

Leads By Example – A Teacher/Admin Profile of Jen Kennedy

By Gerry Brach, Brooks Secondary School Counsellor



Jen Kennedy doesn't dedicate a lot of time in her life to being creative. Creativity just permeates itself in everything she does. Whether it is helping students make their way to adulthood or putting the right people in different situations so they can do their best, Jen uses her creativity to solve problems all day, every day. Jen loves the ability to connect with people and to help provide them with the parameters to solve their own problems. "I try and get out of the way of good teachers so they can do what they know best. It is important to put people where they will shine", says Jen.

Student leadership has always interested Jen as she really enjoys working with students who like to improve things. "Mentoring students in leadership activities is totally different than teaching students in the classroom, you get to see students in a very different light. I have always believed that if you build it they will

come. I like to provide the initial foundation and guidance for a group like Students 4 Change, then let the group take over and have ownership or responsibility of what happens next. I am always there to provide support if needed." Jen started Link Crew with Maranda Burnikell and James Hanson in 2014. During her time at Brooks, Jen has also been active with Student Council, Students 4 Change and District Leadership activities like Youth Advisory Council.

When Jen was a high-school student, several of her teachers had a big influence on her. Jen learned about leadership from Claire Milliken who ran Student Council. She also credits Tony Rice and Ed Oldfield for providing her with leadership opportunities. "At that time I did a lot of video collaborations with teachers and participated in some Rotary Youth Leadership opportunities."

Jen didn't grow up thinking that she was going to be a teacher or an Administrator. After graduating from high school her plan was to be a painter. However, her plans changed after trying photography and later obtaining a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Victoria. Jen moved back to Powell River where she had her own photography studio. It wasn't until she started tutoring high school students in English and Art that she decided to be a teacher. She returned to university and do a post-degree professional program in Secondary Education. Jen loves teaching and feels grateful for the opportunity to have taught a wide variety of subjects such as Foods, Media, Culinary Arts, Photography, Drama, English, Library and Leadership classes during her time at Brooks.

Jen has been a Vice-Principal at Brooks since 2016. In looking back at her time as both a teacher and an administrator, Jen spoke of several highlights which she remembers fondly. "Seeing some students that I worked very closely with struggle so much then walk across the stage and graduate was very gratifying." Jen also enjoyed making staff videos like "Gangnam Style" and organizing 'Fine Arts Reach For the Top'.

Little known facts about Jen are: she has built two homes with her husband Brandon, she knows how to drive a forklift, and she loves A.T.V'ing.

Future plans include travelling to Egypt to see the pyramids and preparing for her son Julian to come to Brooks in five years.

Her advice to students is: "Make the time for the things you love to do. You are in control of how you feel, so don't let other people control your emotions."

This "Leads by Example" individual will be greatly missed at Brooks! Come back soon, Jen Ken!

