

SUMMER 2025 NEWSLETTER

Message from your DRNBC Committee

Welcome and thank you for taking your time to read our Summer 2025 DRNBC newsletter!

DRNBC is currently made up of a Conference Planning Committee. We meet once a month online to plan provincial events that take place in the spring.

Our committee includes representatives from Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Douglas College, Assistive Technology BC, University of Northern British Columbia, College of New Caledonia, Academic Communication Equity BC, British Columbia Institute of Technology, and the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills.

Our hope is to hold an in-person conference every other year, alternating with free online Lunch & Learns in between.

We have also been updating our website and plan to launch it by fall.

We are always looking for new members. If you are interested in joining, please email us at drnconference@outlook.com.

The DRNBC for PSE is a provincial organization committed to providing programs, services, professional development, resources, and news related to individuals with disabilities in the British Columbia post-secondary education system.

In This Issue

- Recap of our May 2025 Lunch & Learn events
- Amazing stories from around the province
- Highlights from post-secondary programs
- DRNBC 2025 Celebration of Excellence awardees

DRNBC Hosted Two Lunch & Learns This May

As part of our commitment to fostering inclusive post-secondary education in British Columbia, DRNBC launched a two-part Lunch & Learn series this May under the theme Bridging Barriers, Building Futures: All-Inclusive Transitions. Held virtually on Zoom, the series highlights innovative practices, tools, and conversations that support smoother, more equitable transitions for students with disabilities. More than 40 participants joined the sessions, including presenters, panelists, committee members, guests, and support staff. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of this series.

Day 1

Our first session, held on May 13, featured Christina Cederlof and Jeisil Aguilar Santos, who introduced Career Exploration—a web-based Open Educational Resource (OER) designed to support career development in post-secondary settings. Rooted in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and instructional design principles, the resource uses tools such as H5P, videos, interactive texts, and AI to create inclusive and engaging content for diverse learners.

The session continued with a panel discussion featuring Wendy Harris, Jen McEachen, Colin Cheng, and Megan Winia, who shared their experiences and perspectives on navigating systemic barriers and building more accessible post-secondary transitions. The conversation focused on effective practices and strategies that can help institutions better support all students.

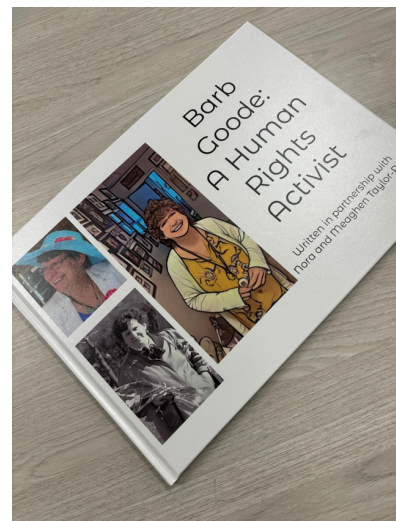
Day 2

The second session, held on May 29, featured a two-part program. Christina Cederlof and Jeisil Aguilar Santos returned to gather feedback and facilitate deeper discussion on the Career Exploration OER, encouraging participants to reflect on how they might apply the resource in their own settings.

In Part 2, Sandra Polushin and Tricia Lins introduced the Transitioning Youth with Disabilities and Employment (TYDE) project—another Open Educational Resource. The project is a collaborative initiative focused on improving employment outcomes for youth with intellectual disabilities and/or autism spectrum disorder as they move from high school to adulthood in BC.

The event concluded with the announcement of DRNBC's 2025 Celebration of Excellence Awards recipients. The Corporate Award was presented to five locations of London Drugs, and the Program Award was given to Brittany Casey of Douglas College. Vince Tomassetti of Assistive Technology BC was also inducted into the DRNBC Wall of Fame. Read more about the awardees on page 15 of this newsletter.

Breaking Barriers: The Story of Barb Goode and Her Advocacy for Equality



This year, Barb Goode and Meaghen Taylor-Reid visited two classes in the Vocational Education and Skills Training Department at Douglas College to share Barb's new children's book, "Barb Goode, A Human Rights Activist". One of Barb's goals with this book is to share with younger generations the history of important advocacy work that has taken place, in order to provide all people with opportunities to participate meaningfully in the community. She has also visited several local elementary schools to read from her book and stimulate important conversations about inclusion, rooted in kindness. Even cooler, Meaghen's daughter Nora was involved in the creation of this beautiful book.

This book highlights the amazing work that Barb has done over the years, to advocate for important changes in creating more inclusive communities in BC, Canada, and beyond! Not only was she the first person with a disability to speak at United Nations, but she continued to break down barriers in all areas of life including employment, education, and housing.

"I am grateful to Barb and other amazing advocates who have given me more opportunities than in the past, to participate in employment, education, sports, and looking at more housing options."

– VEST Student

"The story of Barb Goode meant a lot to me. I felt deeply connected to it; and feel like I can relate, especially thinking that things were unfair and having to fight for things that you would think should be common decency."

– VEST Student



Douglas College Waste Reduction Week 2024

Over the past three years, Naomi Higo and Carol Stoppel have helped organize Waste Reduction Week at Douglas College, an event that helps the Douglas College community make a positive impact on the environment through recycling and reusing everyday household items. One of the highlights of this week is the free clothing giveaway, where employees and students on both campuses can pick up donated items.

This year, the Vocational Education and Skills Training (VEST) students had the opportunity to take part in this event again, during the week of October 21 to October 25, 2024. For our students, Waste Reduction Week is a great way to give back to the community and to learn valuable industry skills such as sorting, steaming, hanging and folding clothing, as well as improving their customer service skills as they interact with employees and fellow students who visit the atrium.

“My favourite part of Waste Reduction Week was meeting new people,” said a VEST student, “and I learned teamwork skills that are important.”

“It’s amazing that the college has different events that helps the college community. With the high costs of living and clothing necessity, the waste reduction event was very impactful.”

“The quality of presentation and the clothing for people to shop in a professional environment was truly nice to see and be a part of the big picture.”

We would like to extend a big thank you to everyone who donated to this important event and to all who stopped by to shop. Together, we collected over 1135.2 lbs of clothing and 997.8 lbs were given away to Douglas community members!

This year’s Waste Reduction Week was a success for both our community and the environment!

Submitted by Brittany Casey, Kiren Uppal, Irina Tzoneva and Davi Bachra



Highlights from ESTR Programs at TRU Kamloops (2024–2025)

The Kamloops Thompson Rivers University, TRU, campus delivered three Education and Skills Training (ESTR) credential programs in the 2024–2025 school year, including: Career Exploration, Kitchen Assistant, Retail Worker. Our students and their supports amazed us with their level of commitment, resourcefulness and resilience while participating in both face-to-face classes and online synchronous classes.

Career Exploration (CE) students participated in another successful *Horticultural Practicum* that takes three weeks in the fall. Students develop skills in grounds keeping and caring for plants in the greenhouse. Students also participated in practicums as a cohort at Mount Paul Community Food Centre, Kamloops Food Bank, Coast Inn and Conference Centre, U-Haul, Acres, and Home Hardware. *Career Exploration students participated in a Fix-It Café* which is a student-led experiential learning opportunity to repair small appliances as well as assemble products such as carts.

Kitchen Assistant students participated in a variety of fieldtrips and service-learning projects that included the Kamloops Farmer's Market (including Retail) and the ICS: Mount Paul Community Food Centre. Students prepared Bannock with Elder Cynthia as part of acknowledging TRC Day.

University Preparation Centre Food Security Project: ESTR's Market prepared soups and baking for the UPC help center on Tuesdays for students to have a free lunch.

As part of Indigenous Awareness, the Kitchen and Retail students participated in a workshop put on by a knowledge maker that had students experience a talking circle with appropriate protocols. TRU hosts an Indigenous Awareness Week in early March. *ESTR's Market* hosted Elder Doreen who taught the students how to make Bannock, assemble native tacos, and shared her story as a professional cook and business owner.



Retail Program: ESTR's Market hosted Greg Stewart, two-time, Shot Put Gold Medalist Paralympian, who is from Kamloops. He also created a children's book and did book signing. It was a popular event! A retail student raised funds for the ESTR scholarship fund by setting up a Henna Art Stand.

Advocacy Curriculum Project: The Kitchen Assistant students participated in the third year of delivery. It is an interdisciplinary project that is a pilot developed by Saskia Stinson (ESTR), Jay Goddard (HUMS) and Sheryl-Lynn Lewis (EACS) funded by the CELT Teaching Innovation Grant. The team delivered a presentation at a conference held at the Taylor Institute at the University of Calgary on April 24, 2024.



Christina Cederlof – ESTR Career Exploration instructor is on sabbatical leave and developed a Career Exploration, web-based Open Education Resource designed to support post-secondary career development. The resource applied UDL and instructional design principles, using tools like G5P, videos, interactive texts, and AI to create inclusive and engaging content. [Career Exploration Resource](#)

Saskia Stinson, who heads up ESTR's Kitchen program, was awarded the 3M National Teaching Fellowship Award for 2025. The award adjudication committee felt that the experiential project at the heart of her teaching and learning design distinguished her from other candidates. [2025 3M National Teaching Fellows – STLHE](#)

Submitted by Saskia Stinson

Something to Celebrate!

The Access Programs Department at Capilano University is celebrating a significant milestone this year!

The Education and Employment Access Certificate program proudly marks its 10th anniversary, spanning ten cohorts from 2015 to 2025, and we plan to celebrate! Cap U has offered programs to neurodiverse students since the 1980s. The focus was always, and still is, employability, independence and connecting with community. These are vital outcomes and our pre-employment program is successful.

Yet, our department was acutely aware of those students who might not thrive in our existing programs; they slipped through the cracks at post-secondary. They were accepted into first year courses and programs based on their academic credits but often, found it too challenging in a system that only seemed to work for typical learners.

We were often asked, and sometimes challenged, by the community with the question – where is the support for these learners? Sometimes the standard accommodations are not enough. How can students feel connected to student life, feel less isolated, and enjoy the university experience?

This prompted us to brainstorm ways to teach the expectations of post-secondary courses and programs. What areas needed focus? What supports could we offer in a student success certificate?

Out of many discussions, and much research, came Education and Employment Access program. The outcomes of this program focus on the soft skills of carrying on in university. Group work, presentation skills, communication, self-advocacy and awareness, increased academic independence, connection with others – these skills are what is needed for student success.

We hire first and second year students as mentors. Their role is to facilitate connection with campus/student life and to model some of the organization and communication skills so vital to success in university. We also include a 6 week practicum in our program. Students may need this as a prerequisite to be accepted into specialized programs such as health care and early childhood education.

We are planning a fun social in May for our graduates of EEA. Help us get the word out to graduates of our EEA Certificate!

For more information, please email access@capilanou.ca.

Happy 10th Anniversary EEA YEAY!

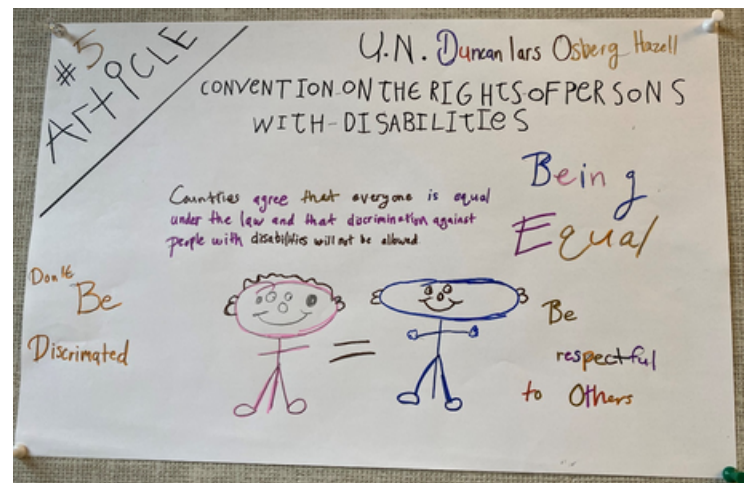
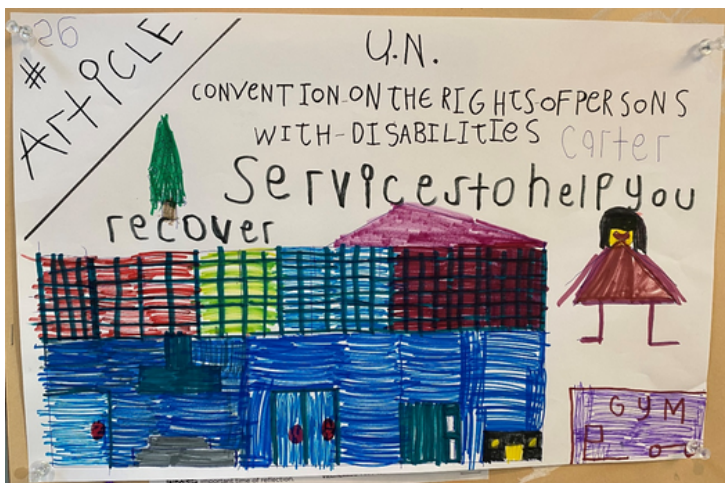
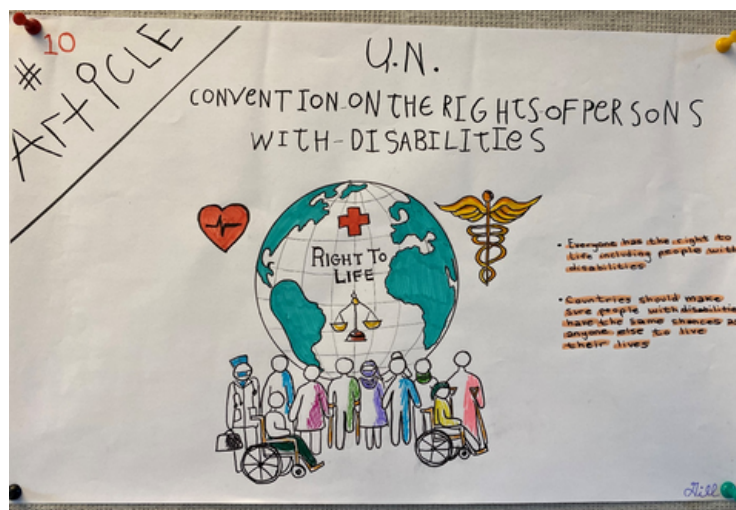
Submitted by Kathy Moscrip and Alison Hale



NIC Comox Valley Learning Event Highlights the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

NIC Comox Valley hosted a learning event in November 2024 about the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Students in the AET program took a course in the fall titled contemporary issues. In this course they first studied the UN Declaration of Human Rights, they followed that learning up with a deeper dive into the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Students each learned about one or two of the articles from the convention. They made a draft poster representation of the article and taught their classmates about the article. After getting feedback on the poster, the students made a final 'good' copy of the article on a larger poster.

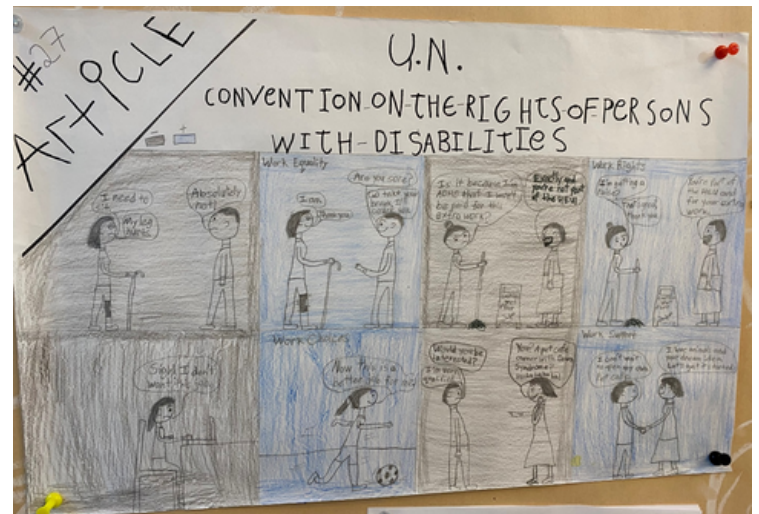
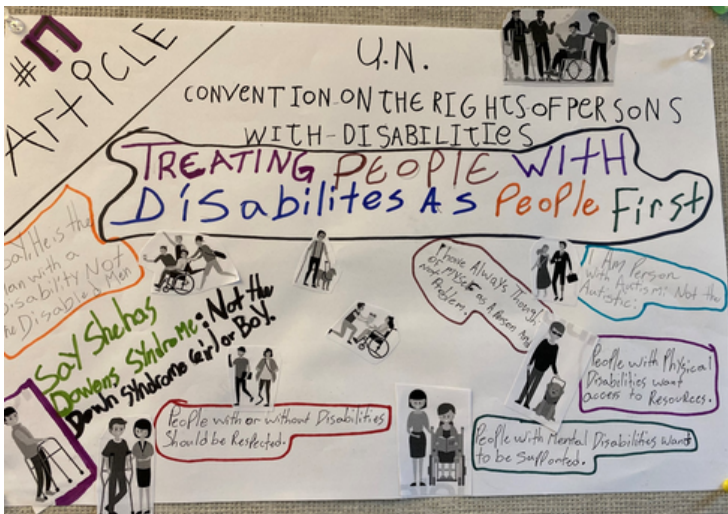


Two 4th year NIC nursing students were doing a leadership project in the class. They did a large portion of the work in planning and preparing for the event. The nursing students also were responsible for making some informational posters – specifically on the 4 different disability models highlighted in the CRPD.



We then invited the community to come to the learning event. The concept was for the AET students to teach the community about the CRPD as we knew that not many people know about it. Students, parents, support staff, the local accessibility committee, the school district and NIC community were invited. The event took place one afternoon after class, capturing all the students present as well as many other NIC students from across the campus. The event was a great success! Many people attended – so much so that the large meeting room was packed! The posters were all on view to read and learn from, and students who made the posters were on hand to discuss their work. The nursing students ran some games to test peoples' knowledge of the CRPD. Two students made speeches: A student who has never spoken publicly before did an excellent territorial acknowledgement, and another student made a speech about how her life has been positively impacted by the CRPD. It was a very fun event and had a positive impact on the students and their community of people who support them. Below are some of the posters made by the students and a photo of the event.

Submitted by Liz Girard



Kwantlen Polytechnic University's Employment and Community Studies Program

Since the launch of our newly revised program in 2022 EACS faculty and staff have embraced the 'nothing about us without us' philosophy, a mantra that has meaning and weights within the Critical Disability Model. We have been looking for ways to create space for conversations, sharing stories and developing impactful community connections. Our community-facing work which includes this

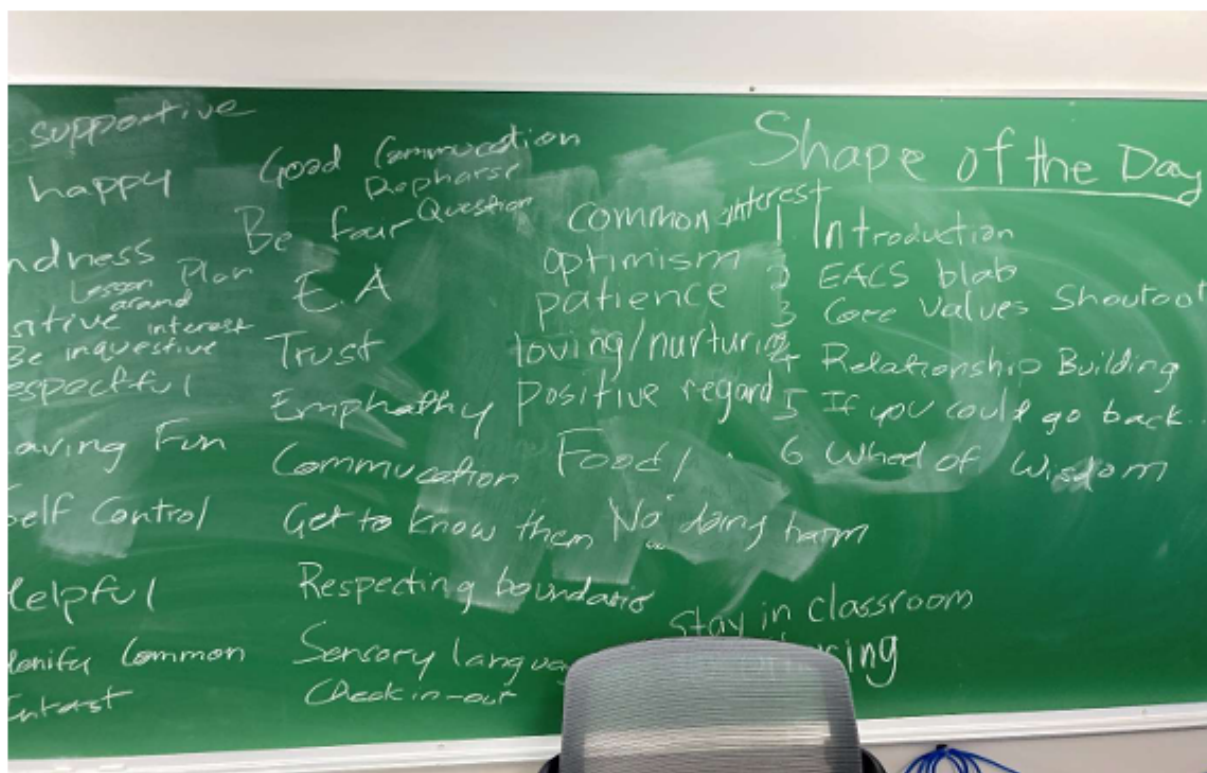


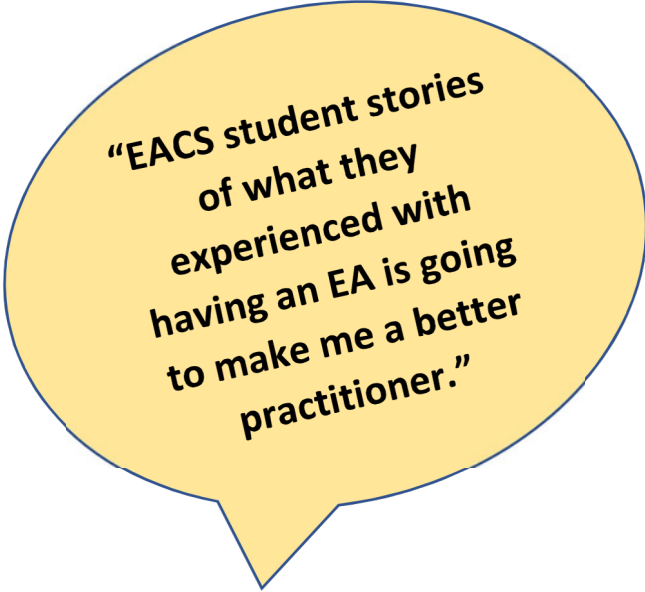
project, has shown how much our students need and want their voices to be heard. We have collaborated with snəwəyət̓ leləm̓ Langara College, Vancouver Island University (VIU) and KPU Education Assistant (EA) students to create an interdisciplinary learning experience.



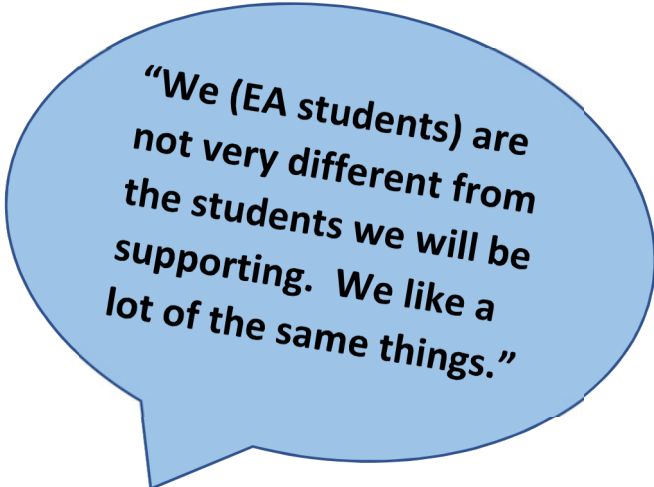
Upon reflection of our new EACS program we realized students were learning about social justice and change making within their own community while training EAs were learning about providing support for students with diverse abilities. It was a natural extension of what each of us were already doing in the

classroom. The first version of this opportunity was via video and text. EACS students anonymously shared stories regarding their experiences having an EA. But something was missing, as noted by an EACS student, "it would have been nice to share the story myself". What this opportunity has transformed into is pairing the asynchronous piece with an opportunity for students in both programs to get together in person for a day of discussions and reflections. Students were still given the opportunity to remain anonymous however the majority were eager to participate in the learning experience.



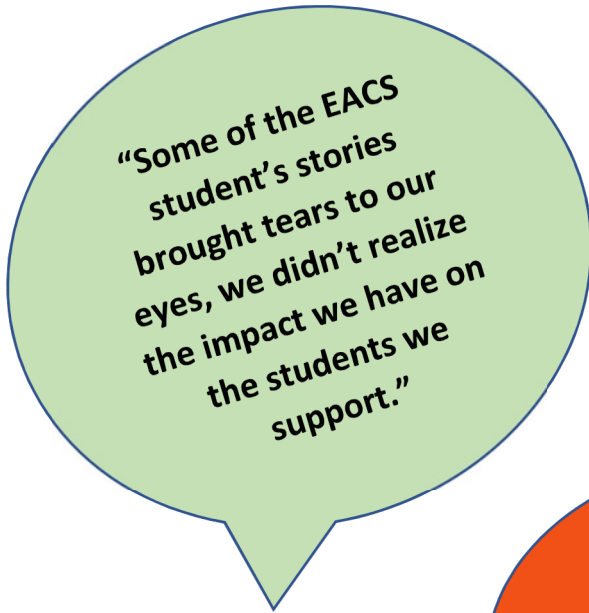


"EACS student stories of what they experienced with having an EA is going to make me a better practitioner."

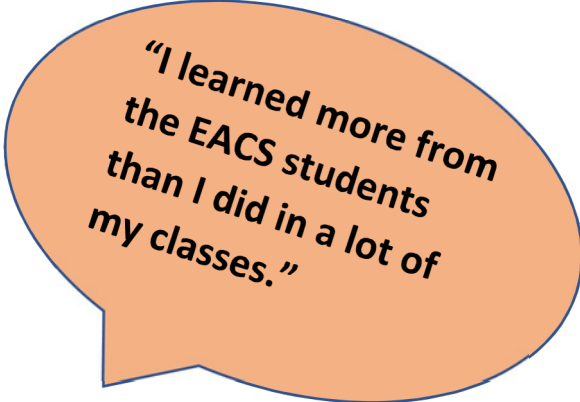


"We (EA students) are not very different from the students we will be supporting. We like a lot of the same things."

Experience Reflections from Education Assistant Students:



"Some of the EACS student's stories brought tears to our eyes, we didn't realize the impact we have on the students we support."



"I learned more from the EACS students than I did in a lot of my classes."



"We need to listen more to the voices of students we are supporting."

"I liked sharing one tip or piece of wisdom. Almost everyone (the EA students) were taking notes of the EACS Student's impactful statements."

"It felt good, good vibes were felt from seeing our impact on the EA classroom."

Experience Reflections from Employment and Community Studies Students:

"Education Assistant Students got to realize the importance of their work in certain student's lives and realize how impactful they can be to the future of a student they work with."

"I enjoyed being able to inspire them with our advice and outlooks."

"The Education Assistant Students got to show us the things they enjoy in life and show us they are very similar in interests and thoughts."

Additional Opportunity for Voice

While working on this project and describing it to an Education Assistant that is a committee member of The Education Assistants of BC Society. They mentioned they were hosting their annual virtual Breaking Barriers Conference and would be very interested in having a K-12 alumni panel. Seven volunteer EACS students offered to share their stories, experiences and voice of their time in K-12 including topics such as what it was like to have an EA, what worked/didn't work, inclusion, advocacy, and advice. Excitedly they presented to over 10,000 Education Assistants across BC, including Whitehorse and Yellowknife. The success of their presentation has led to the possibility of being a standing section of the conference each year.



Future Implications:

We hope to continue this project each semester connecting with a variety of Education Assistant Programs. Through research and testing we are looking to pilot the Digital Collaboration Hub (DCH) that focuses on story sharing through online platforms.

DRNBC 2025 Celebration of Excellence Awardees

The Disability Resource Network of BC is proud to announce the recipients of the 2025 Celebration of Excellence Awards, recognizing those who go above and beyond in empowering students with disabilities through education, employment, and community support.

Corporate Award: London Drugs

DRNBC proudly presents the 2025 Corporate Award to five London Drugs locations for their unwavering commitment to inclusive employment practices. Through a supportive and empowering approach, these stores have made a meaningful impact:

- **Coquitlam Centre**
- **Guildford Town Centre**
- **Lougheed Town Centre**
- **Maple Ridge (Valley Fair Mall)**
- **Richmond (Ironwood Plaza)**

Kiren Uppal and Brittany Casey from the Douglas College VEST Department shared: "They have created a safe and supportive learning environment for our VEST students... Their ongoing dedication to fostering an inclusive and empowering workplace has been instrumental in helping our students build confidence and develop valuable skills for their future careers."

Student voices echo this impact:

"I have gained a boost of confidence... I know that I can count on my awesome manager or co-workers."

— Evan Bissoondatt, Retail and Business Services Program (Guildford Town Centre)

"London Drugs is a fantastic place to work. Their open, friendly, and overall positive environment helps to make it a very enjoyable place to be. The people who work there always make me smile, always willing to help. I will always look back on my experience working there with fondness."

— Kaela Duffield, Career and Employment Preparation Program (Maple Ridge)

The consistent efforts of these five London Drugs locations have made them a valued partner and an exemplary leader in accessibility and inclusion.

Program Award: Brittany Casey

DRNBC is thrilled to recognize Brittany Casey of Douglas College's VEST Program with the 2025 Program Award. Nominated by Meaghen Taylor-Reid of PLAN, Brittany stands out as a compassionate educator who champions the academic and personal growth of her students.

"Brittany Casey has been instrumental in supporting my daughter Kaela Duffield last fall. Brittany has a unique and compassionate way to help her students feel seen, heard and supported so they can discover their own true greatness and gain confidence in their abilities and contributions to society."

"With Brittany's support and encouragement Kaela has discovered her strengths, developed her interpersonal communication skills, and her ability to self advocate. She has helped Kaela to see future possibilities for herself that she may have never imagined before."

— Karen Duffield, parent of a student

With ten years in inclusive education, Brittany continues to collaborate with college departments and community organizations, supporting students beyond the classroom and fostering lasting relationships and opportunities.

Wall of Fame: Vince Tomassetti

We extend heartfelt thanks to Vince Tomassetti for his many years of dedicated service to students with disabilities in B.C.'s post-secondary institutions. Your contributions have helped shape a more inclusive educational landscape, and your presence will be truly missed.

On behalf of students and your colleagues: THANK YOU — YOU WILL BE MISSED!

Note:

This year, there were no nominations in the **Services** category. We hope to receive nominations in all categories for next year's awards. Stay tuned for the 2026 Celebration of Excellence nomination announcement!