

# The Alternative works for me!!!

Staff and students of four DSBN Alternative Education sites share their take on why the programs work for them with Warren Hoshizaki, our Director. Mr. Hoshizaki toured the BRIDGE and Second Chance programs of Niagara Falls and the BRIDGE and First Chance programs of St. Catharines and had this to say, *"It was a fabulous visit to see committed staff finding many different ways to meet the needs of students. They all have created an environment that helps each individual student find their learning style and their motivation. It is true that the relationship with students is most important and it really shows up in these programs."*



*"Our teachers take the time to understand what each student wants to do with themselves...to understand what has happened to put them in this program.... We have benefits that other classrooms don't have, but that is what makes us enjoy coming to class...everyone here is respected."*



*Brittany explains to the Director how the alternative program worked for her. "I did not enjoy going to school before coming to the BRIDGE program... This resulted in poor attendance. I especially could not do math. Since coming to the BRIDGE program, I have managed to pick myself up and become successful. I have exceedingly improved my cooperation skills. I am doing very well in math and I understand it now. I don't feel stressed out like I did at my other school. I have no trouble keeping up and am doing Grade 9 math!.. Overall, I believe the BRIDGE program has saved my education."*

*This place taught me I don't have to be high to have fun, or even lie and now I get along better with my Mom. I am getting help with my anger and also earning credits. There is no drama, just somewhere to go to get away from everything that is bad in your life." B.C.R.S.*



*"I come to school everyday and love the work environment here. I've learned a lot about team work and sharing...this place is like my second home...we all share the same types of problems and we help each other out. I hope to graduate by September."*

*"How many credits have you earned? How do you know how you are doing?"*



*"My teachers here care about me. I started Second Chance with two credits and got almost 6 now, plus my attendance is way better than it ever was before."*

*"This class has effected me in a big way because before I started here I never attended school...I had no credits. Now I have a lot. We do many activities including cooking and cleaning as a team...I never liked school but when I came here I felt like I was wanted."*

*"Our names are on the bulletin board over there. Every time we earn a credit it is posted on the board."*

*"Second Chance has effected me in a positive way because now I actually come to class and do the work I'm given. It is a better environment than a high school for me because there are less people to distract me and skip class with. Plus, the teacher is nice and makes the class a little less boring." H. B.*

*"We keep up the behaviour when we don't get the treatment we deserve. We keep our guard up, continuing with the misbehavior so we can seem like the treatment and disrespect we receive doesn't effect us. However, it does, every single incident of disrespect affects each of us. The difference in the treatment here has made an impact on us all." CEMC*

*"...shown me that when a teacher cares whether you fail or not everyone can be successful if they put their mind to it. It has given me the time to work at my own pace but also helped to keep me on track."*

J.H.



### Speaking of building BRIDGEs...

"At my home school I didn't really get along with everyone so when it came to group work with them it was frustrating, but when I came here we always had to start off the day in a group so I learned to cope with people that annoyed me so when it comes to group work now, I'm fine with it."  
Tyler C

"One of my problems was my temper but now I know when I get mad I need to cool down."  
Kyle

"I think the program has really helped. I have come a long way from a D- student to a C+ or a B+ student."  
Cassie

"Our class is like a community because it is a whole group trying to get better at things like gym, math, science and all different kinds of things."  
Dean

BRIDGE has helped me become a better person because they have helped me with my anger and with having to sit too long."  
Toshyoun

"We are a community because we share daily troubles and solutions."  
Jarrod

"My plans for next year are to be half BRIDGE and half high school."  
Tyler S

### Speaking of YOU taking the First step at FIRST CHANCE...

"Since I came to this program I have more friends, better grades and now I'm liking school. I have ODD, ADHD and Tourettes."  
Aric

"The program has been good. I have more self confidence and self esteem. This program helped me overall with my social life. My barriers were skipping school and my choice of friends."  
Camden

"One barrier to my success would be Asperger Syndrome, and that makes it hard to learn, but with the help I receive at BRIDGE, I have become both a better person I feel and a smarter person. I hope to earn more credits and learn better ways to work with my syndrome, thus making it easier for people to be around me."  
Joshua



### Speaking of not a Second too late to take a Chance on YOU..

"The main reason I had not been going to school was bullying from as far back as I can remember...On top of that I suffer from anxiety/depression which just intensified the effects of bullying. When my parents began the divorce process my life seemed like it couldn't get any worse, but I was wrong. Soon after my mother would pass away putting everything in my life on hold. The staff and students at Second Chance are warm and welcoming. They have helped me tremendously in getting back into school and not only that they made it enjoyable and fun...I enjoy and want to come to class every day. My plans for next year are to continue to earn credits towards my high school diploma. As long as I am here I know I will be earning more."  
N.J.L.N.

"I couldn't make it in high school. I barely went to school and I never did my homework and I didn't find it easy for me because I didn't get all the help I needed. In 2 1/2 years in high school I only had 7 credits...Here I am this semester (three semesters in Second Chance) with 2 more credits to go and almost at the finish line. I would never thought of ever crossing it. Now I'm running right through it with a lot of confidence. Just as my teacher said, "If you try, you will succeed in life." With the supports from this program and especially the staff, I would never have done it."  
J.S.M.

"...At the rate I was going before, I thought I would never graduate. But with this program and the great staff, I believe that not only will I be able to graduate but I may even be able to go on to College...The teacher and youth counselor have taught us a lot in the educational field but also great skills to use outside of the classroom. No one else has really understood that many people who have been in trouble do want to change. Second Chance helped me change."  
CEMC

*Thank You to all students for so generously sharing your stories of success with others and to your teachers and counselors for their commitment to teaching and listening with care.*

## STUDENTS TAKING ACTION TODAY (S.T.A.T.) CONFERENCE 2010

First and Second Chance students from Niagara Falls attended the DSBN S.T.A.T. Conference Friday April 30th along with hundreds of their peers. The conference program brought DSBN staff and students together to recognize, celebrate and inspire the "Me to We" philosophy in the District School Board of Niagara. Guest speaker Spencer West shared his inspiring story of overcoming personal challenges and in doing so discovering how he himself could reach out to help others. The First and Second Chance students spoke of how they too might reach out to others subsequently participating in their own mini S.T.A.T. session back at their classroom. Together with their teacher, youth counselor, student teacher, secondary social worker and clinician and Alt Ed Principal, the group set out to brainstorm some ideas to take action on the part of At Risk Youth in the DSBN. **Here are some of the ideas that resulted:**

*To live your life in your own way... to reach for the goals you have set for yourself...to be the you that you want to be— that is success.*

### REACHING OUT TO AT RISK YOUTH

- Invitation to "Day in the Life" of a Second Chance student (or half day)
- Newsletter mailing to kids on Home Instruction
- Invitation to join Alt Ed events Bring a Home Instruction friend in for a visit
- Produce a testimonial video
- Produce a scrapbook that can be shared with Home Instruction families/students/teachers
- Produce student friendly brochures for each program
- Create a website/page
- Invitation to special events : BBQ, Sports Challenge, Fun Day, Dancing, Cooking
- Invitation to Thursday Cooking Extravaganza
- Invitation to come along to the Mandarin outings
- Go hang out with the HI kids in their environment
- Arrange a movie day/night

### WORKING WITH AT RISK YOUTH IN THE CLASSROOM

#### Teachers

- Get to know us
- Find out what we are really good at
- Don't assume right away that you know us
- Let us work at our own pace
- Be flexible
- Have a positive attitude
- Observe human rights; respect for all
- Less academic routine; more community style structures (character classroom)
- Taking notes can be brutal
- Let us learn more as teams
- Provide more activity based learning
- Build in time for discussion
- Follow through with what you promise/ say you will do
- Create a balance between teacher directed instruction and learning independently
- Just talk to me
- Mutual decision regarding lates and absences
- Let us make use of our electronic devices

#### Schools/Boards

- Longer breaks
- One room school house design
  - One teacher for all academic subjects
  - Provide at least 2-3 days at start of year/semester/term to "Get to know" each other
  - Background music in the classroom
  - Provide workshops to teachers regarding: sensitivity training, empathy training, mental health training,
  - Allow student led workshops,
  - Shorten periods; 75 minute periods are too long

What do you think? Interested in getting involved? Contact the Niagara Falls Second Chance Program (905-354-3272) or First Chance Program (905-933-9058).

