

About the project ...

The Northwestern Ontario Regional Character Education Forum was coordinated by leaders from eight school boards who invited students from grades 7 to 12 to attend a conference to increase their awareness of local and global issues through a focus on character development. The conference had an Aboriginal perspective and was held at a historical park in Thunder Bay. Students participated in activities and attended workshops designed to increase their leadership skills while promoting character development. Presenters discussed topics related to equity, inclusive education and anti-bullying initiatives. As it was held within the Lakehead District School Board's district, one of the keynote speakers delivered presentations on empathy, compassion and bullying prevention at local public schools.

Following the conference, students from the LDSB submitted project proposals on how to promote positive character and its connections to local and global issues. All were approved and were supported by the board. Many involved environmental awareness such as garden renewals and recycling initiatives, while others were related to community partnerships, such as the Dreamweaver Project which linked students with seniors. Leadership was a key component of the school-based projects and the conference as students were encouraged and challenged to take leadership roles in their schools and communities.

Impact on student learning and school culture ...

- The conference and involvement in follow-up projects provided students with strategies and skills for thinking critically about important issues in their schools and communities.
- Students gained confidence in their ability to organize major school events and projects which will help them become positive citizens in their communities.

Lessons learned for moving forward ...

- Involving students in the organization of character education initiatives promotes ownership and involvement at the school level. This involvement promotes increased action and support in the community as greater understanding and appreciation of others is strengthened.
- Student engagement increases when students are involved in authentic and relevant projects that promote integrity, acceptance, empathy, respect and responsibility.
- The board recognizes the collective leadership strength of its students, teachers, support staff and administrators as they work together to coordinate activities and projects that support their students, schools and communities.