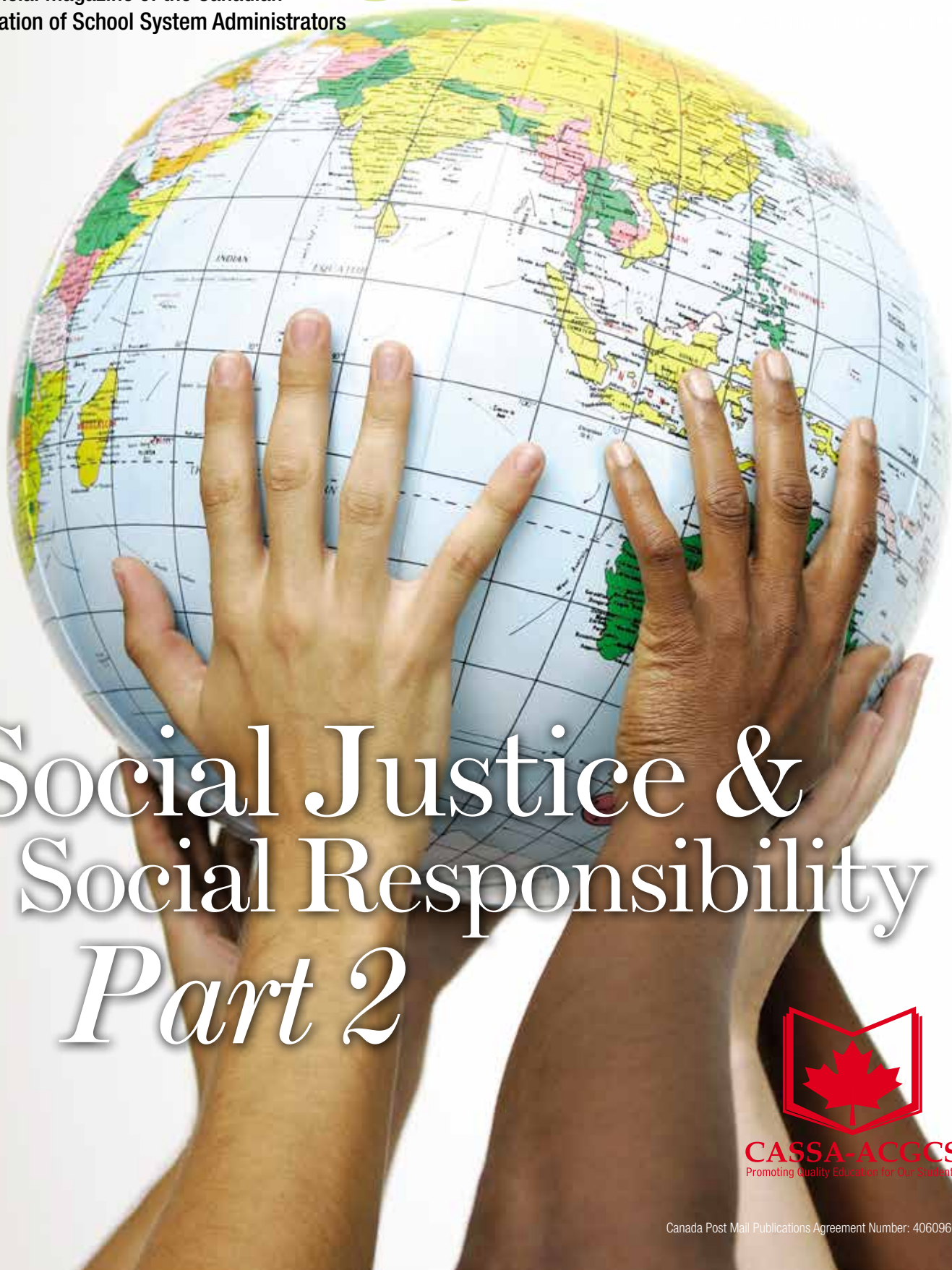


Summer 2016

Leaders & Learners

The official magazine of the Canadian
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Social Justice & Social Responsibility *Part 2*



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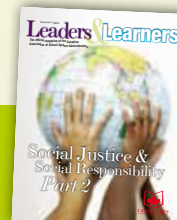
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A quote attributed to the Dalai Lama reads, “When educating the minds of youth, we must not forget to educate their hearts.” I was reminded of this recently when I visited an elementary school in my district. Visiting schools is an important part of my role as a school system leader and I am frequently invited to participate in special events that feature important learnings or showcase student projects. I come away from these visits with a deeper appreciation for the work that schools do to educate the minds and hearts of students.

Earlier this year, I attended an exhibition created by the Grade 6 students at Clearpoint Elementary, in Pointe-Claire, Quebec, which is an International Baccalaureate school that follows the Primary Years Programme. In the final year of this programme, students use an inquiry-based methodology to apply solutions to real-world issues or problems. Students are asked to consider a local or global topic as they explore different themes such as who we are, where we are in place and time, and how we share this planet.

This particular exhibit showcased the theme of where we are in time and place, and students had selected a number of topics to explore such as technology, medicine, the environment, space travel, music, architecture, communication and social justice. In visiting the various booths, I was struck by how students had incorporated a social action component into their learning. To put it simply, it was

not enough to learn about inventions or study events that had taken place; these students were prepared to discuss how we could improve conditions for humanity.

I was particularly impressed with two students who had decided to explore the issue of social justice. These young ladies chronicled the ways in which humans have limited the rights of others throughout history. For example, they had materials documenting how women in many parts of the world are denied things we take for granted today, such as the right to dress in a certain way and the right to vote. They also explored the importance of civil rights and the need to act against racism and child labour. They were passionate in explaining to me that in certain places around the world, basic education continues to be a struggle for children, particularly for girls.

These students also shared ways in which they and their classmates were committed to improving the economic and educational outcomes of others. They had raised money by selling jewellery made by women in developing countries and collecting pledges to participate in a vow of silence activity. The funds raised were going to help children and families by improving their living conditions.

It was clear that their learning extended beyond this particular project and had touched their hearts as well as impacted their knowledge. These students were committed to making a difference. One young lady told me she was going to continue to work for social justice by joining clubs and organizations when she went off to high



Cindy Finn
CASSA/ACGCS President

school. I left impressed, reflecting on the true learning behind such a project: the call to make our world a better place.

Making a difference is not a new mission for educators, but in today's world we have the means and opportunity to have a lasting impact on a different scale. We can work to make our local communities better but we can also strive to improve conditions for people living all over the globe. Social justice has become an important aspect of education today.

This theme of social justice is highlighted in this issue of *Leaders & Learners*. It is evident that our students, teachers and administrators are committed to educating the minds and hearts of youth today. I invite you to take the time to read the interesting articles we have compiled and learn about the various ways that social justice initiatives have taken root in our schools. Bonne lecture!



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- **Dr. Catherine Taylor:** Dr. Catherine Taylor is Professor in the Faculty of Education at The University of Winnipeg. She is widely known for work on sexual and gender diversity and social justice within education.
- **Leora Schaefer:** Leora Schaefer is the Director of the Toronto office of Facing History and Ourselves, an organization that engages teachers and their students in the study of history through an approach that encourages critical reflection and active citizenship.

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I certainly hope that you had a rewarding year as a leader in a publicly-funded school system across Canada. There is no shortage of issues and challenges, and your personal and professional resilience will no doubt have helped you lead in turbulent times!

This year, CASSA has spent a great deal of time focusing on an overarching theme: creating cultures of caring in our classrooms, schools and districts/divisions across Canada. Whether it occurred in our monthly national teleconferences, at our strategic planning session, in our professional magazines and our newsletters, or at this year's conference in Winnipeg, your CASSA Board of Directors has addressed student mental health and well being along with promoting promising practices to create the kind of Canadian society to which we all aspire.

"The goal of a caring and safe school strategy is to encourage school practices that model and reinforce socially responsible and respectful behaviours so that learning and teaching can take place in a safe and caring environment." (Mather, V. (2001). Building a non-violent culture for learning. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 202–206.)

CASSA wants to contribute to the national conversation about social responsibility and social justice so that effective

teaching and improved student achievement and well being takes place in caring school environments. To that end, this edition of *Leaders & Learners* provides examples of promising practices from Northwest Territories at Letsel K'e Dene School, a school of about 80 students, to Manitoba where Pembina Trails School Division gathered thousands of students at Investor's Field in Winnipeg, to a number of examples at school districts across the rest of the country!

I want to thank each of the contributors for taking the time to submit their stories for publication but more importantly, thank them for their day-to-day efforts to ensure our graduates are the very best and most caring of citizens we can possibly help to influence.

Hopefully, conversations that emerge from reading the articles in this magazine and the conversations that will undoubtedly occur during and after our national conference in Winnipeg will move our districts along toward creating the school practices and cultures that "reinforce socially responsible and respectful behaviours."

As always, I welcome your thoughts and comments (ken_bain@cassa-acgcs.ca).

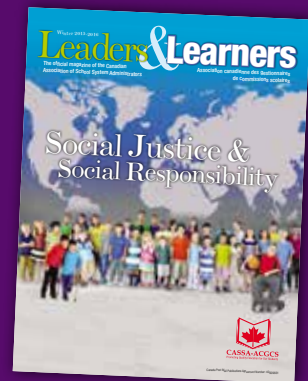
I hope you have a wonderful, safe and enjoyable summer "change of pace!"

Please continue to check out the CASSA website (www.cassa-acgcs.ca) for updates on our national conference, being held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, July 7 to 9, 2016.



Ken Bain

CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director



Leaders & Learners also covered Social Justice & Social Responsibility in our Winter 2015-2016 issue. You can download all previous issues of the magazine at www.cassa-acgcs.ca.

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“Spread the Word”

Gives Glimpse Into How Youth Can Make Our World Better

By Connie Howald, Upper Grand District School Board

Nothing is more powerful for a teacher than watching students rise up and share their learning with conviction and confidence. After an unexpected professional development experience, this is exactly what happened for a group of intermediate teachers from the Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB) in Ontario in 2014.

In 2012, UGDSB decided to make some changes in how they supported teachers with professional development. A decision was made to allocate some professional development funds to

teachers who self-identified an area in which they wanted to dig deeper; an area in which they wanted to look closer at their instruction and how it connected to student learning.

Teachers were invited to submit professional learning requests focussing on an area from their School Improvement Plan (SIP) and the Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement (BIPSA) that linked to their own inquiries and desire to learn more. These requests were then supported by curriculum staff.

It is from this process that a group of intermediate teachers from UGDSB came forward looking to collaborate and discuss effective instructional strategies that uncovered curriculum expectations through student engagement in social justice issues. Each one of them had already started engaging students in social justice topics, just

in different ways. This group of teachers were experiencing the first-hand benefits of engaging their students in literacy, numeracy, science, geography and the arts through investigations around social justice issues and wanted to build upon what they had already started. They already knew they were on to something powerful for students.

As a curriculum leader, I had the honour and privilege of supporting this group of intermediate teachers. We all know how powerful it can be when we get the chance to work with like-minded colleagues who challenge and support us. This teacher learning team overflowed with energy, ideas and questions. This group didn't look at social justice as a unit to be covered, but as a year long avenue through which curriculum would be uncovered with students. Resources were shared along with ideas around how to spark discussion and critical thinking with students.

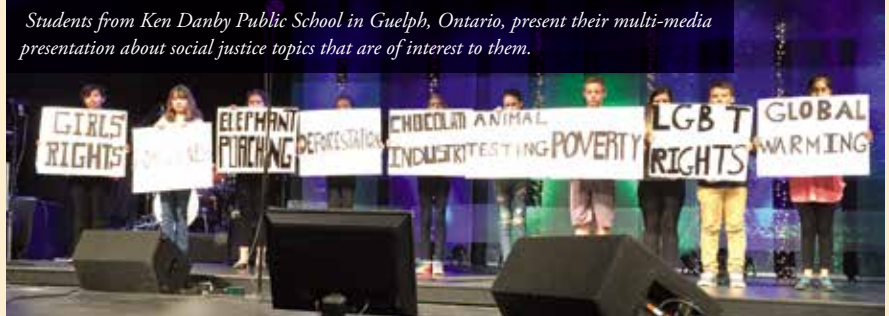
Books, movies, media sources, guest speakers, literary pieces and works of art were examined as ways to expose students to issues and to engage them in discussions. The teachers in this learning team represented different schools from across our board that varied from small rural communities to larger diverse urban areas. The teaching team had a respectful understanding that each one of them was providing instruction and a learning environment that was responsive to their students and respectful of their communities. Therefore, they were all doing different things, at different times, in different ways. The common thread was engagement in curriculum through social justice.

Through this teacher-led professional development, the idea of a student celebration of learning called “Spread the Word” was conceptualized. Each member of the teaching team felt as though all of their students had learning about a social justice topic that could be shared. The teaching team wanted to find a way to bring all of the students together to allow them to share, collaborate and celebrate their learning. In planning this event, the vision was to create a day in which every student would come to “Spread the Word,” prepared to share their learning in a format that reflected their learning style and strengths.

A full day event was planned in which different opportunities and formats were made available to all students depending on their preferred method of sharing their learning. There were opportunities during the day when students who wanted the attention of a large audience could do so on the main stage in front of 600 of their peers. It is there that some students presented a drama piece or shared their original poetry, multimedia presentation or rant. For others who preferred to share their learning in a smaller scale environment and in a less formal way, rooms were set up in which media displays, visual art pieces or information boards could be viewed by all.

After the first “Spread the Word” in 2014, the teaching team was overwhelmed by the evidence of student learning. The passion shared by students was difficult to put into words. They truly rose to the occasion creating a memorable experience for all involved. They advocated from the heart about those issues they truly

Students from Ken Danby Public School in Guelph, Ontario, present their multi-media presentation about social justice topics that are of interest to them.



cared about. They treated each other with respect and rose to the occasion in terms of respecting the degree of maturity needed to engage in such important issues.

The first year was a tremendous learning experience for not only the students, but the teachers as well. The teacher learning team actively sought out feedback from the students and others who attended the event. Superintendents, our Me to We rep, parents, trustees and other members of the community were all invited to attend. Feedback was shared with the teaching team for reflection, discussion and future planning. One of the critical discoveries the teachers made was in realizing that giving the entire day over to student work was not only possible, it was imperative. The adults needed to step back. The student work presented during the first year of “Spread the Word” was of amazing quality and made the teacher learning team really reflect on the idea that this event should be entirely a celebration and sharing of student work.

A conscious effort on behalf of the teaching team to make this all about the students and their voices started to take shape. There was also a more conscious effort on behalf of the teachers to let students know that sharing their learning through the arts was an option that was open to them. We were looking to see greater diversity in how students shared their learning. Student choice in the actual issues they looked at and the way in which they presented their learning needed to be up to them. It is in 2015 that students became the only visible faces of “Spread the Word.” The day became entirely led by students, except for an opening provided by a local Aboriginal elder.

“Spread the Word” has become a yearly celebration of learning that has continued to grow and evolve. Each year since its inception, “Spread the Word” has changed in format and focus in response to the students’ learning needs and current events.

That being said, there are some core principles that have remained the same. When engaging youth in social justice issues it can be a fine line between helping them to feel educated about issues and empowered to get involved, and trying to ensure they don’t become paralyzed from the overwhelming dilemmas in our local and global communities. The teaching team has continually made a conscious effort to ensure that the focus was not just on the reporting of statistics and doom and gloom, but also on what youth can do to get involved and how to make a difference. The message has always been that we can all make a difference.

In addition, allowing students the opportunity to immerse themselves in social justice issues can mean the uncovering of some difficult facts and information. As a learning team, this group of teachers made a conscious effort not to shy away from this, but to find ways to support students. Allowing the students to make choices around what they learn more about resulted in many of them taking a deeper look at some mature topics like rape culture and missing Aboriginal women in Canada; important issues that even many adults struggle to conceptualize and understand. The teachers supported students where they were at and consciously created environments in which respectful and open conversations could take place.

Adolescence can be a challenging time to support students. However, when you capitalize on their desire to be heard and understood, the end result can be not only gains in literacy and numeracy, but in building an engaged life-long learner and contributing member of society. We know that students in Grades 7 and 8 thrive when classroom instruction and learning environments engage them in topics that they are passionate about; ones in which they can debate different perspectives and try out what it feels like to advocate for one side of an argument.

Questions?



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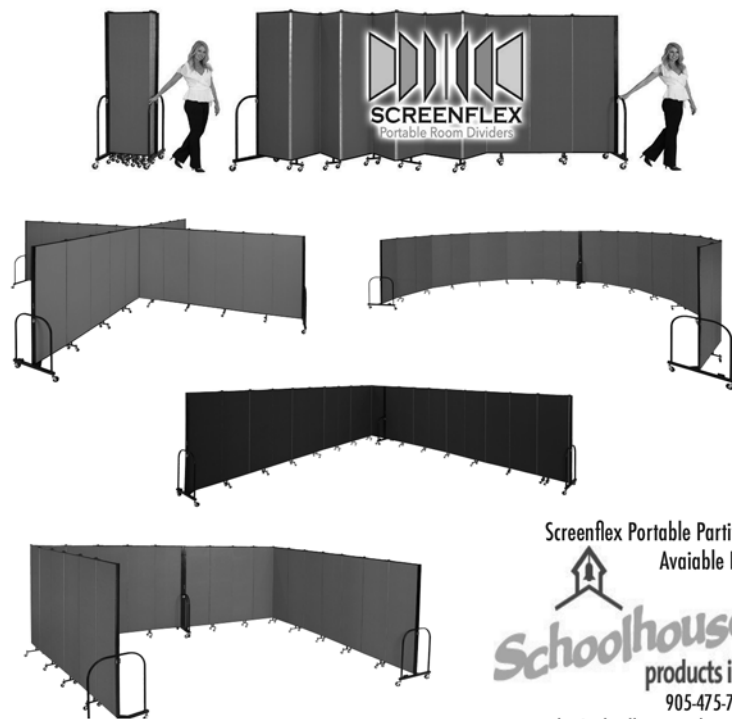
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Students require learning experiences in which they are reflecting, thinking, making connections, asking critical questions, engaging in deep conversations and actively seeking out information that is of interest to them. They can be a restless audience of sorts, so it makes sense that when you link curriculum expectations with social justice issues you support students' learning needs, increase the potential for high levels of student engagement and the end result is deeper learning.

UGDSB is fortunate to have such committed educators who are doing so much more than covering curriculum expectations

with their students. They are helping them evolve into active and engaged members of our local and global community. "Spread the Word" is just one glimpse into the positive power and influence youth can have on making our world a better place. ○

Connie Howald has been an elementary and secondary teacher with Upper Grand District School Board for 19 years. She has been a Tribes trainer for 11 years and recently completed a three-year term as a curriculum leader in 2015. She is currently back in the classroom giving kindergarten a go (where social justice issues come up everyday!).



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Human Rights Unites Pembina Trails School Division in One Common Cause!



All students participated fully in the event.

A Student proudly shows her representation of Article 26.



Organizers completed the art installation 90 minutes earlier than expected due to pending shadows on the field. The aerial shot was provided by Taiga Helicopter.

By Iain Riffel, Pembina Trails School Division

Last year, the Pembina Trails School Division took over Investors Group Field in Winnipeg, Manitoba, to create a large-scale mosaic of the international symbol for human rights, as designed by Predrag Staki: (2011). In preparation for the event, each of the 13,000 students and 2,000 staff of Pembina Trails created single eight by 10 inch panels depicting one of the Articles from the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Over the course of two days in May 2015, students and staff from all 33 schools in the Pembina Trails School Division gathered

on the Winnipeg Blue Bombers' football field to place their art side by side to create a giant art installation unlike anything you have ever seen.

According to Ted Fransen, Pembina Trails School Division Superintendent, "This art installation event was a truly amazing and powerful moment, not to mention a first for any school division in Canada. To have the opportunity to see all of our students and staff celebrating their learning, and working towards a common purpose, was incredible."

For organizers, the mission of the Pembina Trails School Division Human Rights Project was to support a generation of students who are already thinking about social action and social justice, as well as to

connect all of our school communities in a unifying endeavour. For those who believe that education is intended to be transformative, both personally and collectively, and that the intent of education is to improve the human condition both locally and globally, this project, based on human rights and the rights of the child, was a perfect match.

"Although every panel was unique, the cause was the same. Connecting student leadership initiatives to human rights and the rights of children was a natural fit," said Cameron Cross, Divisional Art Consultant and co-organizer of the project.

Throughout the year, the project promoted the understanding of how social action and social justice provides a positive context for student engagement and learning. "We wanted

For those who believe that education is intended to be transformative, both personally and collectively, and that the intent of education is to improve the human condition both locally and globally, this project, based on human rights and the rights of the child, was a perfect match.



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to demonstrate how rights-based education and a project-based pedagogical approach are of benefit to learning for all,” said David Wall, Divisional Educational Technology Consultant and co-organizer of the project.

Research in both areas show positive yields in student achievement, behaviour, and engagement. The project provided the opportunity for deeper learning, student-voice, and constructivist teaching approaches.

Setting the Stage

This project was introduced to Pembina Trails leaders and school administrators in the fall of 2014. A smaller scale project had been piloted at École Bonnycastle School in the previous year, which provided the vision for what was to be accomplished, the curricular possibilities of human rights as cross-graded interdisciplinary theme, and the essential elements for incorporating a project-based pedagogical approach.

School teams included one or two classroom teachers, an art specialist, a teacher-librarian and a school administrator. This leadership group of over 100 Pembina Trails educators gathered twice during the year: once to plan the project, and again to plan the art installation event. This leadership group also shared ideas and resources electronically throughout the year.

Project Development

The development of the project unfolded in many different ways at the individual school level. Some schools launched the project through assemblies, while others used a classroom approach. Some schools chose to invite motivational speakers or guests to relate social stories from their own communities. Some schools chose to have students develop the project over several months, incorporating different Articles throughout the year within existing curricular themes. Other schools chose to develop their panels within a unit of study. Regardless of the approach, students drew upon their own experience or the experience of others and shared what was important to them.

Both Cross and Wall went to schools frequently to promote the project and to provide direct support to teachers and students in developing their panels. In some schools they worked with every classroom until every last panel was completed. Students learned about human rights and the connection to curricular studies while simultaneously learning artistic technique and application of technology.

"The pride and confidence my Kindergarten students demonstrated when explaining their tiles and their meaning showed a level of understanding that I believe was elevated by their involvement in this project," said Trudy Yu, Kindergarten Teacher. "These amazing little people are absolute individuals, and the human rights project gave them a means of celebrating their self-identity and worth."

Art Installation

The art installation event at the Investors Group Field was accomplished in four phases over two days in May. Students and staff from each of the four high schools and their respective feeder schools each took their turn attending the stadium over a half day. To accomplish a field-trip for 15,000 students and staff required a second leadership team involving school administrators, consultants, teachers and support staff. This team of 20 leaders met monthly to plan the art installation event.

Key logistic details included bus transportation and walking routes; accessibility to the field and seating; the proper placement of panels within the time available; providing an engaging and meaningful experience for all ages; the safe return of students; and

the return of every panel to its contributor.

Students arriving by bus or walking were directed from the concourse to the field by a team of over 150 divisional volunteer staff. Once on the field at the zone designated for their school, they were assisted by older students and staff volunteers to individually place their own panel on a 47 by 49 yard template of the symbol. Students then visited social action booths created by students about initiatives at their schools that were connected to human rights.

Each phase wrapped up with a concert provided by Bold as Lions and a short program. Speakers in the program included Mayor Brian Bowman, Gail Asper, Eloge Butera, Duncan Cox, Michael Champagne, Sean Quigley, and, from the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, Louis Richardson. Cousins of Malala Yousafzai, who are students in Pembina Trails School Division, also spoke, along with other students who are leaders in their schools on matters of social action and justice.

In addition to raising awareness about human rights, the event also provided students with the opportunity to act locally and globally. Over 1,500 pounds of food was

collected for Winnipeg Harvest and \$1,500 was donated to the alternative income campaign sponsored by *Free The Children*. As a result, students from all 33 schools in Pembina Trails School Division were eligible for tickets to We Day 2015.

"I feel so happy to be a part of this because I think we are going to make a big impact," said Amari Dian, a Pembina Trails student.

Pembina Trails School Division is thankful for the determination, generosity, and time provided by many partners and sponsors. The relationship with Wade Miller, the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, and Investors Group Field were key to the success of the event. Another key relationship was forged between Jerrold Wiebe, Divisional Numeracy Consultant, engineers from AECOM, and students who had the foresight to pre-measure and cut a template on which students would place their panels.

"The students were incredible in their abilities and professionalism as they worked alongside AECOM engineers. The fact that measurements were so precise that all panels covered the template with little room to spare was expected but still remarkable," said Wiebe.

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And, of course, the relationship with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights elevated the importance of the project within a wider discourse.

Open Gallery

On the final evening, a free open public gallery allowed all to enjoy the stadium and to view the art installation. For Fransen, “the attendance of so many children, their parents and families, as well as educators from across the Division was inspiring. As we gathered on the field, the Pembina Trails community

has connected our purpose in education with the larger community’s purpose of raising a generation of students with a heart for others, a desire to grow up in a better world, and a deep commitment to being an integral part of making a difference.”

Approximately 2,500 hundred people attended. Students of all ages and families returned to find their panels and celebrate the breadth of the mosaic. Due to wide media coverage, several members from the general public also attended and celebrated the accomplishment with children, families and staff.

As a way to honour the May event, 99 panels (three from each of the 33 schools), were selected for display at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. The student art exhibit took place over two days in June and attracted a crowd of impressed community members and proud parents.

Future Pursuits

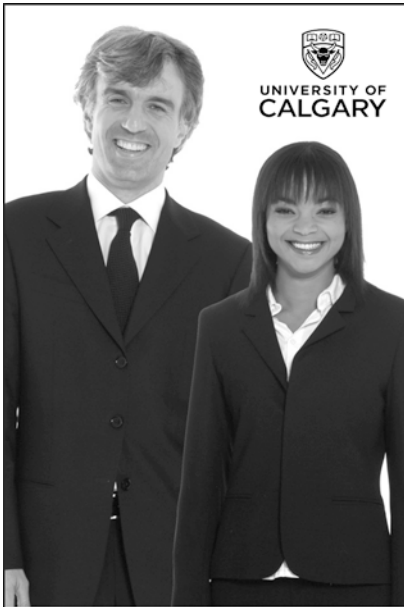
In developing the project, Cross and Wall had the foresight of having students upload a video of their panel as well as providing either a written text or voice-over explanation of their piece and the importance of the Article that they selected. With the help of Creatubbles, every student in Pembina Trails was given their own art space to not only share their piece with other students but also with others across the globe.

“This resource has already been viewed around the world. From Beirut to Argentina to Texas, people are amazed at the quality of work and depth of the artist statements. As each school, student and staff continue to add to the online gallery, we will have a body of work that will become a living document and carry the voices of our children,” said Wall.

Final Remarks

In the weeks that followed the event, administrators and teachers reported that The Pembina Trails Human Rights Project generated heightened student engagement and deeper learning. Student after student could explain their panel, the article it represented, and why it was important to them. The panels provided for meaningful conversation between students as well as between students and adults in the school. ○

Iain Riffel is the Assistant-Superintendent – Programs, Pembina Trails School Division. This article was originally published in The MASS Journal, Fall 2015, which is published for the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, and is published by Matrix Group Publishing Inc. It is reprinted with permission.




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Refugee and Médecins Sans Frontiers Simulation at St. Thomas High School

By Anne Novak-Vrana, Lester B. Pearson School Board

Imagine you have been forced to flee your home, neighborhood and country. Imagine that you have only a short time to gather your family and some of your most precious and necessary belongings to start a long and uncertain journey to a destination where you hope to find shelter and safety. You have only enough to sustain you and your loved ones for a short while until you become completely dependent on the goodness and charity of others. This is the reality of the hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria and other regions of the world.

After following the news about the crisis in Syria “Students for Change,” a group of engaged students from St. Thomas High School in Pointe Claire, Quebec, decided to learn more about the crisis and raise awareness about the global situation of refugees. While doing their research about the plight of refugees they also discovered that the international organization Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) was at the forefront of providing first-rate

health care to the refugees fleeing Syria. This organization quickly earned the groups’ respect and they decided to learn more. With so much interesting, newsworthy and educational information, the group decided to share their research with their peers in Secondary 5 in the form of a formal presentation.

The group met on a weekly basis over several months to plan and design an effective and informative presentation. Being themselves students from Secondary 5, they looked for the most impacting ways to engage an audience and make the presentation memorable. They quickly realized that the use of visuals and sound, and interacting with the audience, would be the best way to engage the students. When an audience is involved in the presentation they listen more carefully and thereby learn more. This is when the group decided to divide the presentation into distinct parts composed of video footage, theatrical sets and skits.

The majority of the research on refugees was taken from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees website, as well as other related sites. Navigating

and collecting information from the different sites proved to be a real challenge as there was an abundance of documents to read and from which to choose relevant and age appropriate material. As the students had also decided that up-to-date video footage of refugees would help to illustrate the reality of the refugees’ experience, they faced the challenge of sifting through many great examples of film. With so many videos available on the internet the group decided to split and trim a variety of segments to create a final production for the refugee segment of their presentation.

Information about Doctors without Borders (MSF) came mainly from the organization’s website and other documentary and news feeds. It was essential for the group to highlight the great work done by the organization on a global level while showing their direct involvement with the plight of refugees. Although information on the internet was thorough, the group decided to nonetheless contact the head office of MSF in Montreal to see if they could be of any assistance in the project. MSF was highly interested in the project and offered

to provide a variety of documents and contributed several items to use for the presentation.

The last important segments to plan were the theatrical sets and skits. The group had decided that to make the presentation as realistic as possible they would include a replica of an MSF clinic as well as a simulation of a refugee camp shelter. For the sets they assembled effective and realistic props which they placed inside two three-sided tarp shelters with tarpaulin roofs. Within the sets they also planned to play out scenarios in which a journalist would interview an MSF doctor "in the trenches" and a refugee describing their situation. The students wrote the scenario, assigned acting roles and designed their costumes. Given that the group was made up of 10 members, they were all cast in a variety of roles to fill all the presentations.

For the introduction the students came up with key guiding questions where they asked the audience to imagine that they had to flee their homes and town and walk to a designated area 100 kilometres away. At the end of the presentation the group provided a Q & A segment. Once all the information and video footage was collected and the sets

and skits created, it was all organized into 50 minute presentations which were presented to nine different secondary V classes over the span of three days.

As the individual classes arrived into the presentation room, they were asked to sit on the floor which was covered with tarps. As they were settling, the sound of airplanes, sirens and loud yelling could be heard in the room. No other introduction was needed and two student animators commenced immediately with, "It is an early morning in July and you are abruptly woken to the sound of sirens, airplanes and yelling. You look outside and see people rushing everywhere and military emergency vehicles and personnel directing people. Loudspeakers are instructing everyone that they have five minutes to evacuate their homes and start walking the 100 kilometres to safety. You are terrified but you and your family must act quickly." At a quick pace, a variety of questions are thrown to the audience.

"What do you take?"

"My cell phone," answers one student.

"Good. How long will it stay charged?"

"Water," says another.

"Great. How much can you carry?"

"Food, my dog, some photos!"

And on and on the questions and reactions.

"What about your grandmother in her wheel chair? What about your pregnant neighbour? What about your father's heart medication?"

You can feel the frustration in the room as the animators proceed to present the rest of the presentation; videos about refugees and MSF, skits in the mock-ups and a final Q & A.

The result of the research and planning lead to an exceptionally interesting presentation attended by close to 250 Sec. V students and their teachers. As a final touch, Quebec Minister of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusiveness, Kathleen Weil, came to the school to speak to the students on the issue of immigration in Canada and, more specifically, about immigration in Quebec. Over 100 secondary students were invited to attend the presentation and later met with Minister Weil to ask more questions. ○

Anne Novak-Vrana is a Spiritual Animator at St. Thomas High School, in the Lester B. Pearson School Board. She can be reached at avrana@lbpsb.qc.ca.

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SCHOOL

Building Ethical Citizens: One School Division's Story

Fr. Sabinus visits students at St. Thomas Aquinas in Spruce Grove to thank the school for their fundraising efforts.



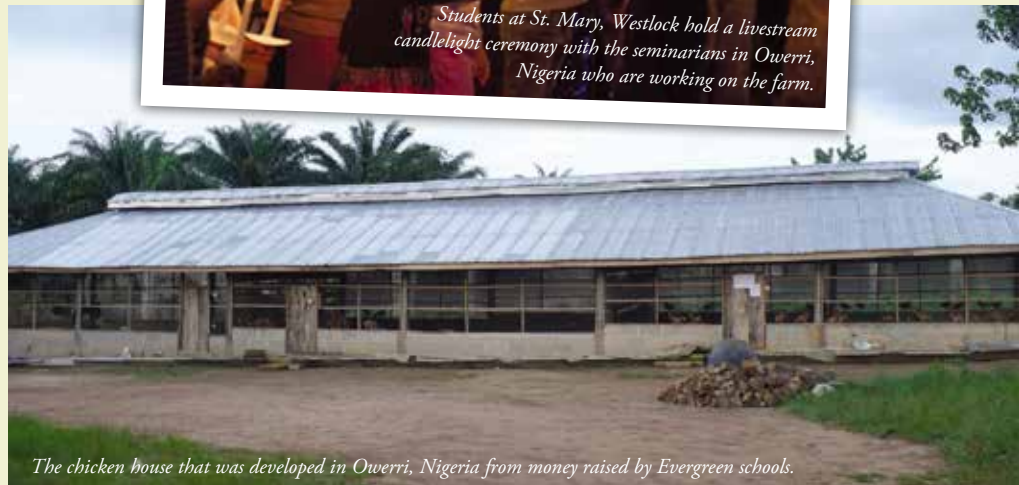
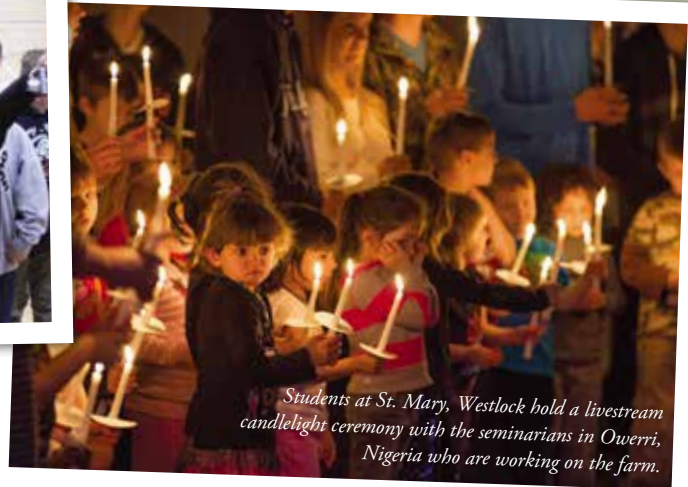
By Cindi Vaselenak,
Evergreen Catholic Schools

“Can you help me?” Four years ago, I was sitting across the table from a beloved priest in one of our school communities when he asked me that important question. My Deputy Superintendent Mike Paonessa and I weren't really sure what would follow. Over the next half hour, Father Sabinus Iwu, Sons of Mary, Mother of Mercy (SMMM), shared his big idea, drawn and detailed on a paper placemat in a coffee shop.

Father Sabinus was being called back by his religious order in Owerri, Nigeria, and he had a remarkable task ahead of him—to become the Director of Agriculture for his seminary. Father Sabinus' big idea was to develop a food supply, a regular source of protein upon which the seminary and larger community could depend. He had a parcel of land on the seminary grounds but did not have the financial resources to develop it. Could we build a farm to feed a community together?

It took us several days to comprehend the magnitude of the project. We realized it would require the commitment of every student and staff member in Evergreen Catholic School Division, 11 schools in five different wards. Our board of trustees endorsed the partnership, and **GREEN EGGS** was officially born

Students at St. Mary, Westlock hold a livestream candlelight ceremony with the seminarians in Owerri, Nigeria who are working on the farm.



The chicken house that was developed in Owerri, Nigeria from money raised by Evergreen schools.

(God Revealed Everyone Everywhere is our Neighbour. Evergreen Catholic students and staff, Grateful for our blessings, Give generously to the Seat of Wisdom Poultry Farm) as a division-wide social justice project. From that point onward, our school division became chicken farmers.

The educational vision in Alberta is to develop students as *Engaged Thinkers and Ethical Citizens with an Entrepreneurial Spirit*. As a school division, we were looking for an initiative that would illustrate our commitment to social justice and social responsibility while meeting the expectations established in the Ministerial Order on Learning. We wanted a tangible project that would appeal to students from kindergarten to Grade 12 and this seemed to fit the bill. Rather than just send money for the purchase of food, our intent was

to build a means to feed a community forever and thus to teach our students what it takes to build capacity in a community to help itself.

Evergreen Catholic Schools' major commitment would be to raise the money to develop the farm; the seminary's responsibility was to clear the land, develop the infrastructure, and buy and raise chickens. We asked Father Sabinus to involve the school division in planning and purchasing so that students would become more invested as engaged learners and develop entrepreneurial skills through building a business together. We wanted students to recognize that, as ethical citizens who have the privilege of living in a resource rich country, they have the means and ability to assist a country that is not as fortunate as we are. The Evergreen Board established a division faith theme “Sent as Agents of Hope and Mercy,”

modelled after the works and actions of Pope Francis, and our partnership embraced the theme by providing hope to the community in Nigeria.

Three years later, over \$100,000 fundraised (and counting), Evergreen Catholic schools and Seat of Wisdom Seminary have a fully functional poultry and vegetable farm. We have a business plan that is shared across the division with regular video and picture updates from the seminary to show the farm's progress. Our farm currently produces 450 eggs per day and raises 500 chickens and turkeys for meat.

In the second year, Newcastle disease killed 180 chickens and decreased the egg production of the surviving birds. Our students were told about this loss and how it would affect the food supply to the larger community. The students learned that it would cost \$1.80 to buy one chick and \$15 to feed it for a year. We fundraised fervently to replace those chickens. When we realized one of biggest expenditures was the cost of chicken feed, Father Sabinus suggested we grow maize to produce our own feed. We would, however, need a tractor, and so our farm continued to evolve.

In our third year, the farm has created jobs for people in the community, which has

experienced high unemployment. The paid workers are teens who finished secondary school and are looking for money to further their education.

Father Sabinus returned to Canada to visit each Evergreen Catholic school and to share his experiences on the farm. At each assembly, he opened with this: "The reason for my coming to visit your schools is predicated on the expression of thanks to the people who have done what no human mind could have simply imagined to be possible for this Seat of Wisdom Seminary. I am delighted and run short of words to express my joy. I say thank you to the teachers, students, parents, board and superintendents of Evergreen Catholic Schools for being a miracle to the community. Thanks for filling our hearts with love. Thanks for demonstrating that in loving like Christ, there are no boundaries and there are no limits! Thanks for showing that we are all connected in the universe! Thanks for showing that the pendulum of love should be allowed to oscillate to the far ends of the pole!"

As a superintendent myself, I see the evidence that we are realizing our vision. A child in Grade 2 approached Father Sabinus and asked, "Did we purchase our tractor yet

and are the chickens laying more eggs now?" A Grade 5 student entered a national essay contest with her essay about our Green Eggs project entitled, "Together We Can Move Mountains."

A social justice project can bring an entire division together, united in purpose, committed to improving the circumstances of others. Our students built a genuine connection with people they have never met and they are invested in helping another country improve its circumstances. As a superintendent, I learned that when someone looks me in the eye and asks for help, my first response should be "Yes." We build the common good by caring for our brothers and sisters in the global community. ○

Dr. Cindi Vaselenak is currently Superintendent of Evergreen Catholic Schools in Spruce Grove, Alberta. She has been employed in the teaching profession for 29 years in three Alberta school divisions as teacher, curriculum coordinator, assistant principal, principal, deputy superintendent and superintendent. Dr. Vaselenak has a Bachelor of Education degree (ULethbridge), a Masters of Science (UOregon), and Doctorate of Education (UAlberta).



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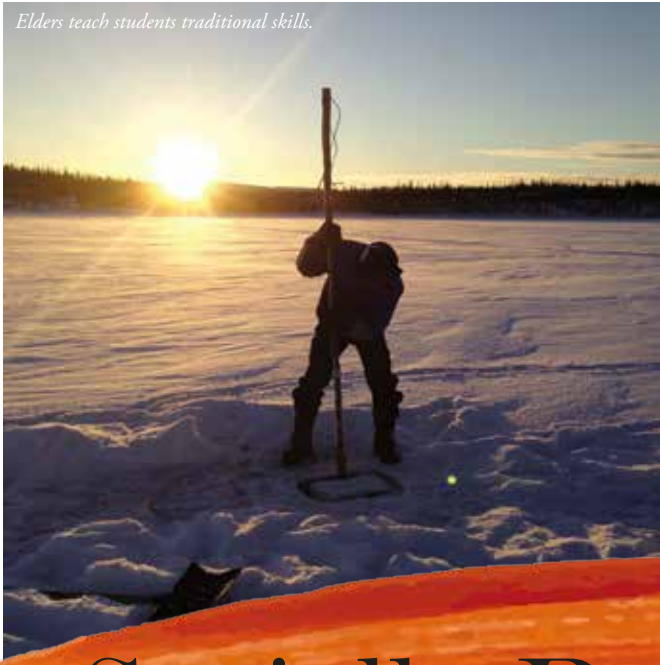


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Socially Responsible Students at Lutsel K'e



One of the murals students painted as a social responsible anti-bullying campaign.



The first two graduates of Lutsel K'e Dene School.



Students painted murals with artist John Rombough.

By Devin Roberts, Lutsel K'e Dene School

Lutsel K'e Dene School (LKDS) is a small school of 72 students located in the remote Northern community of Lutsel K'e, Northwest Territories¹. A disconnect between schools in Northern Canada and the communities they serve can exist. Despite this, Lutsel K'e Dene School has found success by promoting social responsibility with its students.

The South Slave Divisional Education Council (the school board that serves Lutsel K'e) tracks the success of schools with data

collection in numeracy, literacy, language and social responsibility. In 2014-2015, the overall student attendance rate was 81 per cent, which was an increase of 13 per cent compared to the previous three years when the attendance rate had been 68 per cent. Enrollment increased from 64 students in 2013-2014, to 72 by September 2014.

We believe the positive change in enrollment and attendance could possibly be attributed to a reemphasis being placed on social responsibility by staff and students. In 2014-2015, the school underwent a change with five new teachers coming to the school. The LKDS staff decided that a renewed

focus on social responsibility was important. The Positive Behavior Interventions & Support (PBIS) model was decided upon by using a matrix for positive behavior that was designed by staff and students.

Students at Lutsel K'e Dene School participate in a four-team house challenge system that rewards good behavior and positive social interaction. Teachers acknowledge students with "Eagle Feathers" for demonstrating positive behavior and acting socially responsible.

The feathers are collected as a competition among the four school teams. Teams and students are acknowledged for

collecting the feathers on the P.A. system or at school assemblies. Student assemblies were used to acknowledge positive behavior and monthly challenges were organized using the school's goals as a focus for each challenge.

Community involvement also plays a significant role in teaching social responsibility. In Lutsel K'e, elders often come in and share their traditional knowledge with students. Elders share stories, teach students to sew, participate in on-the-land learning excursions, and even painted four murals. Local artist John Rombough lead a group of students in painting school-uniting murals that were featured at three local media outlets.

Lutsel K'e is a community filled with talented individuals willing to share their experience and knowledge with our students. At our spring camp this past April 2015, the school had community members join the camp and share their traditional knowledge with our students. Elder teachings focused on treating others with respect and developing traditional skills. This shared sense of community is the focus of both our school and community.

A focus on extra curricular activities also helped to promote social responsibility, as students were required to be positive role models in their school in order to participate in school activities. In 2014-2015, Lutsel K'e Dene School sent two middle school girls to compete in the Northwest Territories track and field competition for the first time in many years. Girls' and boys' basketball teams were also formed for the first time and competed at the annual Cager basketball tournament in Yellowknife. Popular sports like volleyball and soccer also had their programs expanded, with 37 students travelling to two different tournaments. This amount of students involved in athletics represented nearly 60 per cent of the entire student population.

In June of 2015, two high school students wrote the English Language Arts 30-2 diploma exam for this first time in the history of the school. The 2015 school year ended with the school celebrating its first two (ever!) graduates of Grade 12, with a large ceremony that was attended by 250 community members.

Students, staff and community members have all noted that the school has undergone a change in the right direction, which many

attribute to the positive behaviors being reinforced by the PBIS program and an overall focus on social responsibility. ○

Devin Roberts, B.A. B.ED M.ED EdD (candidate), is currently the Principal at Lutsel K'e Dene School where he has worked for the past two years. Roberts has over 10 years experience in the field of education and holds a masters degree from the University of Calgary.

Note

1. The community is located on the south shore near the eastern end of Great Slave Lake and until 1 July 1992, it was known as Snowdrift, as the community lies near the mouth of the Snowdrift River. According to the 2011 Census, the population of the community was 295 people. Although not accessible by road there is an airport, Lutselk'e Airport, with scheduled services from Yellowknife and an annual sealift is provided by Northern Transportation Company Limited from Hay River in the summer. Lutselk'e Water Aerodrome is available in the summer months when the lake is clear of ice.

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Social Justice Advocacy: Creating Safe, Caring and Inclusive Schools

By Bob Esliger, Robyn Kemp, and Carlo Pavan, Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools

In its ongoing effort to advance safe, caring and inclusive school strategies, Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools (NLPS) hired two social justice advocates (Carlo and Robyn) this past September. The one-day per week position gave them the opportunity to set the groundwork for a safe, caring and inclusive environment for all staff and students.

The year began with the Social Justice Advocates meeting with the Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity (SOGI) and Multicultural & Race Relations (MCRR) district committees that had worked together to produce the initial draft framework for the new NLPS Inclusion Policy. The Social Justice Advocate's task was to update the draft inclusion policy by meeting with all stakeholder groups and other key individuals to garner feedback and input. In addition, they made a dedicated effort to resource themselves with key topics in social justice leadership, to review relevant district data, as well as to seek out

current research and promising practises in inclusive education.

The work of updating the new inclusion policy was also guided by the NLPS Safe, Caring and Inclusive Schools Strategy, board policies and administrative procedures, Ministerial Orders from the BC Ministry of Education, as well as provincial human rights legislation. The social justice advocates also attended professional development seminars and met with individuals from post-secondary institutions who were experienced, knowledgeable and currently practicing in the field of human rights and social justice.

Student questionnaires were created as a vehicle to gather information from NLPS alumni as well as current students, including LGBTQ+, in order to obtain their responses to questions pertaining to their feelings of personal safety, acceptance and belonging while attending district schools. From this data, the social justice advocates determined three themes that needed to be infused into the draft inclusion policy that would also inform the writing of the two administrative

procedures (SOGI and MCRR) to guide schools.

The three main themes include:

1. The need for the district to provide ongoing educational opportunities on issues of diversity to all staff;
2. The need for the district to provide regular educational opportunities for all district staff to increase their understanding of the freedom of information and protection of privacy legislation; and
3. That it is the responsibility of educators to ensure that all students see themselves reflected and honoured in the curriculum, from kindergarten to Grade 12.

In addition to this information, another questionnaire was designed to gather information from school principals specific to student demographics, safety and how inclusion is reflected in their school.

School-based Inclusion Advocates

Early in the fall, the social justice advocates started to build a district-wide team of Inclusion Advocates. Ensuring there was at least one of these advocates in every school



became their goal as they endeavoured to move social justice work in NLPS forward. They also recognized that the local teachers' association had already begun this work and had an existing Social Justice Committee with representatives from many schools already in place. Therefore, one of their first efforts in this regard was to reach out to them, join forces and work together as a larger team.

The social justice advocates brought the inclusion advocates (teachers and support staff) together from over a dozen schools for semi-monthly meetings, as the inclusion advocates began their work in their respective schools. As the year progressed, the momentum started to build and the appetite for more of this work continued to grow.

Guiding Philosophies

As the social justice advocates walked through their assignment and goals this school year they gathered and developed key learnings which they formulated into guiding philosophies to direct their work.

- Diversity exists...inclusion does not. Inclusion is created through ongoing, open, honest and courageous

conversations and a *willingness to learn in public*.

- Inclusive practices are everyone's responsibility yet must be championed by the leadership at every level of the organization. It is the job of the advocates and front-line people to hold their leaders accountable and remind them of this commitment.

Creating an Inclusive Environment: To be Culturally Aware, Sensitive and Safe

Culture, in the context of the NLPS proposed Inclusion Policy, is defined in the broadest sense possible. Groups include (but are not limited to) race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, family structure, and socio-economic status. Therefore:

- (To be) **culturally aware** is acknowledging that diversity exists in our community;
- (To be) **culturally sensitive** is about learning and understanding people whose cultural background is not the same as your own. It is recognizing that there is an appropriate response to the cultural expectations and needs of

any given individual or group within a diverse community. Given the diversity that exists in schools and the community, staff need to give consideration to developing plans and strategies that are flexible and best suited to address this diversity; and

- (To be) **culturally safe** reflects a *way of being*. It is an individual or collective value that sends the message that each person belongs, is respected, honoured, valued, cared for and included. It is less about learning the cultural traditions of a person or group, and more about being self-reflective in looking at our own attitudes, biases and behaviour towards others. We are always asking ourselves the question: *how does this fit in relation to our inclusive values and what do I need to adjust in myself to genuinely respond in a way so that others feel valued?*

Preamble to the draft NLPS Inclusion Policy

Inclusion in Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools is based on the principles of respect, acceptance, safety and equity. It is the



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recognition and honouring of diversity and valuing the contributions of *all* members of the school community.

The Board of Education recognizes that visible and invisible diversities exist and therefore is committed to creating an inclusive environment for all who learn and work in the district. The board affirms that a learning environment that reflects diversity, inclusivity and equity is essential in supporting the highest levels of individual growth and achievement.

The purpose of the district's policy is to ensure that all employees reflect on how their interactions can create a respectful, accepting, safe and supportive environment for the students and staff of our school communities.

Draft NLPS Inclusion Policy

All members of the Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools community have the right to expect that its policies, procedures, programs and communications are inclusive and respectful; taking into consideration visible and invisible diversities, including, but not limited to: race, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, religion, culture and socio-economic status.

The board expects that all students, staff and members of the school communities will:

- Adhere to a code of conduct that is educative, preventative, and restorative in practice and response;
- Foster school cultures that are responsive to the diverse social and cultural needs of individuals and groups;
- Understand how characteristics of diversity impact the access to, and outcomes of, education;
- Recognize the injustices of marginalization, advocate for social justice and promote human rights; and
- Participate in the ongoing development of practices that promote fair and equitable treatment for everyone, cultivating mutual respect, civility and sense of belonging.

Draft Inclusion Policy Feedback

Informal consultation with over 300 staff, students and parents has provided the following information:

- 95 per cent of the stakeholder groups stated that creating the school's code of conduct is a very important process in supporting the proposed Inclusion Policy.

- Many respondents stated that the implementation of the inclusion policy would support their efforts in initiating change, promoting different practices and having possibly difficult conversations.
- School principals stated that the timing is good for this policy as it will give them the backing they need to enter into some potentially sensitive and sometimes difficult conversations.
- Support teachers reported that the policy will greatly assist in building common language across the district while expanding inclusive practice beyond the

scope of special education to the much broader scope of supporting diversity.

On April 27, 2016, the draft inclusion policy was accepted by the NLPS Board of Education and was put out for Notice of Motion with a 30-day period for input from the broader community. On June 1, 2016, the policy was adopted by the board and was put into practice. ○

Bob Eslinger is Assistant Superintendent, and Robyn Kemp and Carlo Pavan are Social Justice Advocates with Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools (NLPS).



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Social Justice and Schooling with Intent

By Michael Prendergast, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board



Achievement matters. Engagement matters. Equity matters. Within the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) these guiding principles are used to direct our efforts to ensure all students reach their full potential. In our strategy Transforming Learning Everywhere (TLE) student voice, social justice and engagement in the teaching and learning environment are embedded into every classroom, from kindergarten to Grade 12.

TLE strives to develop relationships, classroom environments and learning opportunities between teachers and students. An expectation for all is that using inquiry-based learning is the way to reach our students and their interests in our changing world. As a part of learning and improvement in all schools we have expectations that every school, at a minimum, select one local and one global initiative to support student interest. Our strategies vary

and we invite students to share information, ideas and thoughts, and allow students to turn their ideas into action through student leadership.

Over the past three years we have undertaken extensive professional development and discussion for all administrators who lead this work at the school level to ensure social justice and student voice are school-based events. Recently, we have moved to the development of a Student Voice Toolkit. It supports staff in gathering data at schools from their students and helps them have a clear understanding that this be a part of the school improvement process.

The Student Voice Toolkit is monitored by superintendents of education as part of school review and visits, and by the board of trustees as part of our district improvement goals. This has allowed us to make progress and, beginning in 2015, student engagement data must be used in the development of the School Continuous Learning and Improvement Plan as part of every action plan at the

school level. The expectation for all kindergarten to Grade 12 schools is that students elect and then work towards addressing local and global social justice initiatives based on their interests. Students are partners in dialogue and discussions to inform programs and activities in the classroom and school that represent the diversity, needs and interests of the student population.

Through social justice inquiry-based learning we build on a child's natural curiosity and this leads to the development of higher-order thinking skills as teachers give students opportunities to seek answers to questions that are interesting, important and relevant to them. They are enabling students to address curriculum content in an integrated and "real world" way and to develop and practise habits of mind that lead to deep learning and citizenship. By doing so, processes are in place for students to suggest and initiate school-wide activities and opportunities are provided for students to collaborate in the development of school plans that outline potential school-related activities.

All of our schools make a commitment that they address social justice initiatives and that "Student Voice" forums inform their work and learning. This honours the work that schools are already doing in regards to environmental stewardship, supporting local charities, collecting food and clothing for those impacted by homelessness and poverty in our community, or collaborating with non-governmental organizations from across the globe. It has become part of who we are and what we do, but by formally embedding this into our school improvement process we elevate social justice learning to be equal to student achievement. We are acknowledging that engagement, equity and achievement are equally important for our children.

One way we have elevated social justice learning through the curriculum is our ongoing partnership with the international

organization Facing History and Ourselves. For the past six years, we have supported teachers to redefine learning tasks for and with students, building in more opportunities for knowledge construction, problem-solving and implementation in the real world, and connecting the tasks to students' aspirations from Grades 7 to 12.

Using the Ontario curriculum in English, Social Studies, History and the Arts, we are tackling the challenging situations of genocide studies, racism and identity and equity in our classrooms. Teachers and students examine how history is shaped by hatred, indifference and denial, as well as by caring, compassion and responsibility. We will consider issues such as identity, membership and judgment while learning about histories of collective violence. Together, students explore ways to address young peoples' concerns about exclusion, inclusion and stereotyping using the lens of history. By exploring what it means to be an active citizen in a democracy social justice becomes the focal point of learning.

This past winter we expanded this partnership to provide opportunities in all

of our secondary schools where teachers are beginning to engage in a process of embedding a unique approach to exploring Canadian identity in Grade 10. Through our focus on students exploring themselves, in terms of their personal identity and the impact they have on the world, questions related to social justice and personal identity are raised. What is Canada and who is considered Canadian? How do these beliefs impact society? How do these beliefs change over time? What are the rights and responsibilities of Canadians? How does Canada's past inform current cultural, social, economic, and political issues? This includes learning about xenophobia and anti-Semitism in the Christie Pits Riot, conditions that led to the Holocaust and its legacy, the impact of global conflict, Canada's Residential Schools and the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, and the role of apology.

As our world gets smaller, we strive in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board schools to ensure teachers and students are changing their local and global community. Whether it be with the arrival of Syrian newcomers into our community, through

environmental stewardship, learning through the experiences of First Nations and Black History in our community, or supporting those locally in need due to poverty, our schools are creating a better future through simple acts. Our social justice and student voice strategy focuses on every student's social engagement in school life while learning.

We believe we must listen to our students and then deliver high-interest learning opportunities that impact our local and global community. An inclusive education takes place when all students have the necessary resources to feel supported, respected and confident in order to learn and develop to their full potential through responsible citizenship. Through student voice and social justice initiatives students and adults collaborate to ensure their schools become a place where everyone feels safe, accepted and included. When students can connect what they are learning with their own lives, it sparks within them a deeper interest to go forward. ○

Michael Prendergast is currently the Superintendent of Human Resources in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and can be reached at mprender@hwdsb.on.ca.



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Engaged Young Leaders: Putting Social Responsibility into Action

By Susanne Stroud, Brian Pedersen, and Denise Harrison, Ecole Dansereau Meadows School



Before.



After.

Young students have the power to be influential among peers but at Ecole Dansereau Meadows School (EDMS), we have learned that when students change their thinking, it can also transform their actions. Project Runway is a value-based learning opportunity for students to acquire knowledge, apply skills and problem-solve through situations via the lens of the fashion industry. It is this critical thinking that enables students to make ethical and socially responsible choices.

Black Gold Regional Division No.18 opened Ecole Dansereau Meadows School September 2014 in Beaumont, Alberta as a Grade 1 to 8 dual track school. The school is staffed with teachers from various schools in the division as well as new hires; all coming from varying demographics and school cultures. Our students also come from a number of schools in our community. Our first task was to unify our entire school population with one vision, a common language and clear expectations. According to Franklin Covey, "The Leader in Me provides a logical, sequential and balanced process to help schools proactively design the culture that reflects their vision of the ideal school."

Our vision is that everyone is a leader and we believe that every day is an opportunity for students to demonstrate leadership. When

students realize their leadership potential, they contribute daily to a positive culture. Stephen Covey often refers to C.S. Lewis' famous quote of "Doing the right thing, even when no one is looking." Our students are reminded to make socially responsible choices and take ownership for their actions.

Alberta Education created Career and Technology Foundations (CTF) for Grades 5 to 9. CTF is an opportunity for students to explore their passions and interests while making meaningful connections to careers. It was optional to implement CTF in the 2015-2016 school year but the EDMS admin team felt it was a natural fit with Leader In Me. Students in Grades 5 to 8 have the opportunity to choose from many projects. Following are three examples of these projects.

My Passion (Div.3) students design, execute and share a project to learn something new about their personal interests, passions, skills and career curiosities.

Sharing Dansereau Stories (Div.2) is a project where students analyze the results from the *Tell Them From Me* survey tool to identify gaps or needs in our school. The students interviewed members of our school community who they felt could address the areas of need. Students shared the results with the larger school population with a 3D representation.

Project Runway (Div.3) focuses on making responsible consumer choices with fashion by visiting a second hand clothing store and repurposing an existing garment into an updated wardrobe piece. Students reflect on their personal values and how those values relate to the true cost of fast and slow fashion. Throughout the course they learn what characteristics are in a good quality garment, how to care for the garment and the origin of the garment.

Each participating student needs to have three adaptable and flexible plans prior to visiting the second hand clothing store. Furthermore, they have to work within a \$10 budget and chose items to repurpose into something they would wear. The final task is to share their journey in a presentation, with a pledge of what they will do differently moving forward. What have they learned from this experience that has changed their views on fashion and the clothing industry?

Some of our students have had transformational experiences:

- "I pledge to make eco friendly choices for fashion. For example, I will donate my old clothes to second hand stores, instead of throwing them away." Navkomal
- "I plan to turn your old worn, out-of-style clothing, into the most fashionable trend there is and make it brand new again." Tiana
- "I pledge that in moving forward I won't cut corners and won't waste anything. I'll be careful what I buy and where I buy it." Alyson

These real-world experiences have opened our students' eyes and hearts. When our students shop for clothes or are bombarded by media and advertising, they now understand the human cost. This further builds empathic and responsible leaders and citizens. At Ecole Dansereau Meadows School, we believe that our students will be a positive change and contribute to a better world. ○

This article was written by the administrative team at Ecole Dansereau Meadows School, and includes Susanne Stroud, Principal; Brian Pedersen, Assistant Principal, and Denise Harrison, Assistant Principal.

Source

"A Whole-School Transformation Process," *The Leader in Me*: www.theleaderinme.org/what-is-the-leader-in-me.



Acts of Giving Illustrates that Kindness Counts

By Kristi Blakeway and Sherri Skerratt, School District No. 42

What happens when 15,000 students share one positive message? A community connects and random acts of kindness become every day acts of giving. In Maple Ridge, British Columbia, student leaders from all 27 schools meet monthly to collaborate and share positive ideas that can make a difference in their schools and community. Under the theme "Kindness Counts," high school students plan and facilitate leadership meetings for younger leaders from our Kindergarten to Grade 7 schools. Elementary leaders then share ideas with their individual school communities.

This school year, the Maple Ridge School District became the first district in Canada to launch 365 Give at a district-wide level. 365 Give is a non-profit organization that is committed to teaching students the value of giving. The idea is simple. Each school or district commits to participate in 365 acts of giving throughout the school year. Acts of giving can be completed by students, staff, classes, the community, or district-wide. 365 Give provides a 365 Give Tree and 365 bubbles that can be added to the tree each time an act of giving is completed. The more students give, the more the tree blossoms. By partnering with 365 Give, we now have an umbrella where we can share ideas, celebrate giving and recognize the positive difference our students are making in our community.

Acts of giving in the 2015-2016 school year include visiting seniors' homes; wrapping Christmas presents; thanking local firemen and policemen; raising money through bake sales and student businesses to support local and international charities; volunteering in soup kitchens; cleaning up school grounds, streams and the community; paying it forward by surprising community members with free coffee and cookies; posting notes of kindness within the school and community; and appreciating local bus drivers with thank you treats.

By participating in planned acts of kindness, students recognize that helping others increases their own sense of happiness. Our kindness projects have a ripple effect as our students carry kindness forward and contribute to every day acts of giving, such as opening doors, helping younger students and responding through a lens of empathy and compassion. As a district, we recognize that social emotional learning is equally as important as academic success. By educating the whole child, we help our students become socially responsible citizens with a global conscience.

For the past three years, our students also participate in project HELLO (Helping Everyone Locate Loved Ones). This student-run initiative involves elementary age students creating handmade greeting cards before Christmas and Mother's Day, and forwarding them to secondary students who then invite the local homeless community to send cards of love to friends and family they have lost touch with. So far, our students have helped just over 500 homeless people reconnect with friends and family through greeting cards, phone calls and face-to-face reunions.

The key to success in all of these endeavours is student voice. All ideas and projects are created by students and implemented by student leaders. Our district believes that student voice should be at the core of our decision making. Students are invited to meet with school trustees on a monthly basis



and share their ideas and concerns. They provide authentic examples of what they see in schools to help our board make decisions that are the best for kids.

This year, our district hosted our first annual Student Forum. Over 200 Grade 6 to 12 students worked collaboratively to identify student passions, determine how schools can create a safe and caring atmosphere, and develop blueprints for schools in the future. Students identified that schools should feel safe, welcoming and calm. It's often the little things that matter most: the teacher who greets their class at the door, or the support worker who takes time to ask about their weekend. Small gestures of kindness have a big impact, creating a culture where all students feel valued and cared for. By listening to student voice, adults remember the reasons they were drawn to careers in education. Each one of us has the opportunity to make a difference every day.

To close the school year, students host a one-day leadership conference throughout Maple Ridge focused on kindness and giving back. The event runs in an *Amazing Race* format, where students, educators and community members celebrate together while participating in random acts of kindness.

When our kids head home for the summer months, they recognize that we are educating both the heart and the mind. In addition to mastering their academic content, our kids graduate knowing that kindness counts. ○

Kristi Blakeway and Sherri Skerratt are administrators in School District No. 42 and are co-sponsors of the district's youth leadership program. They can be reached at kristi_blakeway@sd42.ca and sherri_skerratt@sd42.ca.



Social Justice for Canadian Aboriginal People

By Sue Simatos, Lester B. Pearson School Board



Panel 1.



Panel 2.



Panel 3.



Panel 4.



Panel 5.

In 2012, when I heard the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) would be travelling across Canada to look into the human rights violations of Canadian Aboriginal people, I felt it would be important for our students to be aware of this unprecedented historical event and to possibly participate. I truly felt this was too important to go unnoticed.

I was able to find a local Aboriginal person, Norman Achneepineskum, to speak to our students about his experience. Norman's four older brothers, three older sisters as well as his mother and father were divided up and sent to three separate residential schools in Northern Ontario and this had had a devastating impact on their lives. They had no choice; children were taken away from their homes by RCMP and put into residential schools, sometimes hundreds of kilometers away. If parents resisted, they were arrested. Children were so far away, parents were unable to protect them. Most children reported their residential school experience was one of being abused, psychologically, physically and sexually.

For seven generations many Aboriginal children attended residential schools and grew up not ever learning how to parent. Many face intergenerational post-traumatic stress as a result of their experience and this continues to plague their families today. Norman spoke to over 4,000 high school students, at the Lester B. Pearson School Board in Montreal, that school year. After seeing Norman's presentation on his life, many students would approach him and hug him afterwards. Norman was very touched by this.

When the TRC came to Montreal, in the spring of 2013, students from three of our high schools attended along with their teachers Matt Luthi and Elyce Russell. They met residential school survivors and were deeply moved by what they heard. Our students made comments about the fact that they learned about the holocaust in school but never learned anything about the residential school system in Canada, which they described as genocide.

Since the months prior to and after the TRC, I have tried to educate as many of my students as possible so they will know the truth about the history of the human rights violations of Canadian Aboriginal people by the Canadian government over the past 150 years. This way, they will be able to make informed decisions about the state of Aboriginal communities in Canada today.

In 2014, at John Rennie High School in Pointe Claire, Quebec, Grade 11 students, under the guidance of their teacher Shiva Kaf-fash, and inspired by my presentation on the human rights violations of Aboriginal People in Canada, created five paintings on masonite (four feet by eight feet) depicting the following:

1. Panel one is titled "First Nations Spirituality" and the student artists are Genevieve Beaulieu, Andrea Blacklock, Vanessa Russo and Duaa-E Zaheer.
2. Panel two is titled "Hope for the Future" and the student artists are Geoffrey Carriere, Kayla Matthews, Keven Surprenant and Elisa Vanbiljouw-Stutz.
3. Panel three is titled "Human Rights Violations" and the artists are Mercedes Cabezas-Watson, Anthony Despre-Leahey, Liam Perkins and Tarisa Scott-Davis.
4. Panel four is Titled "Human Rights" and the student artists are Tyler Briggs, Trevin Choo-Foo, Jonathan Czarharyn, and Michael Lee.
5. Panel five is titled "The Residential School Experience" and the student artists are Bianca Chabot, Wesley Lankinen, Julia Parrillo and Ameeta Singh.

I made posters of the five panels and they travel with me to each of my five schools and serve as an educational tool to teach about Aboriginal History in Canada.

Sue Simatos is a Community and Spiritual Animator (CASCA) with the Lester B. Pearson School Board in Montreal. She educates students about social justice issues at Greendale, Soulanges and Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School, and at John Rennie and Lindsay Place High School.



Social Justice in the Classroom: Voices of Educators

By David Tranter and Colleen Kappel, Lakehead District School Board



What does social justice look like when it's embedded in the classroom every

day? We asked our principals at Lakehead District School Board in Thunder Bay, Ontario to identify educators who practice social justice, not as a periodic event, but as part of pedagogy. We were overwhelmed by nominees! We then asked them three simple questions:

1. What does social justice in the classroom mean to you?
2. Can you provide a concrete example of embedded practice?
3. Is there anything else that you think is important to add?

The results were thought-provoking and inspiring. In all, five critical themes arose from their responses.

Commitment

Commitment starts with having a passion for teaching social justice and the dedication to live it in the classroom every day. Our educators felt strongly that opportunities for social justice reside in every aspect of classroom practice. Susan Lieske, a Grade 1 teacher, said: "From September on, we build our sense of community...to ensure that kids feel safe and can make positive changes." Dawn Aho, a Grade 2 teacher, said, "As adults we are the ones who set the tone. We have a responsibility to leave our students in a better place than when they came to us."

Connection

Connection includes enabling students to share their experiences and points of view

with one another. It also involves starting with topics that are of personal relevance and then making connections to their community and to larger world issues and events. Pamela Isherwood, a Grade 8 teacher, said, "I endeavour to address inequalities and injustices that happen between students through simple conferences, class debates and/or journals while weaving injustices that are occurring on a grander scale—community or world-wide—into lessons, projects and activities."

Understanding

Understanding challenges students to form their own opinion on social issues. It's not enough for them to simply adopt the views of their peers or even the teacher. Instead, students are encouraged to investigate social problems, develop their own ideas and present them in an empirically supported manner. Jack Ludwig, Vice Principal and a Grade 8 teacher, said, "Critical thinking can only happen when students think for themselves instead of forcing our own personal agendas on them. Too often, students simply reflect the opinions of their environment...without truly thinking about things and forming their own views. Using social justice allows them to do research and be able to support their opinion."

Difference

Difference is embraced and celebrated in the classroom. Diversity is recognized as the essential ingredient of a strong community. However, difference can also lead to students feeling excluded. Our educators acknowledge that it's sometimes necessary for everyone to change in order to address the needs of a smaller number of students. Shanlee Linton, a Grade 8 teacher, said,

"The faces in our classrooms are forever changing. As educators, we have to accommodate and address issues that come up." Kelly-Ann Green, a Grade 6 teacher, said, "I use gender neutral pronouns in all of my report cards. I leave notes for supply teachers to also refrain from segregating students by gender in gym."

Fairness

Fairness underlies all classroom practices. However, it is often construed by students as meaning that everyone is treated the same. Our educators help students to understand that fairness often involves unequal treatment based on meeting the individual needs of each student. Brittny Smith, a Grade 4/5 teacher, said, "Our classroom runs on the idea that fair doesn't mean equal. This is something that is addressed early on in our classroom and, while some students need reminders occasionally, most understand. We often talk about how we all have different needs."

Conclusion

In summary, all of our educators agreed that practicing social justice was less about holding high profile school events, and more about the small but powerful moments that occur in the classroom each and every day. Embedding social justice in the classroom might sound like a daunting task, however, it is surprisingly simple. As a result, students are engaged, informed, included, and are provided the essential tools to take on the challenges of the future and together build a better world.

As Jo-Anne Lacroix, a Grade 4 to 6 teacher said, "Embedding social justice is easier than people imagine. Teachers do it all the time. It's part of good teaching!" ○

David Tranter is the Mental Health Leader at the Lakehead District School Board and a professor at Lakehead University. Colleen Kappel is a Superintendent at the Lakehead District School Board.

The Value of Eco-school Initiatives

By Stephen McCabe, Ottawa Catholic School Board



I was recently walking with a school principal through the hallway of a wonderful elementary school in Ottawa, Ontario, when I noticed some paper litter on the ground. Quite proud of myself, I picked up the paper and tossed it overhand into a garbage pail a “three point” shot that hit the bin dead centre. Hoping I was caught by some of the students who were working in the hallway, I heard a voice from a Grade 3 boy who eagerly exclaimed, “Hey mister, did you know you can recycle that?”

One of the many goals we share as educators is to have each of our students deepen their understanding of their role in the world. We aspire to have them see their connectedness to others and the world, and to appreciate the social responsibilities we all share. We do this knowing that their personal well-being is enhanced when they become aware of the needs of others and the needs of our world. Encouraging an “others centred” approach, allows for our students to become empathetic peers who develop the capacity for deep and meaningful relationships.

In the Ottawa Catholic School Board we have placed a concerted effort on developing

within our students an awareness of community and the environment. Eco-school teams have served as a remarkable opportunity for our students to develop their personal leadership skills, relationships and understanding of the world in which they live. On a daily basis we see our students give witness to the social teachings of our church, where they continue to develop their abilities to be “reflective, creative and holistic thinkers” (Institute for Catholic Education, 2011). We strive to help our students connect the Gospel values of stewardship of creation, dignity of persons, conservation, sacredness of life, and so on, so that our students think deeply of their gifts and act with justice to be authentic leaders and custodians of our world.

Environmental clubs in each of our schools help our students discover their ability to have a meaningful impact on the environment. Recycling, composting, planting, reducing and reusing, become positive habits that our students incorporate into their lives with ease. Establishing more outdoor classroom space and becoming more intentional with nature walks with meaningful inquiry activities have helped to promote a deeper concern for the welfare of others and their access to clean water, clean

air, etc. This enables our students to become focused and intentional in their planning and acting.

As one Grade 5 student said, “By being on the ‘Green Team’ I can live out my responsibilities and help the earth.”

Our staff speak highly of the value of our Eco-school initiatives. As one teacher said, “Without an Eco-School program or some form of environmental education, many students would not be introduced to the importance and impact they can have on the world. We affect one student, who in turn brings their learning to their peers, their home and to others and we reach so many more.”

Another educator commented, “With an active Earth Care Club leading the school we do it all! With blue/black boxes, composting, boomerang lunches and paper recycling programs, our teachers, students and families are beginning to rethink what they throw away...since there is no ‘away!’”

Through document sharing platforms, our staff collaborate and share best practices and resources. Their enthusiasm for developing our students to become environmentally responsible citizens is genuine and their ability to do this by starting where each student is at, is wise and effective. A simple example of this can be witnessed daily in most of our high school cafeterias where the vast majority of our students have developed the habit of recycling paper and plastics and composting banana peels and apple cores. These habits have been encouraged through staff guidance and the remarkable influence of our student environmental clubs.

We empower our students to act responsibly and to know the value of these actions. We encourage their personal development and well-being and promote their voice so that they have the confidence to articulate their learning and state proudly sentiments such as, “Hey mister, did you know you can recycle that?” ○

Steve McCabe is Superintendent, Leading & Learning, Ottawa Catholic School Board, and is responsible for environmental initiatives in the OCSB. Reach him at stephen.mccabe@ocsb and follow him on Twitter: @SMcCabeOCSB.

SPECIAL FOCUS



New Deputy Education Minister in Alberta

Effective May 2016, Deputy Minister Lorna Rosen left Alberta Education to take on a new role as Deputy Minister of Treasury Board and Finance. Dr. Curtis Clarke has assumed the role of Deputy Minister of Education, from his current position of Associate Deputy Solicitor General at Justice and Solicitor General.

Dr. Curtis Clarke previously served as Assistant Deputy Minister (Correctional Services) and Associate Deputy Solicitor General. Prior to joining the Government of Alberta, Dr. Clarke held the position of Associate Professor and Coordinator of the Criminal Justice program at Athabasca University. Dr. Clarke is a graduate of Queen's University (BA Hon, MA, Sociology) and York University (PhD, Sociology). He has recently completed a Certificate program in High Intensity Leadership from Cornell University. During his GOA career he also served as Executive Director – Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Staff College and Cabinet Policy Co-ordinator – Executive Council.



**Healthy Schools,
Healthy Communities,
Healthy Future.**

HALIFAX - JULY 6-8, 2017

Your News Here!

Boards, districts and schools are encouraged to submit their news for the next issue!
Email ssavory@matrixgroupinc.net.

2016 Ottawa Catholic School Board EduGala Winners

Eleven outstanding educators from the Ottawa Catholic School Board were recently named finalists for Capital Educator Awards. On May 20, 2016, two OCSB finalists, Claudio Micomono and Jane O'Regan, were honoured as winners at the 15th annual EduGala held at Algonquin College.

Hosted by the Ottawa Network for Education, the annual event honours educators from around the Ottawa region who demonstrate teaching excellence and instill a passion for learning in their students. Congratulations!

You can learn more at www.ocsb.ca/news/2016-ocsb-edugala-winners.

News from AAESQ

The Association of Administrators of English Schools of Quebec (AAESQ) is a provincial organization representing 475 school/centre and board-level administrators across Quebec who work for Anglophone school boards. Each spring, AAESQ holds a conference which brings together administrators and commissioners (trustees); it is a most unique event.

This year, the Spring Conference was hosted by the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board in beautiful St. Sauveur, QC from May 12-14, 2016. The theme of the conference was: T.H.I.N.K. Outside the Box! The program showcased students' musical talents and included breakout sessions on school leadership, managing student stress, and professional development in a digital age.

On Friday, May 13, the Quebec Minister of Education, Mr. Sebastien Proulx, addressed over 200 attendees and lauded the work that English school boards do to promote student success.

At the AAESQ Annual General meeting held on May 13, the following board-level administrators were recognized for their educational leadership: Gerry Robillard (SWLSB) Award of Merit; David Meloche (LBPSB) Local Leadership Award; Tom Rhymes (LBPSB) Local Leadership Award; Roma Medwid (EMSB) Distinguished Service Award; and Veronique Marin (LBPSB) Outstanding Achievement. Congratulations to all award recipients!

New Chief Superintendents appointed in Alberta

- Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord: Robert Lessard will be the new superintendent for 2016-2017. Robert previously served as Assistant Superintendent with Conseil des écoles fransaskoises in Saskatoon, and is currently as an assistant professor at Université Saint-Boniface. Current superintendent Henri Lemire is retiring at the end of this school year.
- Living Waters Catholic Schools: Jo-Anne Lanctot will be the new superintendent for 2016-2017. Jo-Anne is currently the Deputy Superintendent for the Division. Current superintendent Carol Lemay is retiring at the end of this school year.
- Medicine Hat School District: Mark Davidson is the new superintendent effective April 18, 2016. Mark was previously the Deputy Superintendent for Peace Wapiti School Division.
- Prairie Land Regional Division: Cam McKeage is in his first year as superintendent. Cam was previously the Deputy Superintendent for the Division. Former superintendent Wes Neumeier retired in Jul 2015.
- Red Deer Public Schools: Stu Henry is in his first year as superintendent. Stu was previously the Deputy Superintendent for the District.
- Wild Rose School Division: Brad Volkman is completing his first year as superintendent. Brad was previously the Deputy Superintendent for Prairie Rose School Division. Former superintendent Brian Celli retired in July 2015.

Write for Leaders & Learners

The theme of our next two editions is healthy schools, healthy communities, healthy future.

Each issue *Leaders & Learners* discusses a particular theme.

To learn more about the theme for our next two issues, contact Editor-in-Chief, Shannon Savory. She will provide the "Request for Proposals" document, which includes submission criteria and important dates and deadlines.

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