

## *Growing with Character Drama Presentation*

### **About the project ...**

Students in Grades 11 and 12 at Moira Secondary School partnered with local and international organizations such as Quinte United Immigrant Services, Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte and Police Services to discuss how the board's character attributes were relevant to their everyday interactions. The students learned about equitable and inclusive communities and used this learning to develop two *Growing with Character* drama presentations, earning credits for their Drama in the Community course. The productions were based on Hasting and Prince Edward District School Board's character attributes. The plays toured throughout the system at school and board events and were performed for over 3,000 students from Grades 6 to 12. In addition, the drama production was presented at the HPEDSB Director's May 2010 Address and at the Inclusive Education Symposium for school and community partners in May 2010. The symposium provided an opportunity for partners from various municipalities to engage in discussions about effective strategies for creating inclusive learning communities. The symposium featured a number of guest speakers along with other presentations that encouraged participants to reflect on current practices in schools and the community and to consider various inclusive strategies to implement.

### **Impact on student learning and school culture ...**

- Students involved in the *Growing with Character* drama presentations were able to share their own personal experiences related to equity and inclusivity through the productions, resulting in a feeling of acceptance and respect for all participants.
- Arts-based courses, such as the Drama in the Community course, lend themselves to differentiated instruction and are engaging for students with a range of different learning styles.
- Students who participated in the production and/or the Inclusive Education symposium had the opportunity to collaborate with other students and adults from their wider community.

### **Lessons learned for moving forward ...**

- Student engagement and enthusiasm for the *Growing with Character* drama presentation illustrated how the Arts can provide an opportunity to explore healthy ways of dealing with challenges that students may face. Students feel protected when they can disguise themselves and explore the "what ifs" of a situation whether through drama, visual art, music or dance.
- Older students can be influential role models for younger students and should be encouraged to be positive mentors to their younger peers. It is important to establish connections between students as early as possible, either through interactions at events such as the Inclusive Education symposium or through presentations like the *Growing for Character* production.
- The success of the partnership between the Moira Secondary School students and community groups emphasizes how important it is to embrace opportunities available within the community when embedding character development within the classroom.