

Spring 2020

# Inspired

The official journal of the  
British Columbia School  
Superintendents Association

## Mission Possible: The Importance of Career Education

*YOUR CAREER*

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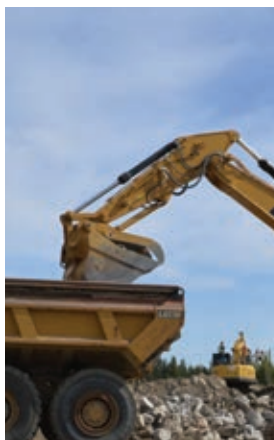
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## A Message to our Readers

When all of the articles for this edition of *InspirED* were written and submitted, the COVID-19 crisis was not first and foremost on the minds of us all, and we were not in the crisis that we have all experienced during the past several weeks. By the time you receive this, you will have already been working to support your communities through what truly will be a transformation in education. If there was ever a time and need for inspiring stories, it is now!

We wish to thank you all for the amazing work you are doing to continue to provide learning opportunities for students among very challenging circumstances. We wish you all health and wellness as you take care of each other and those around you.

**Chris van der Mark and Claire Guy**

## A Message from the BCSSA President



Chris van der Mark

Given the complexity and context of the world we exist in, it is hard to have 20/20 vision, at the best of times. However, by working together, we can all collectively see a little bit clearer.

It is serendipitous, that in the year 2020, we should think a bit about our vision in education. I mean, we think about it all the time, but it would be nice to have, dare I say, 20/20 vision. Many districts and organizations are embarking upon strategic planning and visioning activities. This focus resonates for me in our work, possibly more than ever.

We are constantly reminded of the rapidly changing world our students are moving through and some of the inherent challenges they face. One of the emerging themes requiring attention and vision is the increasingly polarized world we live in. We appear to be in a moment of time where issues are viewed as black or white, partly because that seems clear. It's not. A lot of it is fuzzy, maybe blurred around the edges... much is (or should be) nuanced. We need to use 20/20 vision to find the clarity and navigate the nuance so that as we explore Educational Voice for Student Learning, Leadership for Learning, Equity for Learning, and Member Support, we can make sense of some of the blurry difficult bits, rather than simply magnify the clear lines of polarized black/white thinking we are seeing.

Given the complexity and context of the world we exist in, it is hard to have 20/20 vision, at the best of times. However, by working together, we can all collectively see a little bit clearer. I've used the North Star metaphor before, and I believe that collectively, we all shine brighter, and together we can find the clarity that makes the world a bit better for our students and their futures.

With that, let's all look forward to working together to enhance students' lives across our province. Thank you all for bringing passion, joy and clarity to the wonderful world of education! I look forward to seeing you all in the near future! 😊

### Chris van der Mark

President, British Columbia School Superintendents Association  
Superintendent, Cariboo-Chilcotin  
School District 27

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### Spring 2021

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### Fall 2021

November 18-19, 2020  
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Event dates for the next several years are already available online. Visit [www.bcssa.org](http://www.bcssa.org) for details.

### Fall 2020

November 5-6, 2020  
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### Summer 2021

August 18-20, 2021  
Fairmont Chateau Whistler

## A Message from the Assistant Deputy Minister of Education



**Nicola Lemmer**  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Education Programs Division

I am delighted to be given this opportunity to provide an update on the work that is happening around students' career development. It is an area that I am passionate about because I believe it's critical that all students leave high school excited about the opportunities that await them.

We are all bombarded with the message that the world is changing more and more rapidly. Our young people are told that a large percentage of future jobs don't yet exist today, that many existing jobs have a high chance of being affected by automation or artificial intelligence, that the gig economy will make permanent full-time jobs an historical artifact, and that students will change careers umpteen times during their lifetime. It is no wonder that too many of our Grade 10 and 12 students tell us they don't feel well prepared for the life after graduation!

Since 1989, following the visionary work from the Royal Commission on Education, the mandate of the British Columbia public school system has been to foster "the educated citizen" through three goals – intellectual development, human and social development, and career development. Although these three goals were set out over thirty years ago, they are still very relevant in today's society and are reflected throughout the curriculum. The curriculum

is learner-centred and flexible, and maintains a focus on literacy and numeracy, while supporting deeper learning. The core competencies (thinking, communication, and personal and social) align with the skills and competencies that employers state are needed to succeed in the workplace.

The new career education curricula that span K-12 are a strong signal that we honour career development as one of our key goals. CLE and CLC courses for high school students provide the flexibility for students to pursue their own passions and connect their learning to the world. Under BC's graduation program, all students must complete a capstone – a final project that celebrates what they have learned and helps them explore their preferred future. Other career programs offer students additional opportunities to develop work-related skills. As well, career competencies are not isolated to career curriculum and programs; they are woven throughout the curriculum and all educators have an opportunity to help students explore and understand their skills, interests and abilities.

The evidence shows our education system is preparing students well for the future and we must do more.

Over the past year, my team has been engaging with K-12, post-secondary and business community partners to discuss how we can all contribute to greater career development of our students. We hosted a Careers Summit on May 31, 2019 to kick off the discussion and have subsequently met with numerous partners to get a sense of what is working well, what the barriers are and what we could be doing better.

We have heard that schools and teachers are taking advantage of the new curriculum to provide students with more experiential learning. The capstone project is allowing students to pursue a passion and plan their next steps. Innovative partnerships with local employers lead to

mentoring and meaningful work experience opportunities. Priority students are being supported to transition to post-secondary through dual credit programs.

But we also have heard that, when faced with many other priorities, career development can fall to the bottom of the pile. Students and parents don't have the supports they need to make informed choices. Employers want to connect with their local schools but don't know how to go about it. Not all students have equitable access to opportunities for meaningful career exploration.

Through these conversations, we have received a great deal of advice and recommendations on how to tackle these challenges. The Ministry has taken this input and developed a draft response document for feedback. We want to know whether we've captured the challenges and opportunities accurately, and whether our proposed actions are going to make a difference for students. I would like to thank all of you who have already contributed to this process, and I look forward to hearing from more of you in the coming months as we turn a draft document into something real.

By turning our collective attention to how we can better prepare our students, I want the story to change from one of anxiety about the future to one of excitement about the possibilities that await our youth. Our students should have confidence that they will leave the K-12 system with the essential skills and competencies that will enable them to achieve their potential, regardless of what the world looks like. They will be adaptable, flexible and resilient. They will be prepared for a lifetime of learning and exploration. They will thrive – which will enable British Columbia to thrive.

**Nicola Lemmer**  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Education Programs Division

## A Message from the BCSSA Executive Director



**Claire Guy**  
Executive Director  
British Columbia School  
Superintendents Association

The articles in this magazine are just a small sample of the many inspiring examples of how districts are capitalizing on the knowledge from Indigenous Elders, community partnerships, staff expertise, and local resources to expand the learning outside of the traditional classroom to provide students with relevant and meaningful opportunities to explore possible career pathways.

As someone who is passionate about career education, I am excited that several of the articles in this third edition of BCSSA's *InspirED* journal focus on the importance of and innovative work happening in our province regarding career development.

Several years ago, I was fortunate to be part of an amazing team of educators who created the K-12 *Career Education Curriculum* document as part of the curriculum re-design. At the time, all of us at the table repeatedly said, "if we get this right, this could be the game changer for curriculum transformation and student learning in our province." It felt as though we were among a lone group of educators championing this work, and while there were pockets of brilliance and support, the career education dialogue was not universal, and Capstone was an unknown reality. But the interest in this area has exploded and we are seeing every district put its own local stamp of ownership, innovation, creativity, and partnership to truly personalize and tailor the career education experience for each student.

In the past, career education had been one of the three goals of the BC education system that somehow managed to fall to the side of peoples' desks as they occupied themselves with what they believed were the more tangible and accessible goals – the intellectual and social/emotional development of students. But now, with the acknowledgement that this is indeed an important and valued area in BC education, districts are devoting outstanding energy,

time, dedication, and funding into supporting students' personal interests and passions. The articles in this magazine are just a small sample of the many inspiring examples of how districts are capitalizing on the knowledge from Indigenous Elders, community partnerships, staff expertise, and local resources to expand the learning outside of the traditional classroom to provide students with relevant and meaningful opportunities to explore possible career pathways.

I applaud the Ministry of Education and our many education and industry partners for putting this curricular area on the educational map and for highlighting its proper place among the many important and sometimes competing interests in BC education. As this issue of *InspirEd* goes to press, you will be

hearing more about a provincial career education strategy that will be launched by the Ministry of Education and this will provide further direction and ideas to support the career development journey for our students.

Finally, I want to thank YOU, our passionate and dedicated leaders who have contributed to this edition of *InspirED*. As we work collectively as an association to revise our BCSSA Strategic Plan for the coming years, it is clear that the need to be the leading provincial educational voice for student learning is emerging as a major theme of our work as system leaders. This journal is one way we can positively share our voice and contribute to the well-being of the entire system. And hopefully, with the sharing of these stories, you are inspired to reach out and connect with colleagues across the regions to expand your professional learning. So please, keep these amazing articles and stories coming! Thank you.

**Claire Guy**  
Executive Director  
British Columbia School Superintendents Association



# Lheidli T'enneh Nation 2019 “Balhats” with School District No. 57

By Pamela Spooner,  
School District No. 57 (Prince George)



*Lheidli T'enneh Dayi (Chief) Clay Pountney presented Pamela Spooner, Director of Aboriginal Education for School District No. 57, with a plaque and flag at the Balhats, held at Uda Dune Baiyoh (House of Ancestors).*

The first Balhats hosted by the Lheidli T'enneh in 70 years, an All Clans Balhats was held on November 29, 2019, to celebrate the vital and growing partnership between the Lheidli

T'enneh and School District No. 57 (Prince George). SD 57 operates over 40 schools on the unceded and ancestral lands of the Lheidli T'enneh. Approximately 30 per cent of students in the district self-identify as Indigenous.

“Today is the day Lheidli regained the Balhats, regained their history and turned the corner toward a vibrant and sustainable future,” said Chief Clay Pountney.

The Balhats was an historic event as it signified the reclaiming of traditional governance by Lheidli T'enneh. The main purpose of this Balhats was not just to recognize and solidify the existing partnership, but to highlight that the School District is willing to be increasingly accountable for the success of our Indigenous students and understands how this will positively impact the entire community. In addition, several other community partnerships were strengthened. Elders from surrounding Indigenous communities who have maintained and revitalized their Balhats were invited to help Lheidli Elders and community members regain



Interim superintendent Rod Allen accepts a plaque at the Balhats.



Deanna Hood, Principal of Malaspina Elementary, accepts a plaque as well. All principals in attendance were presented with these gifts.

their Balhats. Students from district schools acted as servers with honour and dignity. This helped to connect the young people to their community, their principals and to the elders, in particular.

The Balhats hall was filled with individuals there to witness the business conducted and to show respect. Lheidli

families came together to collect items for the witnesses, serve food, and hand out gifts. The district staff were able to experience the students and their families showing pride in their clan, culture, and nation. Everyone in the hall was able to witness the power of taking part in First Nations culture, laws, and traditions.

In recent years, Lheidli and SD 57 have invested significantly to enhance and expand the Local Education Agreement (LEA). This investment created a process to ensure the active involvement of the community and Elders, through the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee, to increase language learning, and provide increased opportunities for everyone to learn about Indigenous history and practices throughout the district. Another key goal, shared between Lheidli T'enneh and the school district, is to ensure Lheidli students, and those of other Indigenous nations, are supported at every level to achieve educational success.

Over 250 SD 57 trustees, principals, teachers, and support staff were joined by representatives of the University of Northern BC, the City of Prince George, the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George, and Indigenous leaders from surrounding communities to witness the Balhats. A representative from each school in Lheidli Territory was invited to receive a commemorative Lheidli T'enneh Nation flag and a plaque for display at their school, symbolizing the oral contract made at the Balhats.

As the morning began, there was visible nervousness from many administrators due to unfamiliarity with traditional cultural practice. As the day progressed, the apprehension faded, replaced with a feeling of honour and celebration at being invited to witness and participate in traditional governance. It all culminated in everyone joining together in dance. The Balhats was truly a transformative event. Everyone left the Balhats with a renewed commitment to reconciliation, and with a growing understanding of the complexity of that work.

As educators, we can and must do better. Our children are worth it. Our collective futures depend on it. 🌈

*Pamela Spooner is the Director of Aboriginal Education, for School District No. 57.*



# Capstone:



## A Bridge Connecting Schools with Communities

By Brent Firkser and Naomi Ross, School District 8 Kootenay Lake

School District 8 Kootenay Lake is geographically large; it encompasses six distinct rural communities. Naturally, career education programs look different in each school as they reflect the culture and values of their community. What connects all of our career education programs is that they embody the unique spirit of the Kootenays – blaze a trail into uncharted territory, grow through the experience, and come out the other side ready for the next step.

When the Capstone was first introduced in the BC curriculum, educators were excited about embracing the philosophical shift; however, at the same time, they yearned for concrete tools and a structure to help inform

and guide their work. Over the course of the 2017-18 school year, four passionate educators from two secondary schools in School District 8 Kootenay Lake championed this initiative.

Sasha Kitsch, Claire Hewson, and Jennifer Kidd teach at L.V. Rogers Secondary School in Nelson, and Kathleen Edwards teaches at Mount Sentinel Secondary School in the Slocan Valley. With an overarching goal of creating a framework and broad guidelines for the graduation Capstone project, these pioneer educators collaborated on a district project to research and examine resources from across the continent in order to find the “best of the best” in career education curriculum. What resulted was

a comprehensive distillation into a locally developed Capstone Guidebook.

*The Capstone Guidebook* has proven to be a valuable tool for educators and students. It outlines key criteria for the culminating graduation Capstone project, including guidelines for developing a project proposal, creating a portfolio of artifacts and evidence, presenting to a formal audience, and completing a comprehensive reflection of the learning journey. In addition, a variety of assessment rubrics, such as a student self-assessment using the core competencies and Capstone Portfolio are also included. Hewson and Kidd have had the opportunity to present sold-out workshops at regional and provincial Career Education Conferences. Their

## STUDENT REFLECTION QUESTIONS (FROM *THE CAPSTONE GUIDEBOOK*)

- The Capstone is a unique and demanding challenge. In completing it, what did you learn about your subject? Your skill set? Yourself?
- How is your project relevant to you, the school or the community-at-large?
- What skills do you feel you have mastered? Which do you need to still work on?
- What impact did your capstone project have?
- Thinking about the whole process and your finished product, what are you most proud of?
- What was a difficulty you encountered and how did you solve the problem?
- What is one thing about your finished project you wish you could change? Why?
- What advice would you give to a student who will be completing their Capstone Project next year?

Guidebook, currently in its third iteration, is a popular resource used by many BC secondary schools.

Annette Falk and Katherine Coleman teach at Prince Charles Secondary School (PCSS) in Creston. These innovative educators designed a Leadership Development course that their Grade 12 students take alongside Career Life Connections (CLC) and Capstone. This dual delivery model is a great example of career education cultivating community partnerships and connecting students to the post-secondary world.

Mentors guide students through a series of strengths-based inquiry assignments and reflections. This naturally leads students towards a “passion project” which ultimately becomes their Capstone.

The course objectives require that students assist in planning, organizing, and running a school or community event. Furthermore, as PCSS has made this course mandatory for graduation, every student is given the opportunity to develop and reflect upon their own leadership qualities. Coleman states, “The Leadership Development course

brings out leadership qualities in kids that might not have stepped up to lead in the past. Often, we see natural leadership traits that the kids themselves do not realize they possess and that may not have been apparent in their other classes.” These authentic leadership opportunities provide students with valuable life skills and foster a culture of collaboration, empathy, and pride in their school and community.


Capstone readily lends itself to being embedded in specialty programs and Trades Sampler courses. At L.V. Rogers Secondary School in Nelson, specialty programs such as dance, rugby and the ATLAS Academy, as well as, Youth Train in Trades, incorporate hands-on, experiential learning. As these programs focus on authentic learning experiences, they provide natural opportunities for Capstone to flourish. For example, a student enrolled in the Work in Trades chef program chose to focus on cake decorating. Her community mentor, a local pastry chef, helped her design and create a series of wedding and birthday cakes as part of her Capstone portfolio.

Capstone fosters an invaluable opportunity for mentors within the school and the local community to develop meaningful connections with students. Mentors guide students through a series of strengths-based inquiry assignments and reflections. This naturally leads students towards a “passion

project,” which ultimately becomes their Capstone.

In School District 8 Kootenay Lake, local community members, due to their close-knit connections with the secondary schools, readily embrace student mentorship opportunities. For example, a student from L.V. Rogers Secondary School in Nelson who had an interest in journalism was mentored by a local editor. Through this mentor’s local community connections, the student was given a number of authentic writing opportunities, including writing a review of a Nelson business. Her review was subsequently published in *Kootenay Mountain Culture* magazine.

In small rural communities, Capstone can be the bridge that helps students make connections between their high school education and their post-graduation goals. Through Capstone, students are responsible for meeting timelines, making decisions, conducting research, and presenting their learning to a formal audience – all transferable skills.

Hewson states, “The Capstone has proven to be an amazing opportunity for students to delve deeply into something they are passionate about. By enlisting the expertise and support of our community, an endless stream of opportunities is created and shared; our students are poised to be positive contributing members in our communities.” 

*Brent Firkser is a District Teacher and Naomi Ross is the District Principal in Innovative Learning for School District 8 Kootenay Lake.*

### For more information, consult these sources:

- BC Ministry of Education  
Career Education 10-12 Guide: [curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/curriculum/career-education/en\\_career-education\\_10-12\\_career-education-guide.pdf](http://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/curriculum/career-education/en_career-education_10-12_career-education-guide.pdf)
- Contact School District 8 Kootenay Lake for Capstone Guidebook inquiries: [www.sd8.bc.ca](http://www.sd8.bc.ca)



# Heavy Metal Rocks:



## Where Education Meets Industry

*Throughout the day, students have a chance to test their skills on a variety of equipment.*

**By David Corbett, School District No. 27**

Heavy Metal Rocks is a hands-on heavy equipment operator program offered at no cost to Grades 11 and 12 students through partnerships with industry, business leaders, and School District No. 27 (Cariboo-Chilcotin).

For the second consecutive year, SD 27 is excited to offer two Heavy Metal Rocks programs to students, which include a two-day program near 100 Mile House, BC, and a four-day program in Williams Lake, BC. This year marks the 10th annual Heavy Metal Rocks program in Williams Lake. In recognition of this milestone, a celebration to honour those who were instrumental in establishing the program in Williams Lake has been planned. Program pioneers, community and industry leaders, and local and provincial dignitaries will gather to celebrate the program's success in our community.

Heavy Metal Rocks is possible through partnerships with over 50 industry and community leaders who support the program with in-kind and financial donations exceeding \$125,000 each year. Local industry and community partners play an integral role in supporting this innovative program through the donation of equipment, trainers, first aid attendants, student awards, meal preparation, and monetary donations.

Participating students are selected for the program through an application process, similar to applying for a job. Application packages require a school transcript, attendance report, references, a resume, and a cover letter, followed by a face-to-face panel interview. Selected students are required to complete a number of prerequisite courses including Occupational First Aid – Level 1, S-100 Basic Fire Suppression and Safety, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System, and a resume writing workshop.



These prerequisite courses and the experience gained at Heavy Metal Rocks will have a significant impact on the resumes of participating students as they move toward a new chapter in their lives.

Following six months of planning, the four-day program in Williams Lake begins with an orientation morning at Thompson Rivers University where guest speakers from WorkSafeBC, BC Hydro, the BC Construction Safety Alliance, Fortis BC, and SD 27 talk to students about safety on the worksite, Field Level Risk Assessment, and



*The Heavy Metal Rocks sponsors and equipment.*

behavioural expectations. The morning wraps up with a presentation from the Pit Boss, the General Foreman of Mine Operations at Taseko/Gibraltar, who reinforces the importance of a safety mindset in a mining environment. Before leaving for the pit, students are provided with lunch and personal protective equipment (PPE), donated by WorkSafeBC. Once at the pit, students assist with setup and are each given a hearing test courtesy of the Okanagan Audio Lab.

Training days are long days for the students. They catch the bus to the pit at 7:00 AM and are on site until 5:00 PM each day. Students rotate between 24 pieces of equipment in 12 stations, spending 45 minutes on each piece of equipment. Trainers score

students on each piece of equipment. A gas line demonstration and a spill kit demonstration are provided by Fortis BC during the event. The Williams Lake Lions Club graciously prepares all of the meals on site, including the wrap-up barbeque on the last day for over 80 people.

Heavy Metal Rocks is possible through partnerships with over 50 industry and community leaders who support the program with in-kind and financial donations exceeding \$125,000 each year.

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Student monetary awards are provided by Taseko/Gibraltar Ltd, Tolko Industries Ltd, West Fraser Timber Co, and Mount Polley Mine. In addition to the monetary awards, trophies are provided by Finning for Most Enthusiastic Operator, Most Improved Operator, and Best Operator.

Industry and community involvement are vital to the success of Heavy Metal Rocks. During the program, each student will operate numerous pieces of mining, construction, and logging equipment, each donated and managed under the direct supervision of a qualified volunteer trainer. The site is set up and managed entirely through donated time, supplies, supporting equipment, and monetary contributions. Without this support, Heavy Metal Rocks would not be possible.

The Heavy Metal Rocks program benefits students and the community in a variety of ways. It provides valuable training to local students by equipping them for employment upon graduation and providing skills for their future. It has the potential to keep local young people working in their home communities, and it fosters partnerships between education, the workforce, and the community. 

*David Corbett is the Coordinator of Career Programs in School District No. 27. David has worked in the district for over 30 years in teaching, administration, and now career development. Heavy Metal Rocks is one of his highlights each year.*



# Careers: Changing Lives in the Cowichan Valley

By Larry Mattin, School District No. 79

Rya walked into her school every day for as long as she could remember, feeling defeated and wanting to give up on school completely. For the first 10 years of her schooling, Rya felt lost, falling further and further behind her peers. Did she learn that her behaviour could hide her struggles with her schoolwork or did her frustrations with learning lead to the acting out? Not only was school difficult, she was born into a world of generational poverty; being a single parent, her mom struggled getting and keeping employment.

Rya was 14 years old when I met her. Repeated fights with students and staff, combined with her explosive behaviour, left Rya at risk of being expelled from school completely. It was her literacy teacher who advocated for a psychoeducational assessment and a career teacher who shared dual credit opportunities that started Rya down a different path. Through trusting relationships, Rya's teachers convinced her to endure a few hours of a painful assessment. The results were affirming and informative. Rya finally had someone explain to her and her teachers the nature of her unique learning styles. With this information, Rya's teachers were better able



*Rya, upon completing her hairstyling program, has passed at the top of her class and is now a certified Red Seal hairstylist. Photos courtesy of staff members of School District No. 79.*



*A group of the youth apprentices who were awarded scholarships through the Youth Work Awards.*



to assist her all the way through graduation, and her post-secondary instructor supported her through a Hairstylist Foundation Certificate Program.

Does this story sound familiar? Do you have students like Rya with whom you have worked? If only there were programs in every community that could help struggling learners find a better path for themselves – programs that could change their stories.

We have been very fortunate in the Cowichan Valley. Over the last four years we

have been able to redesign our model for career programming and see tremendous growth in dual credit, youth apprenticeships, and career exploration programs. Through this growth, we have been able to channel funds towards the creation of unique and exciting career programming for students from Kindergarten through Grade 12.

We are now giving the Ryas of our district opportunities to shine while learning about career pathways that might better fit their learning styles. With summer career



*One hundred and twenty-eight students all from around School District No. 79 participated in the Gravity Car builds race as part of the Junior Skills Canada Vancouver Island Motorsport Circuit.*

exploration programs, a robust Skills Canada program, K-9 Applied Design, Skills, and Technologies (ADST), and career professional development and specialist teacher support, every student in the Cowichan Valley has opportunities to learn about and explore career pathways from Kindergarten through to Grade 12.

Fiona Somerville, an elementary principal, commented on the impact of one of our early years programs: “I had a boy say to me, ‘This has been the best day ever!’ because of the hands-on project. This was one of our boys who has trouble focusing and staying on task. Today you helped him feel successful.”

I would love to say that we have the perfect recipe for success, but we all know that each community has to build their own program that meets student and community needs. I can, however, share some of the key components that have led School District No. 79 to grow a robust and successful careers program. First and foremost, you must have a champion at the district level who keeps careers a district priority.

We have seen tremendous growth by adopting the “If we staff it, it will grow” model. Prior to three years ago, we

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averaged three to four youth apprentices a year. Last year we had 97 youth apprentices and this year we have already surpassed 100 new youth apprentices after just five months. The impact of adding additional staff has been evidenced by the tremendous growth in our programs.

*Working together, we can help all of our students, especially our most at-risk, marginalized youth like Rya, write new stories for themselves.*

With district level advocacy in place, you also need to staff the program with the right people. We have champions in all of our high schools who act as career coaches to our students. Our career coaches not only help students prepare for and navigate post-secondary, they also map out apprenticeships, career exploration, and work placements that align with students' career goals. This plays an integral role in recruitment for all of our programs.

In addition to school-based champions, we have been very fortunate in having brought together an incredible district career team, including an academic dual credit support teacher, trades support teacher, ADST specialist teacher, a career coordinator, and a district principal. One

of our first additions to our team was our district champion, a career coordinator named Ryan Gough. A mechanic by trade, Ryan's experience and knowledge in trades, combined with widespread relationships with local industry, made him a great candidate to help lead our district in expanding career opportunities for our youth. What started as our team approaching local industry for potential apprenticeship opportunities for our

students, quickly evolved to local industry calling us when they hire a new youth apprentice.

We have many stories of students whose lives have been changed by our explore, dual credit, and apprenticeship programs. When we meet the Ryas of the world, we know that opening a door to these opportunities can change their trajectory in life, but we also know that opportunity alone is not always enough.



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Careers and trades did change Rya's life, but only because of the brilliant staff who supported and advocated for her on her journey prior to as well as during her trades foundation program.

We all play an integral role in helping our students find their pathway. Whether you are the math teacher, the counselor, or the PE teacher, we should all be having conversations about careers with the youth we work with. We should all be supporting

our students in discovering their potential and passions. With our help, our students can navigate to careers that align with their passions and interests. Working together, we can help all of our students, especially our most at-risk, marginalized youth like Rya, write new stories for themselves.


In Rya's last two years of schooling, she finally had hope for a better future. Not having any money, her counselor directed her to our district career program and dual

credit. Feeling very afraid of stepping into the world of post-secondary, Rya feared that her severe learning difficulties would make learning and studying too difficult to be successful, but Rya knew that she could lean on her counselor and her teachers for emotional and moral support throughout the program. With Rya's newfound determination realized, her literacy skills improving, and with a support network and a brilliant Vancouver Island University instructor, she had all of the ingredients to be successful in the program.

"Look at where I came from; if I can do it anyone can."

— Rya, Student, Graduate


I am happy to share that despite Rya's learning difficulties, she graduated from the hairstylist program top of her class and was chosen by her classmates to be their valedictorian. Additionally, two months ago, Rya wrote and passed her final Industry Training Authority exam and is now a Red Seal hairstylist working at one of the more prestigious salons in our community. With supportive adults and a dual credit opportunity, Rya's trajectory was changed; she stepped out of a life of poverty and wrote a new story for herself.

Rya's story continues to inspire many youths in our community to engage in career opportunities despite their personal struggles, including her younger sister who finished her hairstylist foundation program just last year. Rya shares with future dual credit students and young hairstylists, "Look at where I came from; if I can do it anyone can." 

*Larry Mattin is the Director of Instruction in the Cowichan Valley. With 21 years of experience in Alternate Education, and four years as Principal of Careers, Larry is a long-time advocate for at-risk youth and youth career opportunities.*







# B.C. Students Preparing for Careers in Cybersecurity

**By Jon Rever, Central Okanagan School District; Rob Laing, Richmond School District; Todd Diakow, Abbotsford School District; and Garth Errico, Burnaby School District**

Threats to cybersecurity are becoming more frequent, sophisticated, and well-funded, all of which is leading to an increase in data violations and security breaches each year. Organizations in every industry are dealing with the devastating effects, including the education sector. In the past year, 27 per cent of cybersecurity incidents were at educational institutions. It is estimated that more than 11.7 billion records and over 11 terabytes of data were leaked or stolen through cyberattacks over the last three years.

It is also estimated that there are between 1.5 to two million unfilled jobs in cybersecurity worldwide, a number that analysts predict may climb to 3.5 million by 2021. It is expected that there will be over 28,000 unfilled Canadian jobs by 2021. Faced with this information, leaders at Central Okanagan Public Schools, Richmond, and Burnaby School Districts

realized they needed to take a close look at how they could adapt to this new reality and prepare students for a future of “new collar” jobs.

As stated by Jon Rever, Assistant Superintendent at Central Okanagan School District, “How can we, as educators, support society in helping to address the widening gap in availability of a required skill set and certification in the job market?” These three school districts became involved in a unique and innovative cybersecurity program which is being offered to students in Grades 10, 11, and 12. The program is a collaborative effort between the school districts, Palo Alto Networks, IBM Canada’s K-12 division, and guidance from the Ministry of Education.

Central Okanagan Public School District had already realized the importance of cybersecurity, privacy, and freedom of information issues – they have a senior governance team that supports their work in this area, and a program to support

staff in developing their understanding of cybersecurity. However, they saw the need for further support of students’ understanding of cybersecurity issues. Knowing the shortage of skilled staff in the area of cybersecurity, Central Okanagan Public School District was also looking for ways to connect this to developing skills for students which would align with their career prospects.

Palo Alto Networks has a university academy open to post-secondary students, where university students are taken through a variety of cybersecurity lessons, which leads them to possibly obtaining certification in Palo Alto cybersecurity. This concept led to the spark of an idea to have such a program available for high school students.

An agreement was signed between Palo Alto Networks, IBM, and the three pilot school districts to bring this idea to life. Staff within these districts were involved in

## CAREERS IN CYBERSECURITY...

developing the curriculum for secondary students, training staff on program delivery, and the set-up of virtual training labs (with support from Palo Alto Networks). The program, called the IBM Palo Alto Cybersecurity Academy, was then piloted in these high schools.

Students involved in the Cybersecurity Academy are instructed on the landscape of cybersecurity today. There are three entry-level academy courses that focus

on job readiness skills. The three core areas of these courses are Cybersecurity Foundations (a 15-hour course), Networking Fundamentals (a 45-hour course), and Network Security Essentials (a 45-hour course). The expectation is that students will complete the Academy with an increased awareness of work-related skills and the opportunities available in careers in cybersecurity. Districts involved have also aligned the Cybersecurity Academy

curriculum with the provincial curriculum. Finally, at the end of the course, students can write the industry recognized Palo Alto Networks Certified Cybersecurity Associate (PCCSA) exam, which opens possible future career opportunities for those who pass.

The program has been offered in a variety of ways in the pilot districts. In Central Okanagan, they connected with a pre-existing computer networking course with a highly skilled teacher. In their initial pilot year, 24 students completed the course; 10 students wrote the PCCSA exam, and six were successful on the exam. This school year, 60 students are taking the course in two different classes. The teacher closely connects the course with student career development and brings them to high tech firms in BC to further illustrate the importance of attaining these specialized skills.

Richmond School District is in their third year of the Cybersecurity Academy. It is offered at three schools as a face to face course during the regular timetable, and as a blended model through their distributed learning school.

The third district, Burnaby, has created a district industry certification program. Garth Errico, Director of Instruction with the district, states, "In conjunction with the BAA course in cybersecurity, students get computer science courses and certification. We also provide students with a work experience component."

Within less than two years, the program is now ready to move from the three pilot districts to an additional six school districts that are now being onboarded: Surrey, Delta, Abbotsford, Gold Trail, Saanich, and Coquitlam. "We see this as a place to connect with students who are not necessarily engaged in school and may not be pursuing the more traditional post-secondary options," says Todd Diakow, Program Coordinator in Abbotsford School District.

The Abbotsford School District model will incorporate the Cybersecurity Academy



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into a two-year careers program. Starting in February 2021, students will be able to take a four-course cybersecurity program over two years that incorporates the Cybersecurity Academy components. They have partnered with the University of Fraser Valley so students can earn a dual credit from the program; this can be applied to a post-secondary certificate or a bachelor's degree in the future.

Teachers involved in delivering the Cybersecurity Academy can take the required training online over three days, and face-to-face training opportunities have also been offered. Rob Laing, Executive Director of Learning and Business Technologies at Richmond SD, is working to promote the idea that, "Any teacher with a passion or interest could deliver this course once they complete the teacher training." When considering what brings students to this course, he states, "It is a genuine interest for some students, especially those who

have a draw to the IT field. They benefit by getting to work towards certification while in high school – it is a natural draw." Richmond School District, along with other districts involved, has had several students write the PCCSA exam.

"How can we, as educators, support society in helping to address the widening gap in availability of a required skill-set and certification in the job market?"

An off shoot of this initiative is the involvement by one school in the Cyber Titans Competition. Students from Central Okanagan Public School District placed 48th out of 1,600 teams globally. According to co-author Jon Rever, "The Cybersecurity

Academy has always seemed like a team effort, that included working in a supportive environment alongside other school districts, Palo Alto Networks and IBM K-12." His hope is that this team effort will enable the spread and benefits of this program across the province – both for the understanding of cybersecurity issues and for potential career benefits – to reach as many students as possible in British Columbia. 🌐

*Jon Rever is Assistant Superintendent of Schools for the Central Okanagan School District responsible for IT. Rob Laing, until recently a secondary school principal, is the Executive Director of Learning and Business Technologies for the Richmond School District. Todd Diakow is both a Helping Teacher and the Coordinator for the Palo Alto Cyber Security course at Abbotsford School District. Garth Errico is Director of Instruction for the Burnaby School District.*



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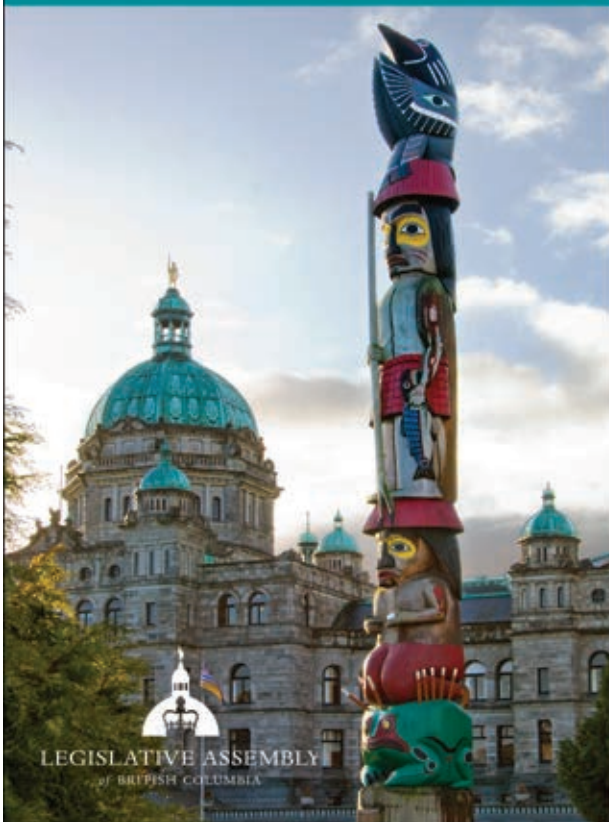


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# A K-12 Priority: Careers and Transitions Opportunities for Students



**By Dr. Karen Nelson,  
School District No. 78**

*A class of eager Kindergarteners learning about welding.  
Photos in spread courtesy of Karen Nelson.*

School District No. 78 is dedicated to supporting the learning needs of all students. In 2015, the Board of Education made a commitment to increasing the variety and types of programs available throughout the district, particularly in the area of trades and technology. Because of this, Karl Koslowsky was hired as the District Vice-Principal of Careers and Transitions. Under his leadership, a District Careers and Transition Committee was established, which developed a three- to five-year plan that focuses on increasing program opportunities to all students.

We decided that the mobile welding program provided by Thompson Rivers University (TRU) would be offered in our district every two years. It has since been held at Hope Secondary School from the beginning of August to the end of January (2015, 2017, 2019). It has provided 30

students with an exceptional opportunity to obtain their Level 1 and 2 Welding Foundation certification.

The establishment of an effective partnership with Thompson Rivers University (TRU) was the impetus to reach out to other post-secondary institutions and develop Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). We have established partnerships and MOUs with four additional post-secondary institutions: Northern Lights Community College (NLC), British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), Kwantlan Polytechnic University (KPU), and the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV).

In a MOU signed in September 2015, School District No. 78 and UFV agreed to provide reserved seat access for our students into designated UFV Trades and Technology programs; deliver dual credit programming by UFV to students; and explore opportunities to deliver UFV

programs within our high schools, along with Try-A-Trade experiences at the UFV campus.

"One of the best things we can do for students is to blur the lines between the K-12 system and the post-secondary system to create opportunities for students to access technical career education as soon as their interests are there," says John English, Department Head of Trades and Technology. "This MOU begins to do just that. We are looking forward to working with Fraser-Cascade to make these opportunities real and to watch the vibrant and enthused minds start university technical programs while in high school."

We are also exposing students to career opportunities while they are in elementary school through BC Applied Design Skills and Technology (ADST) and the Career Education curriculum. Through an effective partnership with the Aboriginal Education Council and community members, we will

## A K-12 PRIORITY...

be hosting our fifth annual Career Fair on May 7, 2020 at the Hope Recreational Center. Last year, through the generosity of 30 vendors, approximately 430 students in Grades 5 to 12 were able to explore a variety of trades programs. This year's event has grown to 45 vendors and 600 students.

The key philosophy model of our District Careers & Transitions Program is creating career path understanding via AWARENESS, EXPOSURE, and EXPERIENCE at all grade levels. These three levels of engagement

are delivered in a variety of methods. Our district belief is that all students should be aware of career options, hence our start at "K" initiatives.

Students gain valuable skills and training as they collaboratively work through computational thinking and design challenges with students from various elementary/intermediate schools throughout the district. To build on the experiences, Fraser Cascade has partnered with other districts, industry organizations, and Post-



*A group of students learn how to build a log cabin.*

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Secondary institutions – particularly UFV – to provide meaningful and real experiences for our junior and senior students.

For our Grades 8 to 12 students, Try-A-Trade offers exposure and experiential opportunities. These events include culinary arts, auto service tech, heavy mechanic, electronics CORE, electrical, and agri/horticulture programs. These experiences help solidify a student's choice to pursue a career path, and students who are not at their career decision junction can take advantage of the district's awareness and exposure events.

Partnerships with WorkBC Find Your Fit allow Grades 5 to 12 students to explore a variety of career options, including hands-on activities and career pathway conversations. Our Grade 8 students participate yearly in the Discover the Trades at UFV, consisting of 16 hands-on stations. Our district heavily supports teachers in establishing teams from Grades 5 to 12, to compete at both the regional and provincial junior and senior BC Skills Competitions. Students participate in the mainstream trades industries along with junior spaghetti bridge building, gravity cars, and robotics. The district has also invested in the area of computational thinking and coding.

New branding and marketing at the Grade 9 level have seen a drastic increase in our Take Your Kid to Work Day participation, which allows students to explore a career they are interested in or





are simply curious about. To feed into our senior electives and university partnerships, the district has established an annual Mind-Over-Metal Summer Camp. The camp runs beginning in early July and allows 16 to 20 transitioning Grade 5 to 7 students to participate in a one-week experience. To link the school-based experience to the real-world, the week includes an industry tour to connect theoretical to practical.

Our district belief is that all students should be aware of career options, hence our start at “K” initiatives.

Through partnerships with training providers and industry, we have been able to offer 16 to 20 Grade 10 to 12 students participation in a Heavy Metal Rocks Try-A-Trade event. This event focuses on the heavy equipment operator industry and allows students to spend time actively learning from the seat of the machines. The wishful culmination of all of these events is that students purposely engage in the senior career courses; Work Experience (WEX) for students 14 years of age and older, Youth Work in Trades (WRK) for students 15 years or older working in a trade, and ultimately, Youth Train in Trades (TRN) students attend a trades training program to gain their Level 1 and sometimes Level 2 foundations certification in a trade. Via our partnerships, the district

can sponsor the tuition portion of the program.

To ensure strong grassroots and lead teachers at each school, the district also provides ongoing professional development opportunities for staff members in order to enhance implementation of ADST in the classroom. Additional professional development has been provided in order for teachers to assist students to systematically plan for their future career paths through the implementation

of the K to 12 Career Education Programs, specifically, All About Me (K to 6) and Education Planner (Grade 7 to 12).

During the past two years, the district has sent teams of teachers and administrators to the Careers Education Society (CES) Conference to gain insight and collaborative networks to support ADST and CE programs at all grade levels. These learning opportunities require a certain level of risk taking, which leads to new learning

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The annual Career Fair at the Hope Recreational Center.

experiences and extended knowledge. Offering this type of professional development has resulted in teachers becoming more confident in teaching ADST lessons in their classrooms.

We need to remember that what we, as educators, spend our time on reflects what we believe is important. The support provided in Fraser-Cascade is indicative of the level of how much importance everyone

places on providing bright and promising futures for our students. We believe that we need to listen to the voices of our most important consumers of education, our students.

Over the last five years, our district has received a total of \$1,242,300 through grant/in-kind sponsored tuition, the Industry Training Authority (ITA), and the Canadian Welding Association Foundation (CWF).

An example is the donation of 10 new 350 MP multi-function Lincoln welders as well as funding for 10 new Henlex ventilation extraction arms, a ventilation air system, and vented cutting and grinding tables at one of our secondary schools. One of our students stated: "We are so fortunate to have these welders at HSS. I have friends in larger districts who don't have anything like this. They are envious of the new welders and other opportunities provided in Fraser Cascade."

Our goal is to improve the life chances of every child and to provide every child, every chance, every day. We are proud to say that this is what we spend our time on every day, supporting the vision of "Everyone Pulling Together to Improve the Achievement of All Learners."

*Dr. Karen Nelson has provided dedicated service to School District No. 78 (Fraser-Cascade) for the last 29 years, 11 of those as Superintendent of Schools.*

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# New Teacher Mentorship: Beyond Skill Mastery to Building Learning Capacity

By Denise Johnson,  
Retired BCSSA Member

When I was preparing my retirement celebration speech four years ago, I had the opportunity to reflect on my 40 years as a public-school system educator. Reflection, as we all know, is a very powerful process. When I stood up to speak to a room full of colleagues, family, and friends at my retirement event, those years flashed across my mind with so many positive and impactful memories. The most powerful memories, and I later realized “influencers” in my career, were my beginning years as a special education teacher where I was provided effective new teacher mentorship. These mentoring experiences set the stage for me to become a competent and dedicated educator with a passion for professional learning and development.

In my years as a district leader, during times of shrinking budgets and the high diverse demands for funding, new teacher mentorship is always valued in principle and supported by educational research. However, often not viewed as a necessity to promote teacher development, sustainability, and capacity building not only for the individual teachers, but also for the school system as a whole. My learning journey story that I am about to share is one example of how beneficial teacher mentorship can be for promoting skill development, improving teaching and learning, and in building leadership capacity.

I began my teaching career in Chula Vista, California. I had spent my own elementary years as a student in Chula Vista, so I was delighted to receive my first teaching contract at my previous elementary school. I could not have been more excited to receive this teaching position in a special education class of 20 students, Grades 4 to 6, who had been identified as having specific learning disabilities. I had recently completed my Learning Handicapped Specialist California teaching credential at San Diego State University. My program at San Diego State was well designed and taught by current and inspiring educators

who were publishing research and actively teaching in the field. I was excited and ready to teach this class.

In this school district at that time, the first week of school was dedicated to teacher professional development. To this day, the benefits derived from the provision of teacher professional development in that first week, beyond becoming familiar with the principal, staff, district expectations, and learning directions, was the positive mindset that focused on the importance of teacher learning.

As the students arrived along with their student files, outlining their complex and diverse learning needs and strengths, the reality of teaching this amazing group of 20 students was, to say the least, challenging and a bit overwhelming. Never lacking in enthusiasm, I felt I was up to the challenge, but I soon realized I did not have enough experience or resources to draw upon to design a complete learning program that adequately facilitated individual and group success.

Before the first week of instruction had been completed, I was contacted by the district’s special education (SPED) staff offering me the opportunity to meet with one of them to discuss the needs of my class and to offer their support.

In addition to meeting with members of the district team, I was provided opportunities for them to come to my class and model both small group direct instruction and whole class instruction

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with my students. The model lessons were designed around my questions in regard to the “best practice” for these diverse learners. In addition, after observing a few modelled lessons, I had the opportunity to debrief with the district consultant about what I observed, and she assisted me with integrating components into my own instructional plans. From there, I was offered the opportunity to teach in front of the consultant, who then provided me with constructive feedback, recognizing my strengths and providing practical suggestions to bridge some of the gaps.

To my knowledge, I was not asked to formally participate in a new teacher mentorship program with this district. This opportunity to meet, observe, model, and coach me as a beginning teacher was an informal mentoring process integrated into the way this district conducted their professional learning development. The impact of this “best practice” of new teacher mentorship was available to me over the course of my three years as a teacher in this district, and was, in my thinking, the way all districts would be supporting the professional learning for new teachers.

When I moved to British Columbia looking for new teaching positions in special education, I always remembered the benefits firsthand of this informal mentoring support in Chula Vista. As such, I consistently researched and took advantage of any relevant professional learning opportunities available to me. I proceeded to create my own informal mentoring relationships with colleagues on staff, and in the district, to promote my teaching knowledge and skills to more effectively teach my students.

These informal mentoring relationships fed my passion for professional learning, built meaningful professional relationships, and promoted a desire to influence and improve the learning environments for students across the district. I think my passion for learning was part of my

professional privilege and responsibility to continue to learn and improve. This desire became part of my professional resume, which I believe benefited my students, my colleagues and the school systems where I was able to teach and lead.

From these beginning experiences with mentorship, a hunger for learning was sustained throughout my career that inspired me to change teaching positions, school districts, and to apply for district leadership positions. In all of these roles, I was committed to finding ways to promote and develop teacher mentorship opportunities to support professional learning and improve learning for students. This is a passion that is alive and well in me today, guiding my contract work as an educational consultant.

These informal mentoring relationships fed my passion for professional learning, built meaningful professional relationships, and promoted a desire to influence and improve the learning environments for students across the district.

For the mentoring opportunities and support provided to me as a new teacher in Chula Vista City School district, I am forever grateful. Now, as an educational consultant, I am committed to supporting the sector through its journey to support new educators in their skill development and confidence, to promote teacher sustainability, and to build learning and leading capacity across the education system. 

*Denise Johnson is an educational consultant in Vancouver, British Columbia, who focuses on learning and leading development and capacity building with educators through mentorship and coaching opportunities.*



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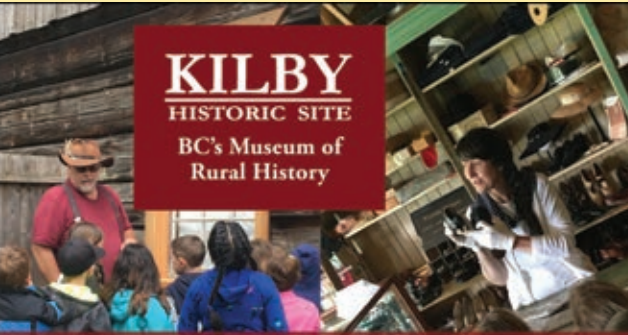
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