours building data bases and brought the conference totally “on-line” for registration....and our colleagues who have supported us over the years... Steve Fachler, Tom McEvay,

Gary Coons, Jay Dahlgren, John McVicar, Dave Macdonald, Joe Panichelli, Steve Inniss, Anita Chapman....and too many more. Truly, attachment, inclusion and enfranchisement is the model we practice within BCAEA and with our youth.

At the Sheraton Wall on January 24, we gathered to celebrate and enjoy...and here we are, a combination of seasoned but still impassioned Dead Writers and “Old” Presidents....and may our spirited roots continue to grow, flourish, and attach with our colleagues and our youth. ♦

Kathi Hughes, served 16 years on the BCAEA Executive, and continues to contribute to the association long after her executive duties ceased. She verified these dates with DJ Pauls, the BCAEA archivist.

Media Use: The Real Brain Drain

Bruce Watts, adapted from an article by Cris Rowan

The advent of technology has caused profound changes in children's development and their ability to learn. Delays in printing, reading, and a decrease in the ability to pay attention are increasing at alarming rates. Attachment and developmental disorders seem to be today's norm. As children spend more and more time connecting with technology, relationships are disconnecting at a very rapid pace. Canadian Statistics report children watch on average four hours of TV and video games per day, and parents spend on average 3.5 minutes per week in meaningful conversation with their children. By the time children graduate from high school, they will have spent more time in front of a TV than at school. Is virtual reality now home and teacher to our children? By allowing our children to watch this much TV, are we literally draining the life force from our children?

Parenting and teaching styles of the past no longer seem to work for today's students, causing frustration and apparent resignation of teachers and parents. While we know that watching TV results in obesity, aggression, addictions and detachment, little has been done at schools or in the home to address this growing concern. Dr. Susan R. Johnson, Assistant Clinical Professor of Pediatrics at University of Southern California, describes how children's developing nervous systems are adversely affected by watching TV and playing video games. Dr. Johnson in her article *Strangers in Our Homes: TV and Our Children's Minds* states that "Watching TV has been characterized as multi-level sensory deprivation that may be stunting the growth of our children's brains. Brain size has been shown to decrease 20-30% if a child is not touched, played with or talked to." Technology is now the teacher of our children; virtual reality is

now our children's home. Dr. Johnson goes on to states that watching TV weakens the eye muscles necessary for reading.

Teaching programs at universities no longer instruct teachers in printing acquisition skills. Dr. Marvin Simner, Psychologist and Professor at University of Western Ontario, and author of *Promoting Skilled Handwriting*, states "Handwriting is an essential skill, despite modern technology. People present themselves to the world through their handwriting, and are inevitably judged by it." Dr. Simner goes on to say that children who experience difficulty printing, are likely to be delayed in spelling and reading as well. While newer teaching styles appear to have a greater emphasis on analytical thinking, creative writing, and communication skills, printing efficiently will always be necessary to accomplish higher level thinking and learning. Dr. Jan Hasbrouck, Ph.D., Educational Consultant with Read Naturally, states "I cannot imagine a world in which printing won't be a part of what we do. There is still a need for printing, so the logical conclusion is that we should TEACH it!"

If we don't change something quick, we risk losing what we all live for, human connection. We also risk losing the functional ability to relate in a meaningful way to our children, teachers and families, an essential skill for living and learning. In order to save our children, we need to go back to the basics of our nature. For generations, human beings have engaged in heavy work, and sensory stimulation was nature-based and calming. We moved to survive; chopping wood, hauling water, plowing fields...listening, looking and smelling nature. Advances in technology and transportation have re-

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sulted in a physically sedentary human body that is bombarded with chaotic and complex sensory stimulation. While TV and computers may be compelling and interesting, burying our heads in technology is causing sensory deprivation and a “disconnect” from our worlds. Dr. Gabor Mate, M.D. author of *Scattered Minds, A New Look at the Origins and Healing of Attention Deficit Disorder*, brings to light the importance of quality of “attunement” between parents and children and states, “The letters ADD may equally stand for Attunement Deficit Disorder.” Dr. Mate points out that “happy interactions” between parent and child generate motivation and arousal by activating cells in the midbrain that produce endorphins, and activating cells that trigger the release of dopamine. Dr. Mate goes on to say “A relative scarcity of dopamine receptors is thought to be one of the major physiological dimensions of ADD.” How well have we evolved to accommodate to these changes? Human evolution takes time, lots of time. Have we adapted as a species to accommodate to this sedentary yet frenzied existence? Are we pushing evolution? What will be the consequences for our children if we continue?

Although the answers to these questions are largely speculative, Cris Rowan, a Paediatric Occupational Therapist, believes we are already seeing results of sedentary lives and high levels of chaotic sensory input levels in our children - and they aren't adapting as well as we would hope. Cris observes that 30% of primary classroom children have attention problems, with energy levels ranging from sleepy and lethargic to charged and wired, while 20% have printing delays, primarily in the areas of planning movement. Changes to home and school settings have contributed to

these delays. Continued budget cutbacks have resulted in overcrowded classrooms with subsequent “caged animal” symptoms in children (anger, anxiety, chewing, and depression). Sedentary home lifestyles, as well as decreased school gym, supervised recess and organized sports, have contributed to observed delays in sensory and motor development. Consequently, these delays have an effect not only on children's ability to print and read, but also impact their energy states, creating either hypo- or hyperactive children with huge attention difficulties.

So how do we learn, and how can we improve attention? We take information in through our sensory channels, we make “sense” of that information, and we produce an output – which could be how we behave, feel, move, and learn. The principles of Sensory Integration Theory, and Cris Rowan's Body Energy Model, posit that sensory input is energy, and can either charge, deplete or ground body energy. Movement, in the form of heavy work, is an energy outlet. In energy terms, “what goes in, must come out”...because energy is neither created nor destroyed, only transferred. When sensory input is balanced with movement output, the energy body is at its optimal state for learning.

As a society of parents, teachers and professionals, we need to work together to address how we can assist children to balance sensory stimulation with heavy work, to increase attention and reduce sensory overload (fright, flight, fight). For example, at home, a parent might allow one hour of “box time” (TV, video game, computer) for one hour of heavy work (bike up hill, haul wood, dig in garden). Schools could work toward increasing classroom-based resistive

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Jim Lawson: 12 Years Service

Mike Shaw

I first met Jim Lawson in September, 1983. We were tradesmen attending what was affectionately called "The Farm," a teacher training program for industrial education teachers run by UBC, but in a building on the BCIT campus. Jim was a tin-basher by trade and I a carpenter, and we had both decided to change careers mid-life. My earliest recollection is of him holding a can of Coke, which seemingly went with him every where, and which even today remains his trademark! Over the years, Jim contributed to the association in a variety of

capacities, including Member At Large, Vice-President, President, and Newsletter Editor. He was also the provider of the world's best smoked salmon at meetings! Through it all, his opinion and counsel was always sought out, well-reasoned, and respected. A new job as Career Education Coordinator for Alternate Programs in Port Alberni meant he no longer had the time available to volunteer. Both the executive and the association will be the poorer for his leaving, but we wish him well in his new job. And Jim, we'll toast you at our next meeting with a Pepsi! ♦

Prince George Aboriginal School

Bruce Watts

There is excitement in the air in Prince George as school trustees voted unanimously in favor of moving to public consultation in the development of a community-based Aboriginal School. Possibly opening this fall, the K-7 school would follow the provincial curriculum, while featuring aboriginal culture. A secondary school would start the following year.

Education Minister Shirley Bond supports the move saying "it will only succeed if its supporters ensure it includes the rest of the community... it must be a true choice program," so non-aboriginal students may also participate. Bond is hoping there will be significant partnership and leadership from First Nations. Improving graduation rates is one of the prime motivators for developing the school. Graduation rates are only 40% for aboriginal youth in the Prince George area and are 50% for aboriginal youth provincially. The Prince

George Citizen reports the Amiskwaciy Academy in Edmonton achieves a 100% grad rate among their Grade 11 and 12 aboriginal students.

The idea of an aboriginal school has been studied and discussed in Prince George for many years. In 2004 SD57's school board chair Lyn Hall told the Prince George Citizen "despite the earnest efforts of teachers, administrators and support staff, we appear to be no further ahead than we were in 1995... clearly we have to do better". Hopefully for the students, their families and their community, this time the drive to develop the school will lead to the opening of an institution which will meet their needs. ♦

We are looking for a correspondent in Prince George who can follow this story for us and contribute an update to our next newsletter. Contact info for the Newsletter Editor, Bruce Watts, is on page 19.

Media Use

(continued from page 18)

“
We
need to
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”

type movement through desk isometrics (hand push/pull), or through recess/gym activities (tug of war, climbing ropes). Schools could also reduce sensory stimulation by decreasing classroom visual and auditory “clutter”, creating sensory hide-outs, as well as could improve children’s ability to attend by utilizing sensory tools and techniques for optimizing energy states.

So while the pace of our society may not allow us to stop pushing evolution, we must start listening to our bodies, if we want to successfully accommodate to recent advances in technology and transportation. We need to intersperse our daily lives with increased heavy work and need to moderate daily amounts of sensory stimulation to get back on the natural evolutionary track. Increasing necessary touch and movement sensation can be achieved by daily hugs, play-

ful wrestling, nature games and by quite simply “reattaching” to our children! Now is the time to plant the seed for children to learn in a new and conscious way. Teaching children to be aware of their bodies, so they know who they are, creates a strong and healthy foundation for learning. Using their energy in positive and productive ways, children learn to create balance and wholeness of body, mind and spirit. ♦

Cris Rowan has been an Occupational Therapist for 20 years, working in schools for the past 8 years. Cris has recently developed two new educational programs, Zone’in and Move’in, for use in schools and at home. Zone’in is derived from Sensory Integration theory, and helps children get their energy Zone’in to Learn. Move’in is based on Fine Motor Development theory and is designed to help children print and read by taking them on a Printing Adventure. You can learn more about these programs at www.zonein.ca, or email Cris at info@zonein.ca.

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The following dedicated individuals volunteer their time to ensure the smooth running of your association. Information on the roles and responsibilities of each position may be found on our web site: www.bctf.ca/bcaea/executive.html



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The Last Word ...

Ryan Oberg, Alternate Student, Port Alberni

REPUTATION

When I'm gone
Will I be forgotten?
What kind of legacy will be left?
Hoping I will be known for the positive
And knowing to just believe
It's never too late
For a change.
All matter of choice
It takes simple gestures
Those will be the times
That will leave a reputation
Of being a good human being

Being a follower is easy
Not much work is needed
Having the strength to lead
And motivation to help others succeed
Is one of the greatest gifts
Can be known to the world
That in many ways we have given into temptations
Giving up is never the answer
It doesn't result in any good
All it will do is bring you sadness
A pain the soul shouldn't bear is loneliness

The greatest obstacle I have overcome
Is the ability to show that overcoming
Everything is within reach
It depends on how bad it's wanted