

Social Action

Pay It Forward: Change a World ...

About the program ...

Pay It Forward is a Greater Essex board-wide initiative that has been embraced by many elementary and secondary schools. Through participation in Pay It Forward projects, students develop an awareness of the needs of the local community and the world around them. To launch the project, the board created a Pay It Forward package, including excerpts from Catherine Ryan Hyde's novel, *Pay It Forward*, age-adaptable in-class activities, a list of print and web resources, video clips, and a project report form. Once students understand the concept of paying it forward, they decide on their own projects – as a school, as a class or as individual students. Projects can encompass the classroom, the school, the local community or the international community.

Excerpt from the novel *Pay It Forward* ...

"You see, I do something real good for three people. And then when they ask how they can pay it back, I say they have to Pay It Forward. To three more people. Each. So nine people get helped. Then those people have to do twenty-seven. Then it sort of spreads out, see. To eighty-one. Then two hundred forty-three. Then seven hundred twenty-nine. Then two thousand, one hundred eighty-seven. See how big it gets?"

– Trevor, 12 year-old protagonist

Impact on student learning and school culture ...

- Many students can identify with the main character in the novel, *Pay It Forward*. They understand the concept of doing something good for someone else and asking them to pay forward the favour, so that good deeds begin to grow exponentially. As a result, students engage readily in their projects as they see how easily they can make a positive change in their school or community. Through participation in the Pay It Forward initiative, students develop empathy and social responsibility.
- Many students choose to pay it forward in their own schools and as a result, the school community benefits. Often when one class starts a Pay It Forward project, other classes are inspired to do the same. In addition, staff members engage for many of the same reasons.
- Overall, students develop an understanding that change can occur through both individual and cooperative ventures and that their actions are contributing to something bigger in the world.

“Since you cannot do good to all, you are to pay special attention to those, who by the accidents of time, or place, or circumstances, are brought into closer connection with you.”

– St. Augustine of Hippo

To find out more, contact ...

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