

Social Action: Halton Catholic District School Board Project

Catholic Leadership Youth Rally Days and Justice for All Student Groups

Board website: www.haltonrc.edu.on.ca

About the project ...

The Halton Catholic District School Board project supported two of the board's character development initiatives - *Catholic Leadership Youth Rally Days* for Grade 8 students and *Justice for All Student Groups* for secondary students.

Catholic Leadership Youth Rally Days were planned by staff, secondary students, parents and parish representatives to bring elementary and secondary students together to gain new insights into leadership from the perspective of Catholic faith. The theological themes of social justice, stewardship and peacemaker were highlighted throughout the rallies and emphasized the roles of student leaders in creating safe and equitable schools. Grade 8 students returned to their home schools with new ideas for leadership based on their experiences from the day.

The *Justice for All* student groups in Halton Catholic secondary schools are student-driven and staff-guided and stem from the students' desire to make the world a better place by taking action to address inequities. The values and goals of each of the school clubs are the same: to hear, learn and do justice for others, especially the weak and the vulnerable, by reaching out from a Catholic faith perspective to people in need and by caring for those who are experiencing crisis in their lives. Staff advisers throughout the board's secondary schools share strategies and coordinate the opportunities for students to be meaningfully involved in their communities.

Impact on student learning and school culture ...

- Both the youth rallies and the *Justice for All* student involvement opportunities supported school cultures of high expectations founded on respect for the dignity of the human person. They also supported the board's belief that all students can learn, progress and achieve.
- Presentations and group activities during the rallies and involvement in the *Justice for All* activities supported students in developing strong citizenship skills such as leadership, teamwork and advocacy and also gave witness to Catholic social justice teachings.

Lessons learned for moving forward ...

- The *Catholic Leadership Youth Rally Days* and follow-up activities at elementary schools and the faith-based leadership opportunities of the *Justice for All Student Groups* support student voice and engagement, peer engagement and student involvement in community action.

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