

Strengthening the Fabric: Growing Our Network

About the project ...

The purpose of Lambton Kent District School Board's project was to highlight character development as an embedded aspect of safe schools and inclusive education initiatives and to profile the parallels between character development and First Nations teachings. The connections that exist among these board and school priorities are supported by the board's implementation of TRIBES and Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) approaches. Combining the connections into an integrated framework provides greater coherence for understanding among staff, students and parents. Through the *Strengthening the Fabric* project, in-service was provided for both elementary and secondary school teams consisting of an administrator, a teacher and a support staff member. The sessions were designed around the integration of character development, safe schools strategies and equity and inclusive education to provide a broad understanding of the board's direction and to engage all employee groups in board initiatives. Curriculum expectations were foundational to the sessions and support resources were developed to help teachers make the connections between initiatives. In addition, a web presence was established to support schools in sharing and celebrating their practices and to highlight the First Nations influence on character development. Following the in-service, each school developed its own series of activities to support character development. Presentations by principals to school councils also broadened the circle of understanding.

Impact on student learning and school culture ...

- Character development learning activities are an avenue for students to learn how to engage successfully with others and how to contribute positively to group discussions and tasks. Strength in these areas contributes significantly to the creation and extension of safe and secure learning environments in which everyone feels accepted and ready to engage and learn, which leads directly to student learning and achievement.
- Resources connecting the initiatives to grade-specific curriculum expectations provide teachers and students with coherence and relevance in both teaching and learning.
- Early anecdotal evidence indicates positive engagement of students across both panels in embedded character development learning activities.

Lessons learned for moving forward ...

- Preparations are underway to acquire literacy materials that specifically reflect elements of character development. These materials, including levelled reading material and mentor texts, will support the board's number one goal of improving literacy outcomes for all students.
- A board-wide framework for connecting initiatives provides staff, students and parents with a clear understanding of board direction.