

# Stepping Stones



## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Pathways Volunteers, Friends,  
Partners and Supporters,

I hope this winter issue of  
Stepping Stones finds you in a  
state of joy and gratitude for  
all the wonders of life.

The approaching holidays are  
a time for reflection and, in  
doing so, I hope you feel a sense

of pride for you have played a crucial role in a successful year  
for the Pathways program. This time of reflection also provides  
a great opportunity for uncovering and developing an appreciation for those  
special experiences and people in your life that make life so  
rewarding. The holidays embody a mosaic of celebrations and  
traditions, reflecting the many religions and cultures of the  
world. Yet, regardless of religion or culture, they all recognize  
the enormous capacity for human beings to love one another.

In my own personal reflections, I am left with an enormous  
sense of gratitude for you and what you have given, as in my  
mind, you are the individuals that make this world so special.  
Thank you for everything you give to Pathways students and  
families. We are blessed for having you as our volunteers and  
friends.

Wishing you every happiness this holiday season and  
prosperity in the New Year

Yours truly,

Jasminka Klacar, Tutor & Mentor Coordinator

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### NOTES FROM THE DESK OF THE STEPPING STONES EDITOR:

This issue of *Stepping Stones* relays  
information, resources and knowledge  
related to the daily challenges and  
issues we encounter while engaged in  
helping our students and shaping our  
program. We hope it will also establish  
a less formal structure of conversation  
among tutors, mentors and staff.  
Please do not hesitate to let us know of  
any topics you feel need to be  
addressed, and take the opportunity to  
share your expertise and experience  
with us.

Please, send your submission to  
[jklacar@cfcc.ca](mailto:jklacar@cfcc.ca)

## From the Director of Pathways to Education

Happy Holidays to Everyone!

It has been a very busy fall term for Pathways. With more than 265 students registered in the program, I recognize how much work has gone into tutoring and mentoring and want to acknowledge all of your efforts. As we are well into our second year of implementation, we continue to learn and develop the program. The following is a brief synopsis of some of the things we've been learning and thinking about:

- We continue to reflect on the best ways to engage students. Recognizing that students become engaged in ideas and issues they care about, we need to make their learning and their time in Pathways and correspond to their interests. One of the biggest challenges about school is that sometimes students struggle to find the relevance in course material; the job of teachers, tutors and others is to help them to make these connections. I encourage you

to continue to help our students to make these connections and please share with us what you learn in the process.

- Relationships are central to what we do. Your relationships with students as well as the relationships staff have with them motivate and create a greater sense of accountability. As you continue to build relationships with students—try to let them know a little bit about you. Some of them will be really impressed to hear how qualified and talented you are. And many of them might have questions about how you got to where you are. Sharing this type of information with students is an important part of relationship building.
- Many of our students are finding math and science to be particularly challenging. We are thinking about ways we can support their learning in these subjects better and also about how we can connect with the schools to develop more math and science resources. This is an ongoing process - but if you have some ideas, please let us know!

- Parents and guardians are critical to a student's success. We are continuing to work with parents and are exploring ways we can better connect with them. We recently held a series of four very successful orientation and information nights for parents and we look forward to having more of these in the future.
- Advocacy, one of our key pillars of support, can happen anywhere. It is about hearing a student's needs and being able to help them, through modeling, education, or dialogue. Our Student Parent Support Workers are doing a lot of this important work in the schools and in the communities. We also continue to develop better strategies to help us advocate with and on behalf of our students and their families.

I continue to be inspired by the efforts of our students! I learn a tremendous amount from them through our interactions and often recognize that it is them who teach me something, rather than me teaching them. This philosophy of learning together is one I personally continue to explore and integrate into what we do here at Pathways. This notion of learning cooperatively, of meeting students where they are at, isn't something that necessarily comes naturally, but stands as an exemplary practice that I and the staff of Pathways continue to strive towards.

Many thanks again for your interest in helping this community's youth to reach their goals and exceed their expectations. All the very best to you over the holiday season!

Sincerely,

*Megan Conway, Director, Pathways to Education*

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# TALKING ABOUT...BEHAVIOUR

## Behaviour as a Means of Communication

Behaviour problems are signals, alerting us to underlying issues such as the following:

- Poor quality of life
- Little control in life
- Few Choices
- Poor Social Skills
- Poor Communication Skills
- STRESS

## Problems with Punishment in Dealing with Behaviour Problems

- May reinforce negative attention seeking patterns
- Confirms student's own poor self-concept
- Can reward non-compliance by increasing peer status
- Increases student resistance by establishing power struggles of authority
- Does not address the **root** cause of the problem
- Does not work for students with serious behaviour problems
- Does not teach appropriate behaviour
- Reactive, rather than proactive

## Strategies for Escaping Behaviour Problems

- Give students more choices
- Make it fun
- Give students the option to ask for a break
- More student input and planning
- More student involvement
- Use humor

## Developing Supportive Relationships

- Students need support
- Encourage them to look at their choices and evaluate them
- Help them make good choices
- Believe in them and in their future
- Help them to find hope

"Your success as an educator is more dependent on positive, caring, trustworthy **RELATIONSHIPS**, than on any skill, idea, tip or tool."

- Eric Jensen, *Brain Based Learning books and materials*

"Students will change only if we honour who they are now and help them discover how they might become more of who they are now by making some **CHANGES**"

- Vicki Phillips, *Empowering Discipline*



\*Adopted from the "PositiveRelationship Building" presentation by Vicki Butler.

## Pathways to Education!!!

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## Holidays Around the World

Religious holidays and celebrations allow individuals to collectively reinforce their beliefs and mark times of special importance. The religious festivals and secular holidays help people remember and celebrate events and people that give their world and lives significance and direction. Certain festivals represent joyous times of celebration, whereas the more somber festivals are considered times of mourning or reflection. Some holidays are specific to a particular religion, whereas others are more common and shared among different religious groups. Here in our multicultural and multi faith Canadian society, we are so fortunate to share holiday joys from around the world.

December marks one of the busiest, most important holiday seasons around the world. With such major holidays as Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and New Year's Eve, December is full of revelry, celebration, and solemn religious occasions.

### Did you know...?

**Ramadan** is one of the main Islamic holidays. It occurs in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and lasts for one month. Each year, Muslims make an annual pilgrimage called Hajj to honour Mecca. **Eid al-Adha**, or the Festival of Sacrifice, follows this event and celebrates the Prophet Abraham. This year Ramadan was celebrated in September.

One of the most important Hindu holidays is **Diwali**, or the Festival of Lights, which lasts five days and initiates the beginning of the Hindu New Year. During this holiday, lamps are lit in celebration to symbolize hope for mankind and the triumph of good over evil. This year Diwali started on October 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Hanukkah** (or **Chanukah**) is also sometimes called "The Festival of Lights." Hanukkah is the Jewish celebration symbolizing their victory and the miracle of the menorah, which burned for eight nights. Each night they light candles in their own menorah - one candle the first night, two candles the second night, and so on. Families also offer blessings to God, exchange gifts, and eat traditional food such as latkes (potato pancakes) during the festivities.

The word "**Kwanzaa**" comes from a Swahili phrase that means "first fruits." African-American activist Maulana Karenga started the holiday in 1966 to encourage people to learn about and celebrate their African heritage. Kwanzaa honors the harvest celebrations of ancient Africa as well as today's African and African-American culture.

**Winter Solstice**, the first day of winter and the longest night of the year, is also celebrated with festivals, decorations and ancient ceremonies that honour nature.

The Gregorian calendar has been adopted by all **Christian** churches in Western society. Most Eastern churches, however, continue to use the Julian calendar for religious purposes, though only a few use it exclusively. Presently, the Julian and Gregorian calendars are approximately 15 days out of phase. **Christmas**, according to the Julian calendar, is on January 7<sup>th</sup> 2009.

## In My Own Words: Mentoring

This year's mentoring program is off to an exciting start, with a variety of activities happening each week. Early in the season, our intrepid students headed outside on a photo scavenger hunt, returning with photographic evidence of their adventures which included recreating a scene from a Shakespearean tragedy on playground equipment, creating a human sculpture, and doing handstands on the soccer field. The weeks since then have seen our students engaged in a variety of activities, from sports to arts to crafts to cooking. With a strong team of mentors, who each bring their unique talents to the program, we are looking forward to the events that they will be leading in the weeks to come, including a guitar/drumming workshop, an evening where students can learn manicure techniques and an introduction to the art of making sushi!

*"Mentoring was a great experience for me. It was different on many levels. Not only was it loads of fun it was also a great way to get inside myself. You get to know others and know yourself and who your real friends are. There are more than just sports, photography, drama and crafts. I took drama and it didn't appeal much to me when I signed up, but the more I got into it, the more I loved it. Drama got me to see the real me. It helped me become more confident with myself. The mentoring volunteers really get out there and help you. It's like they become young again. They're very outgoing. Mentoring is a great place to meet new people and make strong friendships with people and it helps students with what we can do with our future. There's nothing to lose...take a chance."*

- Andrea Blyleven, pathways student

