

Social Justice Fair – "Come Walk With Us"

About the project ...

Character education is an essential aspect of student development at Sudbury Catholic District School Board. The Social Justice Fair was introduced as a way to nurture students' development and empower them to recognize that their choices make a difference in their local and global communities. The goals of the fair were to celebrate creative and proactive school practices, to learn about social justice issues, to listen to inspiring speakers, to participate in seminars, to visit displays from community organizations and, throughout, to reflect on the connections of Catholic faith traditions to social justice. The intended outcome was to inspire students to take action through student-driven, school-based initiatives. Approximately 200 Grade 7–12 students shared ideas and projects that addressed the challenges of both local and global concerns with their peers and with staff, parents and community partners. Participating community organizations included Coalition for a Liveable Sudbury, Development and Peace, Access Aids, Community Foodshed, Free the Children, Sudbury Action Centre for Youth and Chalice. Students who attended the fair had the opportunity to hear presenters from Habitat for Humanity, Native Awareness, Global Solidarity, Environmental Awareness and Using Art for Justice. The work, talent and efforts of the student presenters provided inspiration for all attendees to continue their focus on connecting Catholic faith traditions to social justice issues.

Impact on student learning and school culture ...

- Planning was a key part of the learning at both the school and board level. Members of the Student Senate came together to share ideas and returned to their schools with consistent messages.
- The preparation for the Social Justice Fair, as well as the action plan carried out in each participating school, linked many subject and curricular areas such as construction technology, geography, the Arts and science. Students with diverse learning styles were offered a variety of ways to engage through the use of a range of technologies.
- Both elementary and secondary participants (students, staff and parents) were involved in the organization and facilitation of this event, fostering future opportunities for collaboration.
- Participating students developed stronger communicative and leadership skills and a sense of citizenship and moral responsibility, which reinforced the aims of the ten Character Education attributes identified by the board.
- Secondary students were offered an authentic experience that may facilitate post-secondary pathways.

Lessons learned for moving forward ...

- Partnerships between the schools and community organizations were developed. Additional opportunities were identified to build relationships and further explore strategies to connect students with local agencies.
- Further curriculum connections will be an area of focus for teachers as the board develops further social justice programming. This will continue at the secondary level through curriculum councils.