Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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BA (University of Victoria, 1983)

“A Beacon for Information: Youth Narratives on School-Based Anxiety Prevention”

School of Child & Youth Care

Tuesday, April 25, 2017
10:00AM
Human & Social Development Building
Room B141

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Marie Hoskins, School of Child & Youth Care, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Jennifer White, School of Child & Youth Care, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Anne Marshall, Department of Educational Psychology & Leadership Studies, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Bruce Wallace, School of Social Work, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

The newly revised 2017-2018 British Columbian high school curriculum, as a prevention education response to a growing concern around children and youths’ mental health, indicates that students will learn the signs and symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression and be able to explain strategies to promote mental well-being (Province of British Columbia, 2016). Youth voices may help in shaping this curriculum objective. This study explores the meaning that five high school students, who were trained to facilitate an anxiety-prevention program, make of the problem of anxiety and prevention through their narratives. Youth narratives do not provide a singular explanation, truth or understanding of anxiety; like all narratives, they hold multiple truths. Youth narratives are drawn from the participants’ local experiential knowledge as well as prevailing discourses that shape their understanding. The types of narratives in this inquiry include: i) the quest for problem-free childhoods; ii) the genesis of knowledge; and iii) overcoming giant stigma by connecting. There are implications and considerations pulled from youth narratives, including how a prevailing psychologized discourse may obscure contextual factors in making sense of anxiety and prevention. This inquiry may help educators and other professionals to imagine what else could be possible in conceptualizing the problem of anxiety and implementing prevention programs. It is hoped that this study will add to the current dialogue around prevention and support strategies in British Columbian schools and beyond.