

Character Recognition Evening

About the project ...

Every day, students, staff and volunteers at the Simcoe County District School Board demonstrate positive *Commit to Character* attributes through their actions in elementary and secondary schools, learning centres, Education Centre offices, maintenance buildings and other board facilities. Respect, caring, honesty, integrity, courage, cooperation, responsibility, inclusiveness, optimism and empathy are the board's *Commit to Character* attributes. The Character Recognition Evening is the annual culminating event which celebrates the integration of character development into the curricular experiences of students and demonstrates how it is embedded into school culture through explicit and intentional teaching and learning. The 2009–10 Character Recognition Evening focused on student voice and participation as well as the recognition of 100 students, staff and volunteers who were nominated by their peers and colleagues for outstanding demonstrations of the character attributes. Student voice was most evident throughout the evening as students used PowerPoint presentations and DVDs to present their school-wide character initiatives with an emphasis on student leadership, youth and philanthropy initiatives, citizenship, courage, peer mediation, the Gay/Straight Alliance and anti-bullying. The *Commit to Character* attributes were modelled by students throughout the evening as they welcomed participants and their families, prepared and served refreshments and performed and displayed art work that captured the essence of what character education looks like in the board. The Character Recognition Evening honoured the recipients whose stories reflected practices in character development that support respectful, safe, caring and inclusive schools.

Impact on student learning and school culture ...

- Character development, together with safe and inclusive learning environments, are the foundations for student achievement. The Character Recognition Evening recognized students, volunteers and staff and celebrated demonstrations of the board's *Commit to Character* attributes.
- The student voice throughout the evening provided an opportunity to share and learn about a range of school-based initiatives that other schools have voiced an interest in learning about.
- The strong student voice and participation throughout the evening gave students ownership of the process and increased the impact and credibility of the evening.

Lessons learned for moving forward ...

- The evening provided an opportunity for students to learn about a range of exemplary school-based initiatives and provided inspiration to others for future action and engagement.
- Next steps include exploring different strategies for schools to share their initiatives and plans with each other.