CAMBIE STUDENTS TELL OTHERS TO ‘Quit your bellyaching’

By Graeme Wood

Can you go an hour without complaining? How about a day? How about a month?

Students at Cambie secondary are challenging themselves to do just that as part of a senior leadership course.

“Often as humans our paradigm is negative rather than positive so we want to change what we verbalize. If we’re positive, that positivity comes back to (us),” said Cambie’s recreation leadership coordinator Ms. Paula Stone-Charlton.

The 60 or so students call the challenge the Complaint Free World Journey, inspired after a book that chronicles similar challenges around the world whereby people stopped complaining and started enjoying life through a more positive perspective.

Ms. Stone-Charlton said the idea initially came from a pastor in America who thought his congregation was being too negative. He challenged the congregation to be more positive and his story spread quickly online.

Part of the challenge includes doing random acts of kindness, as well.

Grade 12 student Rosalie Cheung said she recently bought a coffee for a familiar stranger whom she knew had a mental illness.

“What was amazing was the look on his face. It was the most appreciative moment I have seen,” said Rosalie.

“It has opened our eyes to see how much we complain about silly stuff,” she added.

The students have created “positive zones” in the school, including a high-five zone whereby everyone is asked to high-five one another within a 30-foot span of hallway. The zone has paper cutouts of hands with the names of every student in the school. Plastered on the floor are hand cutouts as well.

Students also went around the school placing post-it notes with positive messages on lockers.

The leadership students have also been wearing wristbands to remind themselves to be positive. Should they catch themselves in the midst of a complaint, they must place the band on the other hand.

“It’s difficult to go with it, because when you first start you start to get conscious of complaining and find yourself complaining all the time in the first few days. But after some time you get used to it and then you can go an hour without complaining and then a day and it goes on,” explained Grade 12 student Kavya Balajepalli.

Students partnered up in order to give one another support during the challenge, which started in mid-October and doesn’t appear to have an end date.

Grade 12 student Angelica Gatchalian said not all complaints should be kept to one’s self, however it’s the way in which the complaint is voiced that is...
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On behalf of the Richmond Board of Education, I am proud to present our latest edition of EdCom to our students, parents and community. These stories are about our District and about the dedicated people that make a difference each day. The rich learning environments that surround our students would not be possible without dedicated administrators, teachers, staff, sponsors and volunteers.

EdCom is a valuable platform on which we can deliver stories about success, perseverance, dedication and teamwork while providing an opportunity for our schools, staff and students to share and celebrate their accomplishments.

Countless hours are committed behind the scenes to accomplish so much and often times this dedication goes unrecognized. I am excited that we have the opportunity to shine a spotlight on a few of these individuals and recognize them for their great work.

It is essential to note that EdCom is produced at no cost to the Richmond School District and the commercial advertising in this publication does not imply endorsement by our District.

I hope that you enjoy reading these stories as much as I did.

Sincerely,

Eric Yung
Chairperson, Richmond Board of Education
McMath Grade 11 student Andrew Tong is hoping to energize, and digitize, students across the Richmond School District with his new animation workshop.

"It’s a skill that isn’t easily trained and it is vital for the kids to learn in the future,” said Tong.

Animation, explained Tong, is a way to bring inanimate objects to life on a computer or television screen.

"It’s putting your vision into a computer screen, making something that’s not living and bringing it to life by materializing that vision,” said Tong.

Every Wednesday, for the past month, Tong has been teaching about a dozen students after school at Blundell elementary.

"It’s a delight to have Andrew come and teach the students at Blundell how to animate. He is organized, enthusiastic and an inspiration and it’s really exciting to be a part of his project,” said Blundell principal, Ms. Maria Medic.

Tong’s five-week seminar with the Blundell students emphasizes and helps develop skills such as spatial thinking, creativity and problem solving, in addition to the obvious computer skills.

At the end of the seminar, Tong holds an open house for parents who can see what their children created on the animation program Alice Three.

"The open house summarizes everything the kids have done and it makes them feel good. They’ve learned how to import characters, move them around and so on,” explained Tong, who added that games such as Minecraft have exploded in popularity and inspired kids to learn more about computers.

Tong said while most adult animators are men, his program is split evenly among boys and girls.

"There’s a misconception that computers, animation and programming is for boys. For what reason, I don’t know; it’s just the norm that developed. But, it’s definitely not true, anyone can animate,” he said.

The young upstart said he started to learn how to animate on his own at age 12. Over the course of his solo journey, he learned practical life skills, in particular, problem solving.

"In animating you have to bog down and work on your own. It’s helped me with other stuff in school, like taking tests. I’ve developed a better work ethic and with group assignments I’ve become more open and capable of taking criticism,” said Tong.
Leadership shines AT SUNNY Squamish camp

By Graeme Wood

For Grade 11 student Emma Lu, Palmer secondary’s Camp Squamish was a unique experience on two fronts. First, the Incentive student had never been on a school camping trip. Second, she had never taken on the official role of a mentor for younger students.

“I was extremely excited, but I was also a bit concerned,” said Lu.

The whirlwind three-day experience at the Easter Seal campsite on the shores of the Squamish River in Brackendale proved to be a success for close to 100 students in Grades 8, 9 and 10.

Lu was one of several senior students who mentored the younger ones at the camp, which aimed to teach leadership skills in a fun and thought-provoking setting.

This year’s theme was to create connections with other students, despite the fact many didn’t know one another.

Students, from the school’s Incentive and Pre-Advanced Placement programs, were split into various teams that went through a series of activities designed to promote team building.

To keep things interesting, students from three houses were able to accumulate points in order to win the Camp Squamish Grafton Cup as the ‘Top House’ at the end.

Lu said the most interesting activity the students partook in was a game called Bafa Bafa.

In the Bafa Bafa game, students were split into two groups that formed imaginary cultures, each with its own belief system and language. Each side sent representatives to the other side in order to figure out the rules and customs of the opposite culture.

“In a creative way, through this activity, the students were able to learn the importance of respect, diversity, and living as a global citizen – all of which are values that the Incentive program emphasizes,” said Lu, who initially had some trepidation as to whether or not she could, in fact, guide and lead her team.

But, Lu’s leadership shone through brightly, like the sunlight that penetrated the towering fir trees above the riverside lodge for the entire trip.

“An incredible bond between the students developed as they were challenged to put their heads together to overcome the problems thrown at them,” said Lu.

Grade 8 student Eileen Yang said the camp was a good opportunity to meet other students, particularly since it had only been about a month since she started attending Palmer.

“It felt like my first real experience in actual high school,” said Yang.

“Camp Squamish makes up for this exhausting and overwhelming month of adjustment. Leaving behind the life bound in homework, if only for a few days, was exhilarating,” added Yang.

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Keep Smiling,

Dr. Maureen

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important. Also, it’s best to keep small, personal complaints to oneself, she said.

“You can complain in your mind but if your actions or words display it then you’re spreading that negativity,” explained Angelica.

Ms. Stone-Charlton noted the leadership classes talk about how to speak directly to the source of the complaint.

“We talk about this process. It should teach us about better communication. When we aren’t happy about something we should be addressing that, but we should be going to the source and having a constructive conversation with them, to find a resolution and create a positive outcome,” said Ms. Stone-Charlton, adding that modifying a behavior such as chronic complaining can take four to eight months on average. This challenge is to go 21 consecutive days without a single complaint.

“Through the process you start to recognize that you’re complaining and hopefully change the way you think and then change your outcomes. In the end we get to a point where you’re thinking positively,” said Ms. Stone-Charlton.

At the end, she’s hoping the exercise provides her students with the necessary leadership qualities to continue into their post-secondary lives.

Grade 12 leadership students at Cambie secondary jump for joy in the ‘high-five zone’ in an attempt to put complaining in their rear view mirrors.

“Leadership is present in all of us and there’s an element that everyone can provide. But it’s about identifying your strengths and applying those in the community,” said Ms. Stone-Charlton.

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Fewer book stacks, more creativity found

By Graeme Wood

School libraries are just as important for learning these days, as they were when the printed book was the predominant medium for learning.

In fact, according to Richmond School District’s library coordinator Gordon Powell, libraries are undergoing a transformation that will prove them to be as valuable, if not more, than ever before.

“There’s certainly more interest in providing digital resources, and libraries have moved away from relying only on print resources,” said Powell.

“But libraries are still an integral part of the learning process,” he added.

No doubt, print stocks are declining as non-fiction sources move online, however, libraries and the librarians who serve this long-standing institution now serve many different but equally important roles.

In the realm of librarians, libraries are now being described as “learning commons.”

Librarians such as Powell describe a learning commons as a shared space designed to engage students beyond simple research to a more exploratory and collaborative learning experience. It allows students to create their own environment to improve learning.

Learning commons aim to foster intellectual engagement with a free exchange of ideas and dialogue, be it online or in a designated physical space.

Whereas libraries were once rows upon rows of book stacks, they are slowly becoming welcoming places for students to engage in a wide range of activities.

At Palmer secondary, teacher-librarian Tom Morley is helping to transform the school library into a learning commons.

In one corner there are couches for dialogue; in another, a row of Mac computers for the likes of humanities research; a side room has a green screen for video production; and in another corner, space for a 3D printer (Morley awaits adequate funding).

Morley’s library has seen fewer and fewer books as the years of the digital revolution have progressed.

But that doesn’t mean a new library at a new school will be any smaller than existing ones, said Powell.

“Yes, there’s more room for a class or two to work in the library,” he said.
in school libraries

But in place of book space, has come “maker space,” said Powell. Of course, amidst this evolving learning commons are stacks of fiction books. “There will always be a place for books,” notes Powell.

But as far as non-fiction goes, as a wide range of information becomes more accessible to students online, the role of the librarian is becoming ever so important, Powell contends. “It’s not so much that kids can’t find out anything online, but rather there is so much stuff out there that they need a little hand holding at the outset,” said Powell.

In an emerging era where anyone can effectively be a publisher, librarians will need to help students sift through what is credible and what is not. They, along with teachers, must also show students how to conduct balanced research. Powell calls this process becoming “information literate.” Information literacy has been proven to improve student achievement, according to the International Association of School Librarianship.

Meanwhile, school librarians — who are also expected to teach a handful of classes — are also at the forefront of technology being introduced into schools. “Teacher-librarians are good instructional partners with teachers in incorporating technology in the classroom,” said Powell.

All too often, in Richmond schools, one may notice the iPad cart is typically stationed in the library when the tablets are not in use. This is indicative of how libraries are integrating physical and virtual environments in order for the student to create new, personalized methods of research in order to adapt to a rapidly changing learning environment.

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Learn tips on programming and develop your own video game. Brighouse | Tuesdays, 6:30-8pm, Registered Program (same session repeats weekly).
January 12 - February 25 (2nd session February 9)

Introduction to Electronics | ages 10-15
Learn the basics of electronics and how to put a circuit together. Presented by the Professional Engineers & Geoscientists of BC. Brighouse | 2-4pm, Registered Program. Saturday, February 18

Coding for Internet Safety Series | ages 12-15
Learn about safe online usage and gaming addiction. Brighouse | Thursdays, 7-8pm, Registered Program.
Internet Safety: From a Hacker’s Perspective | February 1 (for teens 10-14) Internet Addiction: What parents can do | February 8 (For parents)

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Quilchena kids crazy for kale at farmers’ market

By Graeme Wood

A classic farmers’ market was in full operation at Quilchena elementary in November as students reaped the rewards of their fall harvest, all for a good cause.

Arugula, radishes, spinach, kale and green onions were some of the items sold by participating students to teachers and fellow students in order to raise $280 for the Richmond Food Bank.

Teachers Mr. Kevin Vines and Mr. Andrew Livingston "leased” garden plots to the students for $10 in order to replicate a real life farming experience for the kids, who formed a dozen student-led food companies that sold the food.

"It was a ton of fun. The kids were totally engaged and we were trying to recreate a real life experience,” said Mr. Livingston.

Students planned and designed their project, first researching what vegetables were in season, then renting tools and buying seeds (teachers represented the seed companies, selling to the student farmers.)

"Our inspiration was trying to match curriculum and having students become more engaged and take ownership,” said Mr. Livingston, noting the market was inspired by the redesigned curriculum, whereby students lead the project while teachers ensure the tenants of the curriculum are followed.

"When you turn it around and let the students inquire about what they’re learning, an even richer experience can happen instead of a teacher driven project,” said Mr. Livingston.

"It’s an opportunity to teach and learn outside the box,” added Mr. Livingston.

All the students made back their $10 lease and then some. A total of 12 companies set up tables in a classroom and marketed their products with posters and promotions (such as free samples).


The market was so successful that students took pre-orders of garlic. That means they will have to account for their work (and the cost of the garlic seeds) at the next planned market in June.
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