

## *Student Leadership and Engagement Initiative*

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

The purpose of the project was to engage the board's intermediate students, develop their leadership skills and provide increased opportunities for character development experiences. A board-level leadership group made up of the Director of Education, the board's Catholicity Coordinator and a teacher from each school developed a plan to create a network of student councils across the board. From this network, a central Student Leaders' Council was created with a representative from every school. The Student Leaders' Council met with the board-level leadership group three times during the year via videoconferencing to talk about student leadership opportunities and engagement within their respective schools, discussing topics such as social justice activities, outreach and community involvement, environmental action, school spirit and parish community activities. The Council also worked within the larger network of student councils to develop activities at their schools to promote student engagement and to nurture character development based on Catholic social teachings. They challenged and inspired each other to come up with new ideas and plans to engage the full student population at their schools and organized numerous activities including Hearts and Hands for Haiti, Mosquito Net project, 24 Hour Famine and community outreach to seniors. The board-level leadership group supported their efforts by organizing a *Me to We* workshop for all intermediate students. In addition, Student Leaders' Council members spoke at board meetings, parish meetings and created and recorded a radio advertisement about the board that was broadcast throughout the district.

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

- Student leaders became better prepared to take on leadership roles in high school and, overall, intermediate students were encouraged to take on responsibility within society and their communities.
- Student-led activities nurtured a cooperative spirit throughout the schools. As students took responsibility for events and projects, their sense of responsibility, self-worth and confidence increased.
- Teachers became increasingly engaged in their school's activities and projects, which encouraged student involvement in school community-building events.
- Students experienced the benefits of working for and helping others.

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

- Students were inspired to get involved in leadership activities and in organizations that helped others. Funds will be made available to continue these opportunities and organize leadership forums for next year's intermediate students.
- The school-level student councils provided students with practical experiences of democracy at work.
- The Student Leaders' Council provided a forum for discussions among administration, program staff and students. It also gave the students the opportunity to share ideas and initiatives and to challenge those in other schools to get involved in various projects.
- Student activities are most productive when they are guided by teacher-facilitators. Release time will be required to enable teacher-facilitators to provide this support to the students.