

Student Impact Teams: Be the Change

About the project ...

The purpose of the project was to create Student Impact Teams at each secondary school to model the board character attributes and work with staff to coordinate character development activities and facilitate the transition for students from Grade 8 to Grade 9. Six students from Grade 10 or 11 were chosen on the basis of leadership ability and representation of cultural and social groups within each school, with a total of 96 students across the board. The students, along with two teachers from each school, attended intensive training sessions where they learned strategies to help them facilitate change processes within their schools, with a focus on inclusion and equity. Sessions were hosted in each of the four geographic regions for each family of schools to provide the teams with the opportunity to address the diversity of each region's unique culture. The sessions were based on the belief that successful transitions lead to the development of immediate connections to school culture and to the tenets of character development. The sessions were designed to reflect research that cites the effectiveness of peer support and peer intervention in creating positive change. Back at their schools, members of the Student Impact Teams helped with transitions and set specific goals to ensure that the board character attributes permeate all interactions within their schools. The resulting improvement in school climate in turn provided the foundation for greater student engagement and academic achievement.

Impact on student learning and school culture ...

- Staff and students noted an overall improvement in school climate, which is of particular importance for ensuring the engagement of students entering Grand Erie DSB high schools from different educational and cultural backgrounds, such as the Six Nations and New Credit First Nations.
- Staff and students also noted improved student engagement and connection to the school, particularly for Grade 9 students.
- School and community awareness of the character education initiative improved through the work and leadership of the Student Impact Team.

Lessons learned for moving forward ...

- Empowering and involving students in all steps of the process were key factors to the success of the project.
- Student representation from all groups and demographics of each school was an important factor to the impact of the teams.
- The inclusion of the community in Student Impact Team activities will help expand its positive influence beyond the school.