Student Voices in Aboriginal, Character and Equity Education

‘Learning together for student success’

Durham District School Board
Deanna Fry, Aboriginal Education Facilitator
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Introduction & Welcome Circle

1. With a partner, please share …
   …your experience at the conference so far.

2. Please share with the large circle the essence, one word, of your experience.
Essential Understanding #1

Sharing Circles:

In a circle we are all connected to one another; even though we have similarities and differences, we are all equal.
Agenda

• Welcome Circle
• Medicine Wheel & Lifelong Learning Wheel
• Media clip – For Angela
• The Project
• Reflection
• What we learned from the Project
• Student Voice impact @ DDSB
• Reflecting Circle
The DDSB Aboriginal Welcome Wheel
Essential Understanding #2

Medicine Wheel:
We each have Spirit, Heart, Body and Mind.
It is:
with our Spirit that we SEE,
with our Hearts that we FEEL,
with our Bodies that we ACT and
with our Minds that we THINK
For Angela

Please de-brief the film clip in a small group, using the following questions:

1. How do you feel?
2. What do you think?
3. What did you see?
4. What could you do?
Essential Understanding #3

Lifelong Learning and the ME to WE Circle:

We are influenced by the world around us, but when we Feel Deeply, Think Critically, See Clearly, and Act Wisely, we can BE the change we want to see in the world.
Reflections from students…

Acceptance and Concern for Others

“I understood some things about Aboriginal culture … but now I feel for First Nations people and what they went through.” Student A, Dr. C.F. Cannon P.S.

“This experience opened my mind to other learning. It opened my eyes to a different culture.” Student B, Dr. C.F. Cannon P.S.

“I knew there was bullying at school. I am more aware of it now and before I didn’t stand up for others, but now I will.” Student C, Glen Street P.S.

“I now know a lot about a culture that is not mine and I am interested in learning about more cultures. I am not afraid to learn more, to experience new and different things.” Student F, Harmony P.S.
“When I was younger and playing soccer, an older kid said to me, it’s not about skill, it’s about passion. So I have passion. I have the strength to stop bullying myself. I have courage.”
Student G, Harmony P.S.

“The session opened up my mind. I am open to other cultures.”
Student H, Grandview P.S.

“From the video, I understand where people get their stereotypes. I learned to stop others. I feel I could stand up. Being racist isn’t appropriate. It’s immature.”
Student I, Grandview P.S.
Self Confidence

“The session made me ask myself, What am I doing? This is my culture and I don’t know about it. I just learned about me, really, about my culture. It made me feel I have much more to learn about myself. I’m just eleven and I have a big life ahead of me.”
Student D, Glen Street P.S.

“I was scared at first to do the presentations, but then excited that I was brave enough to do it. I have more courage after doing the presentations.”
Student E, Harmony P.S.

“I am a good leader; respectful of other opinions, optimistic and interested in this topic.”  Student A, Dr. C.F. Cannon P.S.

“I think I inspire others. The students are building a sense of community in my class.”  Teacher 2, Glen Street P.S.
“Before this, I let people walk all over me. After this, I am taking charge, doing things that I like. When I realized that bullying was happening at my school, at first I didn’t do anything about it. But I am a good listener; I have empathy for others and now a lot of kids come to me to talk.” Student D, Glen Street P.S.

One of the teachers noticed a big change in one of the students from a different school over the months of the project.

“I taught Student F’s brother last year and also Student F was at our school. He had some difficult times, but I want you to know that I have seen such a change in you, seeing you in February and now again, you have grown so much and I am really happy for you.” Teacher 2, Glen Street P.S.
“I am thankful that I had the opportunity to take part in this.”
Student A, Dr. C.F. Cannon P.S.

“Sometimes I am a leader. Sometimes I just follow. Like, I have just been evicted from my apartment and I am living in a hotel, so basically I’m homeless so now I’m just following. I don’t have a choice. I know when to ask for help and I’m optimistic.
Student E, Glen Street P.S.

This student felt so safe and comfortable that he shared this very personal information with both the small group and again with the entire large group on our Celebration day in June. We were astounded by the student’s sense of fellowship with our leadership team and his incredible honesty. He did not seem sad, rather he was accepting of his situation and hopeful about the future.
“I had a number of students at school who said, I want to be part of this group. I want to make a difference too.” Teacher 4, Grandview P.S.

“I learned about my lack of knowledge on the subject, but also about my emotional connectivity to something larger than myself.” Teacher 5, Athabasca P.S.
What surprised me was how much I had to learn and how this project became a vehicle for my own enlightenment, my own personal and professional growth. I came to the first meeting tightly holding onto the three aims from *Finding Common Ground*: care deeply, think critically, act wisely. When the Aboriginal Facilitator suggested that there was a piece missing, I couldn’t see it. Then she introduced me to the Medicine Wheel, and I saw a nearly perfect alignment. She was right, what was missing was the ‘spirit’ piece; the vision, ‘see clearly.’ Our new Character Affirmations became:

- Care deeply
- Think critically
- See clearly
- Act wisely
This new understanding has a profound effect on everything I am working on in Safe Schools. Bully Prevention, Restorative Practice and Character Education lessons, workshops, presentations and training; it all starts now with our key messages:

- We care about each other
- We respect each other
- We see each other
- We support each other
Reflections from Deanna Fry, Aboriginal Education Facilitator

• “When Phillip got involved (Equity Facilitator) we saw the systemic racism. Prior to that, I was focused on the personal hurt and personal racism. From this perspective, I had insight into the biases we carry. In looking at the residential schools and Prime Minister Harper’s apology to First Nations people, we are forced to feel deeply; think critically; see clearly; act wisely.

• It is in the moment of cognitive dissonance when our framework of understanding is disturbed that we can ask ourselves, what other biases do I hold, that I can let go of and treat others differently?”
Reflecting with a Partner

With a partner, please share:

1. How does this project – the Essential Understandings and activities – fit with what you are already teaching?
2. Can you infuse your current practice with one or more of the Essential Understandings or activities? How would you do this?
3. How would this benefit your students?
Closing Circle

How do you feel?
What do you think?
What do you see?
What can you do?

Please share with the large group your impressions of Student Voices.