

LEADing the Conversation for ELL Learners

Erik Walkowicz and Gregory Tweedie T

The Literacy, English and Academic Development (LEAD) program run by the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) offers specialized programming for English Language Learners (ELLs) who face additional challenges as a result of the circumstances of their migration - often from war-torn regions - and their lack of opportunity for prior schooling. This program has nine locations and offers intensive language instruction and support.

Earlier this month, two teachers from the LEAD program visited Dr. Tweedie's EDUC460 ELL Specialization class to share their thoughts with his students. With combined experience of more than 40 years in the field of ELL with the CBE, Carla Belanger and Kim Rezazadeh offered deep insight into this specialized program.

For more information on the LEAD program, visit CBE's website, or call the Kingsland Centre at (403) 777- 7373.

The Werklund Wire caught up with Kim and Carla to discuss what they shared in Dr. Tweedie's course, outlined in the interview below:

Werklund Wire (WW): What does a 'typical day' look like in a LEAD classroom?

Kim Rezazadeh (KR): Everyday in my LEAD classroom is different. One day a female student brought chocolates to share with the teachers. I asked her why she brought the chocolates – her young nephew had just been released from captivity and she was celebrating the good news. The girls and I had a good cry about this before classes began. This same day I had to book a translator for a parent meeting, liaise with the librarian about ELL resources for the library, and organize course planners for the 2019-2020 school year. Lunch time is usually spent meeting with teachers or students on language or trauma issues.

WW: How do you manage to maintain your own mental health when being exposed to the traumatic stories and experiences your students face?

CB: For me, sleep is the most important thing I can do for myself. When I'm rested, I'm far more resilient. When I'm not, I just want to cry. Talking and sharing with other LEAD teachers is healthy, but there's a limit to how much one can process. I do yoga and meditation daily. Summer helps a lot!

KR: I try to maintain a realistic work-life balance. Yes, I bring work home, but after some time I turn off work and focus on my family. I could easily work ten hours a day, but this is not realistic. I keep a close relationship with other LEAD teachers. We have an understanding of our students that other teachers have difficulty relating to.

WW: How do you not take situations in class too personally and know that what you do is enough?

Carla Belanger (CB): I rarely take students' difficult behaviours personally because I'm always looking through a trauma lens. I know there's always a reason why. But to be honest, I'm less tolerant before I've had my Venti Americano! As for doing enough, I always feel I can and should do more. It's hard for me to let go and let be. I connect students and families with dozens of agencies and mental health professionals, I call parents in to school all the time, and I plan my lessons every night based on what concerns came up that day. As well, I visit their homes often, and text families whenever I want to connect. Not everyone is comfortable with this level of service, and I understand that, but it feels right for me.

WW: What is the #1 piece of advice you could give to pre-service teachers in creating learning connections with students coming from traumatic backgrounds?

CB: Smile a lot, show genuine warmth, and be firm with your rules and expectations. Tell them it's okay to have problems, but we will solve them together. All of this builds trust, and more than anything, these students need to feel safe. When they're safe, they can start to learn!

KR: The best advice I would give is to get to know the families right from the beginning. Know what their challenges are, because there may be many underlying issues that distract students from learning: lack of money and food, worrying about the future, missing relatives, witnessing and experiencing violence from war, and culture shock. Learning is important, but the feeling of being safe and loved is paramount, so show love and care to all of your students.



President's Corner



Hi Everyone!

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank everyone for an amazing semester! We have had a very successful year, and it is my pleasure to **introduce everyone to the team for next year**, as we held our annual elections earlier in February. Ruth Panaguiton is our incoming President, Sidrah Anees will be the new vice president, Kyle Corry will take on the role of VP Mentorship, Lawson Harvey will be our VP Finance, Keren Medina will be the VP Admin, Genevieve Johner our VP PD, Tina Miller will be the new VP Events, and Jonah Secreti will be our VP Communications. Congratulations to the incoming team, and thank you very much to those that ran in our elections! **The incoming team will be beginning their term on May 1, 2019!** To our **graduating students**, please keep an eye out for our **graduation event** happening on **June 4th, right after our ceremony.**

As always, make sure that you keep up to date with us on our social media pages: Facebook: [/esaucalgary](https://www.facebook.com/esaucalgary); Instagram: [@ESAUCalgary](https://www.instagram.com/ESAUCalgary). And, of course, stop by our office during office hours to pick up your membership!

I am wishing our students the best luck in Fields II and IV!
Until next month!
Sam

Social Media Essay Contest

It has been a great pleasure to organize an [essay contest](#) for undergraduate students at the University of Calgary around the theme of our Interdisciplinary Working Group on the Ethics and Politics of Social Media. The [contest](#), entitled “Social Media: the Good, the Bad and the Ugly”, has provided us with a window into the thinking and experiences of a young generation whose lives are impacted by social media in ways that are often underappreciated by previous generations, who had not been immersed in this new technological landscape from such a young age.

We are excited to announce that we have two winners from the Werklund School of Education, as follows:

Lorianne Reuser (education) and **Daniel Huss (communications)** are together our first-prize winners. In [her essay titled “Giving up the microphone: Whose voices are heard on Bookstagram.”](#) Reuser delves into the book club community on Instagram to draw our attention to the ethical responsibility of ‘bookstagrammer’ influencers—who often enjoy a high rank in the intersections of race and economic standing—to recognize the work of authors of colour whose writing, literary merit, and lived experiences are often not given the attention they deserve. She builds on an eye-opening recent controversy around the ethics of reading (or not reading) material that is uncomfortable to read because it depicts the pains of marginalized others. Reuser invites us to check our privileges and consciously use social media in a way that makes it a more egalitarian space for everyone.

In [her essay titled “My Place on the Platform \(As Determined by Cropped Cotton Trousers\)”](#) and chosen as our second place winner, **Bryn Waidson (education)** employs creative writing to open a window into the mind of a social media user whose sense of self worth is influenced by the lives she witnesses being lived in the social media space. Through the powerful images she creates, and the internal dialogue she describes, we are exposed wonderfully to the angst of a modern young woman in the face of consumer culture shaped by social media. Waidson warns of the environmental and human rights implications of a consumerist culture exacerbated by social media, but also shines light on positive influences helping her find clarity and inspiration from others on social media.

We are greatly indebted to all the participants in the essay contest for enriching our understanding of social media. Their enthusiasm, and thought-provoking essays helped us, as researchers, to better understand the concerns of our undergraduate student community when it comes to the good, the bad and the ugly of social media. More information and links to more of the essay submissions will be posted on the [contest website](#) shortly.

Mohammad Keyhani (Haskayne School of Business)
Maria Bakardjieva (Dept. of Communication, Media and Film)
Safaneh Neyshabouri (School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures)
Andrea Whitely (Dept. of Communication, Media and Film)

Reminder: Apply to Graduate! If you are in Field IV this term, make sure you apply to graduate by **March 31st!**