

About the project ...

Bluewater District School Board's *Youth are the Change* showcase provided an opportunity for students and staff to come together to showcase and share projects from schools that participated in 3 board-wide student engagement and action initiatives: 2009 We Day, an Aboriginal/Sexual Orientation in-service session for students in grades 7-12 and the *Green at Heart* Committee. The event took place over two days with approximately 200 students and 40 teachers in attendance. Some of the showcased projects addressed homophobia as one of the primary forms of bullying experienced by students. Others raised student awareness of the impact of environmental issues through initiatives such as recycling and composting programs. At many schools, student projects focused on the actions of social justice groups to address local and global issues of inequity.

Impact on student learning and school culture ...

- The *Youth are the Change* showcase provided students with an authentic opportunity to demonstrate how they planned and carried out specific action plans following participation in a board-wide initiative.
- The school-based projects provided students with leadership and collaborative skills development opportunities as they planned and implemented their projects with peers in their schools.
- The creation of social justice groups provided opportunities to belong for many students who were not connected to other extracurricular activities at their schools.
- Many of the projects supported the board's instructional focus on curriculum expectations by providing real-life contexts for interdisciplinary discussions.

Lessons learned for moving forward ...

- When teachers took an interdisciplinary approach to planning, activities were created for students to learn about topics such as poverty, violence and discrimination – this provided real life contexts for them to explore local and global issues.
- Commitment to follow-up action at the school level is strengthened when students and teachers participate in system-level events together.