



Radio Amateurs of Canada

Youth Education Program

NEWSLETTER #7

January 11, 2005

*submitted by Terrance Berscheid - VE7TBC
Saanich, BC
re: Central Middle School - Victoria, BC*

We at the Central Middle School Project wish to each of you a **prosperous 2005 of Inter-school QSOs!**

I thought I'd give you an update on where our Central Middle School Project Staff are focusing our efforts.

After talking to Kathie Cross, our 'teacher' (Kathie is actually the Youth and Family Counselor at Central Middle School) we have decided to take a slightly different approach to 'recruitment' into our project.

First a bit of background:

This project takes advantage of the Central Middle School Enrichment Series. Four 10-week sessions are held each year, two in the first half, and two in the second half of the school year. Students have an opportunity to choose which one of several very interesting enrichment classes; some are sports related, others are arts and theater-related, and some are 'shop/crafts' oriented (such as doll-house construction). Only one of these alternatives involves 'out-of-school' instructors, ours.

Another relevant aspect is that Central Middle is a true "Inner City" school (you've seen those movies of inner-city schools in big cities like New York) -- well other than the fact that Central also has a large playground, once inside the school you would not know that you are in a British Columbia school and not the New York 'working class/ethnic' variety. By that I mean that it becomes quite evident that a large number of the students are from non-Caucasian heritage; many are from socio-economic backgrounds in which the families do not have high incomes; and more than a few have come from families with various medical and drug dependencies.

Despite all this, Central Middle is a very vibrant school. The energies are electric! School halls are abuzz and overcharged during breaks. I honestly don't know how the staff survive those coronal eruptions. And my experience is that even those students who do have some learning/behavioural challenges take readily to learning about an entirely different subject than what is found in the standard school curriculum -- in this case, amateur radio.

Our "Revised Plan"

After having a couple of these sessions under our belts, we did an analysis of who was voluntarily signing up for our sessions; and who would benefit from being involved in our sessions. What we decided was that we would focus on inviting some of the students who had 'issues' to be part of the next program. Consequently Kathie approached four of those students, and excitedly reported back that the students were extremely pleased to be invited to be part of the program. This does not mean that we will only accept the 'disadvantaged' student. Far from it. In fact, we volunteers will not necessarily know which students in the next session fall into the above category, and which are from the other end of the spectrum -- well-adjusted, from good family backgrounds, etc. Nor do we care!

My point is that we, the instructional staff, feel that amateur radio is a very effective medium for helping a student learn how to communicate with others -- to be a normal, well-spoken member of her or his community. You've heard it before -- the medium tends to create a 'level playing field'. One of the reasons for this is that when we talk on the airwaves, the other party does not necessarily have any idea of what we look like, what disabilities we might have (even vocal disabilities, as we all, when first learning to use a mic do so with great anxiety -- which does transmit across the ether). Another is that when the student is representing her/his school, the student does it with pride and does get absolute control of the situation when that PTT switch is engaged.

I would like to suggest that you discuss this phenomenon with school authorities in your community. It might just be the handle they have been looking for to help some less-advantaged students.

We have also explored how we could get the students increasingly involved in their community, and as a consequence, we have approached volunteer co-ordinators for some of the community events in our community in which Amateur Radio plays a role. Specifically, we have an event in January where "Senior" hockey teams from across Canada play in a tournament (affectionately called the Old Timers Hockey Tourne). Ham operators are at each arena, and transmit scores to other arenas and to HQ; as well as passing on messages and instructions to game officials.

Several times a year, in Victoria, we have walks such as the 10-K run and, of course, the Royal Victoria Marathon (several thousand runners). Amateur Radio Operators are very involved in these activities, at check-points where the lead runners are reported back to the finish line, but more importantly in assisting in arranging transport for injured runners, and distribution of materiel such as fluids, etc.

Our plan is to encourage our past and present students to 'shadow' our operators at these sites. In reality, I suspect you'll hear that the student will be doing the actual transmission, elmered by the amateur operator.

We have even identified a means of 'training' our shadows: Central, as does most other schools, has a few 'school runs' each year, where the students follow a route similar to a 10-K charity walk. Our plan is to have an amateur and a student stationed at strategic positions along the route. While the amateurs will not be able to identify the runners (they don't wear numbers, for example) they will have a 'presence' and that we suspect will be a major personal booster for the student amateurs.

One group of participating amateurs I sometimes forget to acknowledge are our - support staff who are not in the school classroom, but wait patiently "on the side" to assist us in everything from practicing QSO protocols

to establishing IRLP links, to demonstrating packet and HF communications. We have several in Victoria who participate in this manner; but I would specifically like to acknowledge the efforts of those who were involved in our recently-completed session: **Kip VE7HVR; George VE7ABX; John VE7JMF; Rick VE7TK; Al VE7BEU the Executive of the Westcoast Amateur Radio Association;** and particularly the **Principle, Vice Principle and Staff at Central Middle School**. These are the folks who sustain, and demonstrate the professionalism of our hobby, and without them, most of our sessions would not have the same energy and excitement.

We at Central Middle are very interested in hearing some of your ideas for enhancing your amateur radio programs.

73

Terrance for **Kathie Cross, Patty-ann Lea VA7PTY and John Walls VE7SDJ**

Many thanks to Terrance for keeping us up to date.

Please accept the best wishes of the YEP committee for an exciting and creative new year.

Would you and your school be willing to share what you are planning to do in the new year or give us an update on how you have been using Amateur Radio in your school during the end of 2004?

These newsletters are great tools for the YEP committee, particularly in areas of fund raising and promotion of the program. Your help is greatly appreciated.

73,

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