

About the project ...

The Thames Valley District School Board's Character Development Committee was given a mandate to develop strategies and practices to embed the board's character traits throughout its schools. The committee decided that the most effective way to do this was to develop curriculum resources to support teachers and, through the development and use of the resources, build capacity throughout the board. In the elementary panel, because teachers were using the character traits as the focus of Teaching Learning Critical Pathways (TLCPs), a team of two administrators and five teacher-librarians was brought together to select mentor texts to support the TLCPs. As an additional support, an accompanying resource binder was created for distribution to all elementary schools. In the secondary panel, five civics teachers, led by the learning coordinator for social sciences, were brought together to develop templates for embedding character in the Grade 10 Civics Course curriculum, which is mandatory for all secondary students. The templates were designed to examine important civics questions and consider the challenges of governing communities in which contrasting values, multiple perspectives and differing purposes coexist. All curriculum templates, mentor texts and associated resources were designed to promote a positive school climate and to meet the expectations for safe schools and inclusive education policies.

Impact on student learning and school culture ...

- Incorporating the key character traits into the Teaching Learning Critical Pathways clearly made the initiative a whole-school effort as all members of the school community share the responsibility to model, teach and expect demonstrations of the universal attributes in all school, classroom and extracurricular activities. In addition, character development was integrated into the curricular experiences of students and embedded into the culture of the school and classrooms in an explicit and intentional manner – all key expectations stated in the ministry's character development document, *Finding Common Ground*.
- The secondary model is grounded in student engagement, which is also a key expectation of the ministry document.

Lessons learned for moving forward ...

- The Character Development Committee completed a gap analysis at the conclusion of this project and will be continuing professional development for teachers to support their use of the new resources.
- Effective school-based practices in using the resources will also be highlighted.
- A goal has been set to establish a sustainable culture of character throughout the Thames Valley District School Board.