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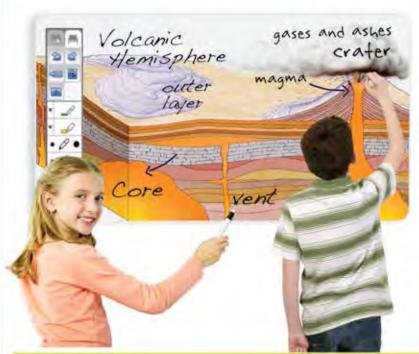
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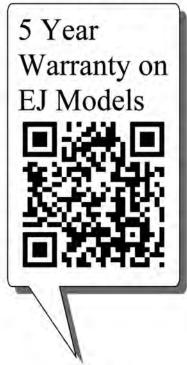
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What does student activism look like today? This issue of the $\it M.A.S.S.$ Journal tells the stories of student activists across Manitoba, from both their perspective, and that of the educators who are helping youth make a difference.







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A Message from the Premier of Manitoba



Greg Selinger

n November 23, 2011, I had the privilege of attending We Day in Winnipeg. The event, which brought 16,000 students together, was inspiring to witness. Imagine the good that 16,000 young Manitobans could accomplish!

Making the world a better place can seem like a daunting task, with so many issues that need to be tackled. Where does one even begin? Much as a marathon begins one step at a time, activism often starts with small gestures of goodwill. Change that begins at the grassroots level will quickly develop an energy of its own. Even the Craig Kielburgers of the world started with something small.

Let me give you an example of how a small act can lead to bigger change. When I was in my early 20s, I was a community organizer in Winnipeg's inner city, and one issue that kept coming up was the problem of tax discounters. These were businesses that would basically buy people's tax returns, giving them money up front. The people who used these services would only get about 10 per cent of what they were entitled. So a person who had earned a \$500 tax refund would receive the money immediately-but they would only receive \$50. The company would pocket the difference. These businesses were taking advantage of vulnerable

I worked with some people from the community, and we started a community-based non-profit income tax service. This way, people would get support to ensure they were treated fairly. They received the money they deserved at a time when they could really use it—during the winter months. We drove the tax discounters off Main Street for years, and in 1985 the federal government passed a law regulating tax discounters across the country.

A few decades later, I was Finance Minister and a similar problem emerged with payday lenders making a huge profit off economically vulnerable people. Using the confidence I built and the skills I learned at the age of 22, I managed to solve the problem. With the support of

many in the community, our government passed laws to regulate the payday loan industry.

The moral of the story is that people of all ages and incomes can identify a problem and devote their time, creativity, and energy to putting an end to it. When we worked together on Main Street, we wanted to bring a little more fairness to the working people of the area; within a decade, everybody in Canada could count on that fairness thanks to a federal law. Government does its best to listen, but citizens need to speak louder in order for government to hear them.

To its credit, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (M.A.S.S.) has adopted in its Statement of Beliefs, a commitment to foster active participation in public service in children so that they become lifelong contributing members of our democratic society. On a practical level, superintendents and educators carry out that mission every day by what they say, and especially by what they do. In partnership with academia and government, M.A.S.S. provides the educational community with concrete ideas and resources to help teachers develop the deeplyengaged citizens of tomorrow.

All Manitoba families benefit from the tireless efforts of the educational community to help our children learn, think critically, and take an active role in the world. Thank you!

Showcase Your School/Division's Work in Social Justice!

When M.A.S.S. solicited pieces from students and teachers about their work in social justice, we received many more than we could accommodate. As such, we are creating a link on our website (www.mass.mb.ca) that will feature the write-ups in this magazine, as well as those we couldn't fit and any others we receive by the end of May.

The site, which will become live sometime in May, will feature writing from schools and divisions across Manitoba (including early, middle, and high schools). This will give everyone interested in social justice work a means to learn what other schools and/or divisions are doing in this important area. It is a great outlet to connect with others as well as get

ideas about what can be done to make our schools, communities, and the world more socially just.

Teachers or administrators are invited to write 500 words about social justice activities they are overseeing at school. We would welcome a 200 word piece by one of the students involved, too, for a total of 700 words. Divisional descriptions can be somewhat longer.

Send your submission directly to Jori Thordarson (jvthordarson@hotmail.com).

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A Message from the President of M.A.S.S.



Brian O'LearySuperintendent of Seven
Oaks School Division

here was a time not that long ago when schools viewed their work as preparation for life. Schools prepared students to become engaged as citizens once they became adults, not as young people. Today's youth are turning that notion on its head. For them education is life and they want to make the world a better place now.

The 16,000 plus students who packed the MTS Centre November 23, 2011, for We Day, were a powerful testament to student's awareness of the world around them, and their commitment to making it a better place.

Today students fight poverty, racial discrimination, homophobia, and environmental damage. They volunteer hours and hours reaching out to young children and to seniors. They exchange letters, art, and their views with young people all over the world, in real time.

Inspired by the examples of Craig Kielberger's mission to end the exploitation of children for labour (he was 12) and Winnipeg's Hannah Taylor's work to help the homeless (she was five when she began), our students know that they can make a difference now.

Today students fight poverty, racial discrimination, homophobia, and environmental damage. They volunteer hours and hours reaching out to young children and to seniors. They exchange letters, art, and their views with young people all over the world, in real time. They sort groceries at Winnipeg Harvest and raise money for schools in Africa. They teach their peers and their parents to be better people.

This issue of the M.A.S.S. Journal is devoted to the story of the difference young people are making now. This story of student voice, of student action for social justice, also serves as a reminder of the power of passion as a force in education, and a testament to the strength of our Manitoba school system.

When young people are passionate they put more of themselves into school. They are fully involved in learning. Their writing and presentations are for real audiences with real goals in mind. They learn to work in teams, to ask important questions, and to understand the lives and situations of others. Most importantly, they learn about themselves and their responsibility to others.

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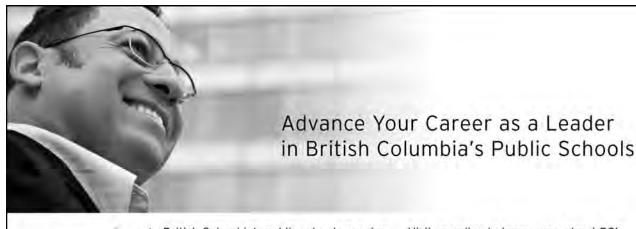
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What Kind of Citizen?

Examining the values that drive school-based citizenship education and action

By Joel Westheimer

ctive and effective citizenship has increasingly become a central pillar of many schoolbased reform efforts. In both Canada and the United States, there is a growing awareness that voting rates and other forms of political participation have dropped precipitously, and that the biggest declines are among young people. This has led, in turn, to an easy consensus among teachers, administrators, and policy-makers on the need to teach students how to be good democratic citizens.

But when we scratch beneath the surface of these beliefs and get specific about what kinds of learning and action should be encouraged, and about what kind of school curriculum will best promote democratic participation, much of that consensus falls away. School programs that explicitly aim to teach democratic participation and action embody an assortment of different, and sometimes contradictory beliefs, about the kind of society we are trying to build.

Consider the following three school programs and ask yourself which one, in your mind, is teaching democratic citizenship. The first school, which I will call Capital High School, teaches democratic citizenship through lessons on personal responsibility, and through a provincial requirement for community service. Since Ontario students must each complete 40 hours of volunteer community service in order to graduate, teachers at Capital help students find volunteer activities in the community, helping out in soup kitchens, cleaning up parks, and assisting in hospitals.

Teachers and administrators in a second school, which I will call Laura Secord School, engage students in lessons about how government works, and emphasize participation in civic affairs. Teachers in this school feel that democratic citizenship requires that students know about laws and legislative procedures. They also model civic participation by involving students in classroom and school-wide decisions. By enacting democratic principles within the school, these and other like-minded educators hope to develop and sharpen students' democratic citizenship skills, and dispositions.

A third school, which I'll call River Valley, has as one of its central curricular missions to teach students about social justice, about how to improve society, and about specific ways to affect change such as community drives, grass-roots campaigns, and protests.

Although I've changed their names, each of these schools is real and each has a staff confident that the school is engaged in citizenship education that will lead to a more active and engaged democratic citizenry. What kind of citizens does each of these schools want its students to become? Will students like those in Capital High School, who volunteer in the community, become "good" citizens? Do mock trials or studies of the local legislature constitute citizenship education? Is a classroom or school that is governed democratically like Laura Secord School better suited to impart democratic lessons? What about the last school I mentioned? Is an emphasis on social justice the key to democratic ideals?

What kind of citizen?

I run a research collaborative based in the Faculty of Education at the University

of Ottawa called Democratic Dialogue (DemocraticDialogue.com). The teachers, students, and university researchers associated with Democratic Dialogue are all interested in the role schooling plays in strengthening democratic societies. We conduct studies to investigate the many different ways schools are fulfilling (or not fulfilling) their historic democratic mission to foster an educated citizenry, capable of informed engagement in civic and political life.

Over the better part of a decade we have been studying programs that aimed to develop good citizenship skills among youth and young adults. In study after study, we come to similar conclusions: the kinds of goals and practices commonly represented in curricula that hope to foster democratic citizenship usually have more to do with voluntarism, charity, and obedience than with democracy. In other words, to many educators "good citizenship" means listening to authority figures, dressing neatly, being nice to neighbors, and helping out at a soup kitchen-not grappling with the kinds of social policy decisions that every citizen in a democratic society needs to learn how to do.

In one of the first studies, my colleague Joseph Kahne and I studied dozens of programs and identified three visions of "good" citizens that help capture the lay of the land when it comes to citizenship education in North America: the *Personally Responsible Citizen; the Participatory Citizen;* and the *Social-Justice Oriented Citizen.* It's worth summarizing the differences here so you might better be able to situate your own programs among these kinds of goals. They can serve as a helpful guide to uncovering the variety of assumptions that fall under the idea of citizenship education.

Personally Responsible Citizens contribute to food or clothing drives when asked, and volunteer to help those less fortunate whether in a soup kitchen or a senior-citizen center. They might contribute time, money, or both to charitable causes. Both those in the character education movement and those who advocate community service would emphasize this vision of good citizenship. They seek to build character and personal responsibility by emphasizing honesty, integrity, self-discipline, and hard work. Or they nurture compassion by engaging students in volunteer community service.

Other educators lean toward a vision of the Participatory Citizen. Participatory citizens actively participate in the civic affairs and the social life of the community at local, state/provincial, and national levels. Educational programs designed to support the development of participatory citizens focus on teaching students about how government and other institutions (e.g., community-based organizations, churches) work, and about the importance of planning and participating in organized efforts to care for those in need, for example, or in efforts to guide school policies. While the personally responsible citizen would contribute cans of food for the homeless, the participatory citizen might organize the food drive.

A third image of a good citizen, and perhaps the perspective that is least commonly pursued, is of individuals who know how to critically assess multiple perspectives. They are able to examine social, political, and economic structures, and explore strategies for change that address root causes of problems. We called this kind of citizen the Social-Justice Oriented Citizen because the programs fostering such citizenship emphasize the need for citizens to be able to think about issues of fairness, equality of opportunity, and democratic engagement. They share with the vision of the Participatory Citizen an emphasis on collective work related to the life and issues of the community. But the nature of these programs gives priority to students thinking independently, looking for ways to improve society, and being thoughtfully informed about a variety of complex social issues. These programs are less likely to emphasize the need for charity and volunteerism as ends in

themselves, and more likely to teach about ways to effect systemic change. If *Participatory Citizens* organize the food drive and *Personally Responsible Citizens* donate food, the *Social-Justice Oriented Citizens*—our critical thinkers—ask why people are hungry, then act on what they discover. See Table 1 for more detail.

Conflicting priorities

Is it possible to pursue all three of these visions? Perhaps. Might there be conflicts? Yes. Certainly participatory citizens or those committed to social justice can simultaneously be dependable or honest. However, there may also be conflicts. The emphasis placed on individual character and behavior, for example, can obscure the need for collective and often public sector initiatives.

Voluntarism and kindness can be put forward as ways of avoiding talk about politics and policy. In terms of *democratic* citizenship, these programs may be limited. Character traits such as honesty, integrity, and responsibility for one's actions are certainly valuable for becoming good neighbors and citizens. But, on their own, these traits are not inherently about democracy.

Currently, the vast majority of school programs that take the time to teach citizenship are the kind that emphasize either good character (including the importance of volunteering and helping those in need), or technical knowledge

of legislatures and how government works. Far less common are schools that teach students to think about root causes of injustice or challenge existing social, economic, and political norms as a means for strengthening democracy. Often, when schools emphasize individual character and behavior, they shy away from teaching about social movements and the root causes of problems.

Schools in both a totalitarian nation and a democratic one might engage students in volunteer activities in the community—picking up litter from a nearby park perhaps, or helping out at a busy intersection near a school or a senior-citizen center. Indeed, government leaders in a totalitarian regime would be as delighted as leaders in a democracy if their young citizens learned the lessons put forward by many of the proponents of personally responsible citizenship: don't do drugs; show up to school; show up to work on time; give blood; help others during a flood; recycle; and so on. These are all desirable traits for people living in a community. But they are not about democratic citizenship or democratic participation.

Efforts to pursue some conceptions of personal responsibility might even undermine efforts to prepare participatory and social-justice oriented citizens. Obedience and loyalty (common goals of character education), for example, may

	Personally Responsible Citizen	Participatory Citizen	Social-Justice Oriented Citizen
DESCRIPTION	Acts responsible in their community Works and pays taxes Picks up litter, recycles, and gives blood Helps those in need, lends a hand during times of crisis Obeys laws	Active member of community organi- sations and/or improvement efforts Organizes community efforts to care for those in need, promote economic development, or clean up environment Knows how government agencies work Knows strategies for accomplishing collective tasks	Critically assesses social, political, and economic structures Explores strategies for change that address root causes of problems Knows about social movements and how to effect systemic change. Seeks out and addresses areas of injustice.
SAMPLE	Contributes food to a food drive	Helps to organize a food drive	Explores why people are hungry and acts to solve root causes
SSUMPTIONS	To solve social problems and anprove society, citizens must have good character, they must be honest, responsible, and law-abiding members of the community	To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must actively participate and take leadership positions within established systems and community structures	To solve social problems and improve society, entirens must question and change established systems and structures when they reproduce patterns of injustice over time

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work against the kind of independent thinking that effective democracy requires. Personal responsibility must be considered in a broader social context or it risks advancing mere civility or docility instead of democracy.

School must play an important role in strengthening democracy

Schools have long been seen as essential to support the development of democratic citizens. For democracy to remain vibrant, educators must convey to students that both critical thinking and action are important components of democratic civic life, and students must learn that they have important contributions to make. Democracy is not a spectator sport.

The exit of the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, dedicated to a critical history of war, bears the following inscription: "History is yours to make. It is not owned or written by someone else for you to learn... History is not just the story you read. It is the one you write. It is the one you remember or denounce or relate to others. It is not predetermined. Every action, every decision, however small, is relevant to its course. History is filled with horror and replete with hope. You shape the balance."

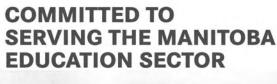
I suspect many readers could imagine a lesson in democratic participation that begins with just such a quotation. The choices we make for citizenship education in our schools have consequences for the kind of society we ultimately help to create.

Joel Westheimer is professor and University Research Chair in democracy and education at the University of Ottawa.

Reference

1. J. Westheimer and J. Kahne, "What Kind of Citizen? The Politics of Educating for Democracy," American Educational Research Journal 41, no 2 (Summer, 2004): 237-269.







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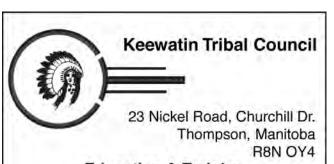




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STUDENT ACTIVISM: CHANGING T

Impassioned, *student*-led movements driving for social change can be found all across Manitoba. Following are the stories of just a few, told by the students involved and the teachers who are helping the activism come alive.

Citizenship Education for Participatory Democracy

By Marlene Schellenberg

f all the institutions that sustain a healthy democracy, education has the potential to have the greatest positive effect. Ken Osborne (Osborne, 2001) stated that Canadian schools have traditionally imparted cultural and social understandings, as well as vocational skills and knowledge. When young people have the opportunity to experience the full dimensions of public education, they learn about the best qualities that sustain the kind of pluralistic, moral democracy that values respect for human worth, and dignity, diversity, and freedom. When students are given opportunities to examine their own lives and the lives of others in the world, they can learn about the conditions, dispositions, and requirements of democratic life. When this knowledge is shared, the understandings deepen. When the learning is put into action, the goal of education is realized.



Minister Gord
Mackintosh (back row, left), Minister Erin Selby (second from right) and Marlene Schellenberg (far right), with some of the students who influenced the government's decision to increase funding to public transportation.
May, 2011.

This kind of learning for participation as Canadian democratic citizens has been the experience for many students at J. H. Bruns Collegiate. In 2003, two students approached their Social Studies teacher, Ms. Meera Bhalla, expressing the desire to start a human rights group. After participating in the Asper Holocaust and Human Rights program, one student wrote: "On our last get together, we were presented with a certificate acknowledging our participation in this program, and we signed a contract stating that we would

educate others and become an active voice on human rights."

And so, Students Helping Our World (S.H.O.W.) was born. The following goals were established to guide members to:

- Expand their own knowledge about the world:
- Educate those in the school and community about human rights; and
- Take action to create change in the school, community and the world.

Using these principles over the past seven years, students have undertaken

Empowerment for Democratic Citizenship

By Megan Dufrat

ou must be the change you wish to see in the world." Throughout our lives, these famous words of Mahatma Gandhi resonate with us; but how do we go about making this change?

Throughout my high school career at J.H. Bruns Collegiate, my involvement in extra-curricular groups has allowed me to recognize the power an individual can have in changing the attitudes and behaviours within society. As a member of Students Helping Our World (S.H.O.W.), I have had the opportunity to complete in-depth research regarding issues surrounding local poverty. While completing this research, we met with MLAs and lobbied for change. Our work led to the Manitoba Government committing \$2.3 million more towards public transportation for the economically-disadvantaged, a policy that will allow the impoverished improved access to community programs and services.

This experience provided me with unique learning that I feel all students should experience in educational institutions. Through my involvement in S.H.O.W., I have acquired skills that have shaped who I am. In influencing politicians to create new policy, I now am empowered and inspired to continue making political change in my life. My experiences in S.H.O.W. have allowed me to better understand the political process, and have provided me with the ability and desire to lobby politicians to address social injustices. Within my broader school community, I was able to share my experiences and knowledge, and influence my community's views of the democratic process.

Reflecting on my high school extra-curricular education experiences, I know that I have been empowered to continue to voice my democratic views within society in order to create positive social change. I have come to realize that to create an effective democratic society, all students should be provided with these experiences within a classroom setting.

HE WORLD, ONE ACT AT A TIME

many projects, such as studying responses to terrorism to better understand racism, and supporting the Manitoba Campaign to Ban Land Mines. The students also have worked on social justice issues close to home. In spring 2011, after a twoyear examination of life facing those less economically advantaged in our society, the students lobbied MLAs for change. With the support of Minister Erin Selby, the students were successful. In his press release, Minister Gord Macintosh credited S.H.O.W. with influencing his decision to increase funding to public transportation to help those living in poverty better cope with its costs.

S.H.O.W is only one of many groups in the school that uses this model of participatory democracy. This kind of grassroots engagement is the vehicle through which many students at Bruns Collegiate become impassioned, inspired, and, most importantly, empowered. They learn to believe that they not only can change attitudes and behaviours at the personal level, but they also can change the laws that govern society.

As vital as these experiences are, Rosa Bruno-Jofré, former Associate Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba and later Dean, Faculty of Education, Queen's University, and Dick Henley identified an erosion of the cultural and social functions of education that provide the space for students to learn about the full dimensions of participatory democracy (Bruno-Jofré, 2002). Further, they identified an emphasis on the vocational function to provide training for the world of work as a tool for economic growth in Canada and other western countries. As the gap between rich and poor widens, and citizens in western democratic nations look for answers to this injustice in places like the Occupy Movement, students need more than job skills to understand the Canadian cultural and social context, become empowered to deliberate about the public good, and hold political authorities accountable for ensuring justice for all.

While schools can be applauded for supporting events like the recent We Day, these experiences do not provide a venue to explore systemic roots that sustain injustice and take action to create change.

While there are curriculums that address these issues, the action is often marginalized outside the classroom as an extracurricular activity. Manitoba Education's new *Grade 12 Global Issues: Citizenship and Sustainability* curriculum is a step in the right direction.

The survival of dynamic, participatory democracy in its fullest expression depends on all students experiencing this kind of learning. The viability of the democratic process lives and dies on the shoulders of a democracy's citizens, and when students engage in this kind of action, they leave

public education knowing they truly can change the world.

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STUDENT ACTIVISM: CHANGING T

Youth for Diversity:

The Teachers' Perspectives

By Leanne Froese and Ryan Weins, Teachers

tudent voice at Collège Churchill High School is alive and well. Students exercise their collective voice in classrooms, hallways, the offices, and guidance areas on a regular basis. Students know that they are valued participants in an ongoing conversation that includes consultation, collaboration, and cooperation. Some voices, however, still struggle to be heard as they try to promote equality for all students. Students of the school's Youth for Diversity (YFD) group face many challenges in their attempts to effect long lasting and significant change in the school culture.

The students of YFD/Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) are the ones many would assume would be there. They are not the "popular kids" of high school

movies, but the outcasts. The majority are insecure and timid in public settings. They are also highly aware, constantly alert for the danger and hurt presented by bullies, by those who have power, or by the words that flow from the student body in hallways. It may be that, when they are so often the preyed upon, YFD's meetings are more a refuge from antagonism than an opportunity for activism. Whatever the case, they come with the belief that uniting their voices is a much more effective approach than standing alone to create change. The group's meetings offer many students hope as they pool their leadership, vision, skills, and hands to carry out objectives.

The group has existed in various forms over at least five years. The most recent manifestation began



Why do we Come to Youth for Diversity / Gay Straight Alliance Meetings?

By members of the Youth for Diversity / Gay Straight Alliance

Our ideas as a group

We come because it is a place where we can be surrounded by positive people who care about important things and want to make them better. We come to be a part of a REAL community.

We have lost leaders and even interest, both of which we attribute to problems of organization and communication. We're experimenting with scheduling and focus to find a better balance.

We are proud of the Day of Silence and NOH8 Day, of community meetings and potlucks, posters and bake sales, and anti-bullying presentations. We can feel the evolution of acceptance in the school.

We want to meet weekly, communicate with the help of two bulletin boards, Facebook and the website, and continue to advertise and host more events, but be more focused about taking on one at a time.

Our individual words (pseudonyms used)

Jim: I remember...that the atmosphere in the building was quite hostile—unsettling—towards LGBT people. In one year of hard

work and diligent signage, however, I found myself in the heartening situation of reading over a list of topics on which a class bully had insulted people. Among them were race and gender. Left unchecked was the sexuality box.

Jill: Though [we] have difficulties in collaboration and efficiency, we have an impact on our environment. I'm really grateful for the improvements made for the rights of...everyone, really.

Phil: The first name that I got called [here] was FAG. It stuck. It still happens, but thanks to our schools' YFD group, I see many improvements...

Sally: Never in my five years of attending have I seen a group quite like YFD. Once we gained numbers and stamina, I felt like many different people...could finally identify with people they might not have before. I believe that this was needed in our school and that with time it will thrive...to make our school an accepting, friendly place.

HE WORLD, ONE ACT AT A TIME

three years ago as a small group of students began to have lunch-hour discussions in an open classroom. Their initiative to recruit others and formalize the meetings, with the goal of changing the school, gave birth to YFD. Their meetings offer the comfort of shared experiences and challenges, advice, listening ears and new approaches to combat stereotyping and antagonism.

The group is not always successful. Inconsistent attendance and a fluid membership are problematic. It is a struggle to find ways of effectively communicating with each other and the school. Meetings are missed, posters remain unprinted, and a bake sale runs short on baking. On the one hand, the birth of the group seems to have required a small group of individuals willing to take on more than their share of the work. With them at the helm, the group has initiated powerful poster campaigns, fundraising activities, guest speakers and days of action (e.g. Day of Silence). On the other hand, the membership comes to depend too fully on those few, who sometimes disappear for any number of reasons, leaving the group reeling. Perhaps the greatest inhibiting factor to the group's success is in asking students to step into leadership roles, a tall order from among a small group of students already struggling with their own issues of social, personal, and sexual identity.

The school's staff members have been supportive. They allow the group access to their classrooms for presentations, display posters and rainbow stickers, and let members miss classes for group activities. Administration has provided them with funding and access to school resources like printing. As sponsor teachers, we try to let students lead. We provide the safe room, the unspoken validation of their reason for meeting, and the maintenance of an open, honest, student-directed environment. We teach the group how to function appropriately as a group, help them to recover from what they perceive as failures, and celebrate their successes.

The future of the group requires a threshold number of dedicated students to share the leadership without relying on a single individual to hold up and carry the vision. The voices heard in the meetings are strong and empowered, but those voices need to find the courage to leave the

comfort of the meetings. Unfortunately, the group's resources are, so far, at odds with their ideals and dreams voiced in the meetings: they need to be helped to focus on achievable goals, one at a time, because taking on too much too fast inevitably leads to disappointment.

Their successes are not always obvious to them. Subtle attitudinal changes in the school are hidden by the whispered insults that still emerge in hallways, and by the scribbled messages that still pollute the posters put up by the group. They require more tangible

change. Networking with other schools would offer some encouragement. Celebration days are necessary. Small steps require recognition.

The great irony of social justice groups is that they are always working towards their own extinction. Some day everyone will wear purple on No Hate Day. And, some time after that, we won't even need to have one. Until then, these are the kinds of students and groups that will continue to inspire all of us.

Stories continue on page 24.



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Citizenship in the Classroom:

A Way of Teaching, Learning and Living

By Laurie Bachewich, Principal

itizenship is discussed and considered in so many different ways in today's society. As a teaching principal, I believe that citizenship is about teaching our children to be good people. It is also about teaching our children that they belong to a much larger world, and that perspective is important. When we are teaching our children about citizenship, it is teaching them about empathy, to have an opinion, and most importantly, a voice.

This is a tall order. With curricular demands as they are, accomplishing such a feat is almost terrifying. But I believe that it can be done. I suggest that citizenship is something we believe, and ultimately live in our buildings. Citizenship is not an extra; it is a way of being.

Five years ago, I asked my Grade 7/8 class the question: "If you could change anything in the world, what would it be?" Expecting answers that would have benefitted them personally, I was pleasantly surprised. Many of their responses had to do with global and local issues.

After much discussion, as a class we decided that issues surrounding hunger and homelessness would be our focus for the school year. Our Grade 7/8 class quickly became "Kids Being the Change", and they named their project FISH – Friends Involved in Stopping Hunger. They led the entire school and community in the research and awareness of this issue, globally *and* locally. This year-long project helped the students find their voices, and turn concern into action every year since.

Of all of the ideas suggested by our "Kids Being the Change" class, the theme of the 2011/2012 school year was most profound. Honouring our Elders resulted in an entire year working with seniors in our community and surrounding area. The students' focus was to break down the barriers between generations. They wanted to



show the older generation what they had to offer, and they wanted to better understand the senior's challenges, embrace their experience and what *they* had to offer.

The Grade 7/8 class met with community groups such as Seniors for Seniors to ask them what they could do for them. It resulted in teaching seniors how to play the Wii, and playing a variety of recreational games at the local Drop in Centers.

Our Grade 7/8 students met with the other teachers and students in the school to help them also come up with ideas as to how to infuse the theme of Honouring our Elders in their classrooms. This resulted in a beautiful black and white photo project with the Grade 2/3 class, where hand portraits were done. Younger students invited special elders in their lives to come to the school to be interviewed, and to share stories of their youth.

A friendship program was established between our middle years students and the seniors living in the local care home. The Grade 7/8 students invited the seniors to come to the school for a tech night. They showed them how to use Facebook, cell phones, digital cameras, and email. It was an amazing way to meet the LwICT outcomes.

Our final project was a Celebrating Our Seniors dance that was planned and organized by our Grade 7/8 students. As the band played and our students danced with their guests, every educator and parent in attendance stood back and watched as their children and students bridged gaps with the most important people in their community. As they held the door open for them, served them refreshments, and sat and visited with them, there was not one dry eye in the hall. It was a project that developed citizenship, taught life-long lessons, and forged lasting relationships.

Teaching citizenship is not just a project, a fundraiser or volunteerism. It is a culture in your school, building, and community. In my opinion, if you ask the right questions, listen, support, guide, and offer opportunity for your students, it will lead to amazing things and stronger, more caring citizens.

HE WORLD, ONE ACT AT A TIME

How Being the Change – Changed Us!

By the Grade 7/8 class, "Kids Being the Change"

"Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day, teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime."

his quote defines the basis of our FISH project – (Friends Involved in Stopping Hunger). Through this initiative we were able to see firsthand the enormity of the problem of hunger. We realized that there are people who suffer right in our own backyard, and that it does not just belong to the faces on the television of starving children in Africa.

We decided to take action and make a change. We realized that people are people, and that we don't need to be afraid of those who are homeless. Alone, we may never eliminate poverty but working together we can truly make a difference.

We have worked on several projects over the past few years. Each of them impacted us greatly and inspired us to BE the change.

We feel that the topics we have chosen have changed the way we see the world. We would not have realized the challenges that elders face, or the racism and injustice that are still issues in our society, had we never done these projects. We have started to see beyond ourselves and now have the desire to inspire others to do the same.

We would like to thank our teachers for asking that very first question and giving us the opportunity to use our voices to make a difference in our world.

And, so we ask: What will you do to change the world?







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STUDENT ACTIVISM: CHANGING

Students Can Change the World

By Michelle Young & Katharine Kingdon, Teachers

pon learning that We Day would be coming to Winnipeg, we, the teachers at Neepawa Collegiate Area Institute (NACI), jumped at the opportunity to get students actively involved and prepared to attend. We wanted to provide students with an experience of a life-time so we began the journey by helping them realize the part they play in the global community. The announcement of We Day was a kickstart to the development of a student global action group at NACI.

In order to become a part of the global action group, interested students from Grades 7 to 12 did some research and wrote a summary explaining why they should be a part of this humanitarian group. Students were selected and the fun began!

Forty-four students and four teachers took the first steps in creating "They Can Change the World". At this point, teacher, Dianne Nordstrom, and principal, Kelvin Hollier, joined the group and Team H.O.P.E. (Helping Our World Pursue Equality), was formed. Students created a group logo, slogan, and prepared to participate fully in the We Day experience. Following We Day, students returned with passion, excitement, commitment, and motivation. The team now began to educate their peers and community.

With so many enthusiastic participants, Team H.O.P.E. divided into four working committees: Public Relations, Fun-raising, Education and Community Awareness. These committees are all working towards a common goal of raising \$5,000 towards a sanitation project in Kenya, Africa, with the guidance of Free the Children.

Fundraising activities began very early in the 2011-12 school year. School spirit-scarves were sewn and sold by H.O.P.E. committee members, staff, and Beautiful Plains' school board members; a used sports-equipment sale was held in the







school; the community was canvassed for Halloween for Hunger; and teachers and students participated in an international Vow of Silence day.

The Education committee kicked off 2012 with a variety of activities to increase the knowledge base of the student body about life in Kenya, Africa, in comparison to their life in Neepawa, Manitoba. A bulletin board was created to provide a visual snapshot of Kenya and the water issues. Members of this committee also prepared and presented a slideshow of facts, videos, and music to highlight the Kenyan project. All staff and students viewed the presentation.

The Public Relations Committee created a set of statistics on specific water and health issues that Kenyans face. These facts were shared through announcements and "post-its" throughout the school for a one week period. The following week, the students were quizzed on the trivia and prizes were awarded.

The Public Relations Committee also shared information about Kenya and what H.O.P.E. is working towards in their school and community through photographs and articles in the local newspapers.

While the Education and Public Relations Committees were working towards raising awareness, the Fun-raising Committee was busy challenging the student body in a CHANGE fund-raising competition between homerooms. The community was involved too, and donated prizes for the classrooms that raised the most funds each week.

The Community Awareness Committee is presently planning a Pancake Breakfast. The purpose is to highlight Team H.O.P.E. and its fundraising goals for their sanitation project in Kenya. During the breakfast, the Education Committee will be sharing information about Kenya and will have a guest speaker from Doctors Without Borders. Later that day, Team H.O.P.E. is also planning a school and community-wide Walkathon. During the walk, the team plans to incorporate an experience of what a day in the life of a Kenyan would be if they had to haul their family's daily water supply.

Team H.O.P.E. recently baked 70 dozen cookies and delivered them to local businesses and groups to thank them for their support. This allowed the students to give back to those who support their school. To date, team H.O.P.E. has raised \$4,200 and is still on their journey developing global citizens in their school and community.

Neepawa Area Collegiate Institute has H.O.P.E

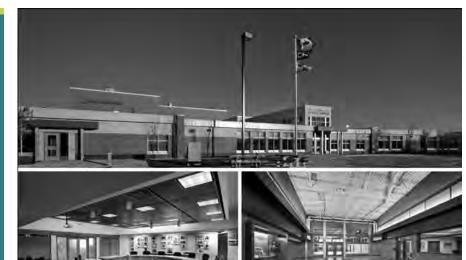
By Breanne, Grade 11 Student/ H.O.P.E. member

tudents at Neepawa Area Collegiate Institute (NACI) in Neepawa, Manitoba have H.O.P.E. (Helping Our World Pursue Equality). They hope to change the social injustices of the world. Team H.O.P.E. meets weekly to work together to make our world a better place. We are connected to the Free the Children foundation, and are fundraising to help both a global and a local cause.

Team H.O.P.E chose Kenya as our country to support globally with the focus on bringing clean water to the people there. The group started to fundraise in September, selling scarves made by the students, collecting and selling used sports equipment, participating in Halloween for Hunger and taking part in an international Vow of Silence day.

The first fundraiser involved the group spending countless hours sewing, and putting together scarves representing our school colours to sell at sporting events and at lunch hours. This created school spirit at NACI. For one of our local projects, Team H.O.P.E gathered and sold any used sports equipment that people in the community donated. The money we received went towards buying mitts for our community's Koats for Kids program.

A second local project involved collecting non-perishable food items on Halloween night. Students canvassed the towns of Neepawa and Arden for over 2.000 food items to donate to the local Salvation Army. The students took part in the Vow of Silence, raising awareness about the children across the world who do not get to speak out against the injustices they deal with everyday. Students could not communicate verbally or with technology during the school day. This action made us realize how lucky we really are to have the freedom to speak.



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STUDENT ACTIVISM: CHANGING T

Join Us and Be the Hope of Tomorrow, Today!

By Kyle D. McKinstry, Shelley Zander, Heather Manns and Brian Tichon, Teachers



often hear words such as apathetic, lazy, misguided, lost, and troublesome used to describe today's youth. Those words could not be any farther from reality at MacGregor Elementary, a school comprised of 285 students from Kindergarten through Grade 8, located just 20 minutes west of Portage la Prairie on the Trans Canada Highway. These students walk with pride, glow with ambition, and take on difficult issues with confidence, revealing a maturity that goes well beyond their years.

Our school culture makes school matter to our students. The teachers and staff try to instill the belief in students that they matter, and that their thoughts and feelings have merit. Our teachers have worked hard to develop learning communities within the school that enable our students to grow into citizens of tomorrow. Teachers are able to communicate and share new and innovative teaching and learning practices, and work on a student first mentality. These teachers challenge their students to expand their horizons, and question and inquire when what they are seeing around them doesn't appear right. They are fostering a community of sustainability, inclusivity, and empathy for all. Our school believes in the mantra of Reverend Jesse Jackson that, "students are not our future; they are the now."

While the teachers of MacGregor

Elementary School provide a platform and offer their guidance and support, these students conceive, design, initiate, and realize their plans to effect change in the local community and in the world.

They are willing to question and challenge the systems and institutions. For example, they are investigating ways that will enable their school and their division to function sustainably and responsibly. Currently, they are researching methods to access fair trade educational resources, and are drawing up a proposal to present to the school board that promotes the sole use of fair trade organizations as the suppliers of school and division resources.

These same students have also become involved in supporting their local community in a variety of ways. On learning that hunger is the world's biggest health risk and that it kills more persons every year than HIV, malaria, and tuberculosis combined, students organized a food hamper drive called "Halloween for Hunger" in collaboration with the Free the Children Organization. They informed the community and surrounding area that they would be trick or treating for non-perishable food items.

Students also initiated a town-wide MacGregor clean-up, and then they developed the Adopt-a-Grandparent Program, in which students take turns travelling to the MacGregor Health Centre to visit with residents, developing lifelong relationships with the elderly.

Our students' concern for the environment has become more and more evident

in classroom discussions on sustainable development. Always active recyclers, students learned how to reduce their global footprint even further when they elected to invite a representative from Sprucedale Industries, a training centre that provides services for developmentally challenged adults, to explain how they could recycle more efficiently. In addition, they sought out a partnership with the Whitemud Watershed Conservation District, in order to develop a MacGregor Elementary School Green Space. This green space will encourage an appreciation for sustainability within our school, community, and surrounding area.

These initiatives will help to build lifelong partnerships with outside organizations that should thrive into the future. Finally, MacGregor Elementary School students have also written numerous letters to the Town Council, the School Board and other organizations, in addition to having had an article published in the local newspaper and an interview broadcast on our local radio station.

The students of our school exhibit empathy and show a real desire to take action. They are making a positive and long-lasting impact on their global community as humanitarians. They are trustworthy, focused, and internally driven. In short, they are leaders. If one is looking for volunteers, hands shoot up in the air like rockets taking off for the moon.

These compassionate students are also learning through their experiences to be effective public speakers and activists. They understand that it takes more than just a bake sale and a donation to a charity to make a long-term, sustainable difference. They know that it will take their collective spirit, along with that of fellow students, parents, communities, and leaders from across the province, the country and the world, to achieve real and lasting change.

Today's leaders should take note of the passionate, proactive movement of our youth and commit to following their lead, working together to develop a legacy that will endure and inspire.

Student Voices Change the World

"Being a part of the Social Justice Club makes me feel important. We are the generation that will change the world!" - Abby, Amy and Emily

"We have a dream for a better world and we are working hard to make that dream come true." – Shae-Lynn and Faith

difference in this world." - Hannah, Summer, Bree and Chloe

"When I got up, I wanted to make a difference, now I'm making that

"We will never give up on making the world a better place." – Jacie

"This is just the beginning for us. We will continue to work towards making a difference in the future." – Robbie and Lauren

"I joined Social Justice because I wanted to change my world and become a better person." - Rebecca

"When we leave a Social Justice Club meeting we leave with more knowledge and hope of making the world a better place." – Jordyn and Jessica

"I enjoy helping people who cannot help themselves." - Drew

every day." – Ashley

"Who knew helping people and making a difference would be so much fun!"

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STUDENT ACTIVISM: CHANGING T

That's Not fair! Inspiring Students to Take Action

By Kris Friesen & Orest Deneka, Administrators

he power and energy that has been unleashed at Springfield Middle School is truly aweinspiring. The school has many of the common character building activities such as the 30 Hour Famine, the Terry Fox Walk, and Koats for Kids. But the number of initiatives in school around social justice is growing weekly since 55 students attended We Day in November.

The convincing message was to move students from ME to WE and that when WE work together, even as children, WE can make a difference for other children both locally and globally. And, surprisingly enough, our students were convinced that they didn't need a lot of adult help to do it. They even designed their own neon orange We Day shirts proudly worn at We Day.

A week after We Day, students took it upon themselves to participate in the Vow of Silence. We had over 70 participants! The student council also got together on



their own, and decided to make and sell beaded bracelets in support of the Free the Children organization. They set up a booth before the Christmas band concert, proudly wearing their neon shirts, and solicited help. They raised a whopping \$355.

Several of the teachers who attended We Day were so energized from the experience that they are working everything they can around social justice into their curricula because they see how engaging it is for students. It's hard to tell who is more excited to learn, the teachers or the students.

We began with a We Committee of students and teachers to plan the school's next steps, and we've now



grown into three committees: Aboriginal Awareness Committee, a Five Days for Freedom Committee, and a Fundraising Committee. Each committee has a teacher as a guide and several students.

We also had Muuxi, a 23 year old man who was a refugee from Somalia, come to our school. He shared with us stories from his childhood in Somalia. His story of being captured and chained for 18 months as a child labourer was compelling. Students are now thinking of individual ways to raise money for an organization that he had set up with a few friends called Humankind International, which raises money to build schools for refugees in places such as Ethiopia.

Students Speak Out!

outh are known for questioning their authority and boundaries, but we are also very good at questioning things like the social injustices that occur all around us. As middle school students, we are starting to realize how unfair life is. In school, we have started learning about some of the major social injustices that have happened in history, and these classroom discussions are always successful in getting even the quietest kids to participate.

For us, learning how people around the world are not as fortunate as us is very interesting. When everyone is involved in conversations, people begin to form questions, and then as a group they find the solutions and answers that one person may not have been able to find on their own. This is why We Day was such a life changing experience.

The whole day was mind blowing. The speeches from the Kielburger brothers were the most inspirational to us. We came back from We Day overflowing with ideas of how to help improve the lives of less fortunate people in our community and all over the world. This message is so important because WE are the next generation. WE can stop these injustices and make this world a more equal and fair place for all.

By Alicia and Jazmin, Grade 8 Students

Alicia was serving at a soup kitchen the other day and saw many adults come in, which she expected, but what made her look twice was when little toddlers walked in. Immediately, she thought "whoa, that is not fair". The young children whose faces lit up at the sight of food made her want to cry. We need to do something about this so no child has to go hungry.

The stories shared by We Day speakers were astonishing. Spencer West, a man who tragically lost his legs, told us about a time he visited a developing country and there were little children who came to see him and were running all around him. Spencer and the kids were joking around with each other and in a very innocent, light hearted way, asked him if he had left his legs in Canada. Spencer laughed and decided to tell them his story. One of the little girls said with complete honesty, "I didn't think these sorts of things happened to white people too."

That one sentence blew our minds.

We need to help these people in less fortunate situations and let them know that we are here. We are human, too, and we want to help. In fact, WE are determined to make a difference.

HE WORLD, ONE ACT AT A TIME

During the Five Days for Freedom Week, April 9-13, the focus was on various freedoms that all children should have such as being free from child exploitation, hunger, and thirst. On the final day of the week, April 13, we hosted our very own We Day. We invited local talent and people with a passion for helping others to share stories and music. We also had some students gifted with creativity design our foyer bulletin boards, and create a penny wall for freedom.

So, the question that we need to ask ourselves as educators is why is this topic so engaging for our young people? With the view of protecting our students from the harsh realities of life, do we rob them of opportunities to grow, learn, and take action as leaders of the next generation? How can we unleash the explosive energy students have around social justice?



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STUDENT ACTIVISM: CHANGING T

Taking the Leap: Making a Difference

By Lori Zagrobelny, Grade 5/6 Teacher

arlier this school year, I asked my students, "What is poverty?" To my surprise, the room fell silent. With encouragement to guess, many ideas came on a variety of topics, but none on the shocking aspect of poverty. This was when I knew that my class needed to take the leap.

I decided to start by introducing my students to a program called Brush Out Poverty (www.brushoutpoverty.org). This project gives students the opportunity to create large paintings that are then sent to an orphanage in Uganda, Africa. The children at that orphanage then create paintings that come back to our students. You can also do fundraising with your class, and the profits go to the orphanage that you did the exchange with.

My students embraced the project right away, and busily researched and decided that they would paint what represented themselves or our culture. When the paintings arrive from Uganda, I know that a lifelong commitment to helping will revisit each time one of my students sees that African painting hanging in their home.



To enhance the project in my classroom, I invited a guest speaker who went to Tanzania, Africa as a volunteer. She shared how she raised funds throughout high school to be able to go to Tanzania and make a difference by installing sources for clean water at one of the schools there. This gave the students the opportunity to learn more about some of the everyday challenges faced in Africa, and start to

recognize that they can make a difference, even now.

In addition to our guest speaker, my class was introduced to some of the African culture through seeing African dance, African drummers, and an African storyteller. Working in pairs, they have been researching different parts of Africa using both books and online resources, investigating everything from challenges,

Lending a Hand Locally and Across the World

By Erryl and Beruk, Students, Grade 6

It all started with Brush out Poverty, a project that we did to help an orphanage in Uganda, Africa. We each painted a picture for a child at the orphanage. Beruk's painting is about trying to mix Canada with Uganda, and Erryl's painting is about the Winnipeg Jets. We all worked very hard on our paintings and were very proud of our finished work. Then we sent them off to Uganda. Now the kids at the orphanage are each painting a picture, which will come back to us. Beruk and I are so excited to receive one of their paintings! Our class plans to raffle any extra ones to raise money for the orphanage.

We have also been learning about the different parts of Africa. With our partners we have been studying Morocco and the Congo. We have learned everything from language, food, and culture. One of our favourite things we learned about the Congo and Morocco is about their sports. Our school went to St. Alphonsis School to see an African dance group. An African storyteller, singer and drummer

named Bola Oriyomi came to our class to tell us a story and show us instruments.

Our favourite fundraiser was the hot chocolate sale where we raised \$64.99. We also took part in a food drive for Winnipeg Harvest and went there to volunteer. One thing Erryl and I liked was sorting the potatoes and onions. We filled three big carts!

Our class will volunteer at the Siloam Mission soon and will bring bathroom supplies such as toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoo, body wash, and other bathroom materials.

Erryl and I feel really helpful because we volunteered to help do a fundraiser. We feel very different because there's a difference between how we live and how they live. When we go home we feel we have too much. It makes us feel really lucky and fortunate because we have lots of supplies, food, and water, things we need to survive.

HE WORLD, ONE ACT AT A TIME

sports, animals, clothing, and culture. This information was then used to create PowerPoints of their findings to share with the class.

Shortly thereafter, we received the news that the class would be receiving an Innovation in Citizenship Education grant to enhance our project on a global level, and extend it to the local level as well. We decided to get involved with Winnipeg Harvest. The students started a food drive in class, and collected four large boxes of food. They also decided to fundraise through running a multi-day hot chocolate sale, which they decided

on, planned, and wrote and sent home letters to encourage the community's support. Lastly, the entire class was thrilled to go on a field trip to Winnipeg Harvest, where they delivered all the boxes of food themselves, got a tour, learned about poverty at the local level, and volunteered by sorting more than 2,300 pounds of potatoes. Everyone left feeling they made a difference that day.

Our current undertakings include planning a hygiene product drive for the Siloam Mission in Winnipeg, and planning a variety of fundraisers with profits going towards purchasing more hygiene products for the Siloam Mission and the orphanage we are working with in Uganda, Africa. We also look forward to an upcoming field trip to the Siloam Mission, where students will see the effects of poverty firsthand.

Students need to know it is okay to stand up for what they believe in, to recognize how fortunate they are, to not accept racism, and to realize they can make a difference no matter how young they are.

Come by and ask my students "What is Poverty?" now. Be prepared to stay awhile.



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STUDENT ACTIVISM: CHANGING

Making Bright Stars Shine

By Aisha Mahmood, Teacher

hat do you know about global food shortages, hunger, AIDS, and child soldiers in Uganda? Probably a lot more if you know a French Immersion student from École Selkirk Junior High (ÉSJH). For the past three years these students have embarked on an adventure of awareness, empowerment, and transformation.

Our journey began in my Grade 7 Sciences Humaines/Social Studies class. It seemed that every discussion of poverty, war, equity, and responsibility revolved around the impact of hunger. In response, we attended a youth conference entitled Appetite for Change offered by the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation (MCIC). It sparked my students to make a difference by creating an informative video.

Under the guidance of Randy Hiebert, resource teacher and director of ÉSJH's film club, and the generous support of Sharon Moolchan (ret.), lead Social Studies teacher, we were able to take the students to the conference in Gimli, then to Winnipeg to interview Zack Gross (a fair trade expert) and Serge Kaptegain (a refugee from DR Congo), as well as to Inwood quarry to shoot some dramatic footage. When the film was complete, it was shown at our first, now annual, Soirée de Conscience.

My students worked tirelessly to coordinate the evening where they debuted, "FAMINE: Cette Fois, c'est Personnelle/HUNGER: This Time It's Personal". Serge also spoke at the event, and the grand finale was the game show, "Are you more concerned about our world than a 7th Grader?", where the students battled it out with our celebrity guests, Superintendent Gail Bagnall (ret.) and Deputy Minister of Education Gerald Farthing,

The following year (2011) we submitted a five-minute version of our video to the Kaleidoscope Video Challenge, which invites Canadian youth to create

videos highlighting why they think active global citizenship is important and what makes them global citizens. We won the "Canadian People's Choice Award" for best French Video, and with the support of Lord Selkirk School Division, we were able to attend the Gala to receive our award in Ottawa.

Last year we also participated in Brush out Poverty, through which my students

Can we Change the World? Yes! By Sabrina Kendall, Grade 9 student

n 2009, if you had asked me whether students at École Selkirk Junior High could change the world, I would have told you probably not. If you were to ask me this year, I would tell you that we already have. Our project began in the Grade 7 French Immersion Social Studies classroom where we were learning about world hunger. That year, a Manitoba Council for International Cooperation (MCIC) conference for students was to be held on this very subject and six lucky students had the opportunity to attend. We came away with little seeds planted in our brains, which would eventually grow into a three year project to change the lives of Ugandan children.

After attending this conference, we were inspired to take action, and so began the planning for a "Soiree du Conscience / Evening of Awareness." The goal of this evening was to create awareness of hunger issues worldwide, and how even **we** can help!

Hand in hand with this project came the creation of our very own award winning video: "Famine: Cette Fois c'est Personnelle" (Hunger: This Time It's Personal). With the help of our resource teacher Mr. Randy Hiebert, we were able to create an insightful bilingual film. When entered into a national film competition, Kaleidoscope Real World Video Challenge, we won the People's Choice Award! So now our voices can be heard on a larger scale!

With the success of our Evenings of Awareness and our film we wanted to use our voices to help. Since we discovered education is really the key to change, we connected with a needy school called Bright Stars in Masaka, Uganda, who were in need of a classroom made of more than boards and tarps. Currently, the construction of a new classroom for our friends at Bright Stars has begun, our Evenings of Awareness continue on, and our video continues to inspire change. We hope that over the last three years many people have learned about world issues such as poverty and hunger, and have been inspired to take action, just like we did!



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exchanged paintings with students at Bright Stars School in Masaka, Uganda. The students of this rural school are mainly orphans due to war and AIDS, and their only classroom was a couple of boards with a tarp on top. With the goal to be able to build these children a solid and secure classroom, we held another successful Soirée de Conscience about children's rights to education with a drum workshop and presentation by Hilaire Ndyat from the Winnipeg Afro-Aboriginal Crosscultural Association. It was an informative evening of fund and

conscious raising, and it made my students want to come up with a plan to raise the rest of the funds needed to build a Ugandan classroom.

There have been countless bake sales, car washes and penny drives, and a new fundraiser never before seen: Flamingo Flocking! We began to circulate flocks of plastic flamingos around Selkirk. When a flock is deployed, a sign is left stating "You have been Flocked" and goes on to explain our cause, and that if you would like to make a donation we appreciate it, and if not that is alright as at least you are

now more aware. We also sold Flocking Insurance so homes could be protected from this invasive species! It was hilarious and extremely effective. This October, after those pesky flamingos made another appearance, we were able to meet our goal to build our "Bright Stars" a structurally sound classroom.

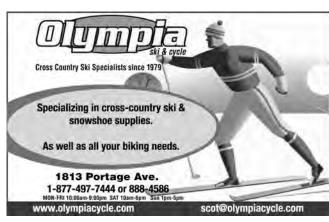
I am so fortunate to have engaged and motivated students, and blessed to work for a division that embraces such initiatives that really create opportunities for our students to flourish, and to create an impact in our community.











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Be the Change You Wish to See:

Advice from Craig Kielburger

By Alexandra Walld

t is a movement Canada's students believe in. It has resulted in 1.7 million volunteer hours in 2011. It will help bring together young people so that they can turn hopelessness into hope. It's We Day and classrooms across Canada are making a difference by turning "me" into "we."

The event, which can more aptly be described as "a movement", was created by Craig and Marc Kielburger, international children's rights activists, leading figures in youth empowerment, and co-founders of Free the Children, the world's largest network of children helping children through education.

Craig's story is well known. When he was 12, he was looking for the comics in a newspaper, when he came across an article about a 12-year-old child slave sold in human trafficking who was murdered when he escaped. This upset Craig so much he and 11 classmates started a group—the starting point for Free the Children.

Since this passionate start, Craig, 29 and Marc, 34, have spent time in the devastated city of Port-au-Prince after

an earthquake crippled Haiti; have had breakfast in the home of Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa's first female elected head of state; and, closer to home, reported from the streets as rioters marched and police cars burned during the G20 Summit in Toronto.

What else have they done? Well, they've also co-founded Me to We, an innovative social enterprise that is measured not by dollars earned but by lives changed. Part of this is We Schools in Action, a program designed to help teachers get students involved.

"Educators are our strongest ally in creating sustainable change through education," explains Craig. "We simply couldn't do it without them."

We Schools in Action come with a "Spark Kit," which includes campaigns, posters, DVDs—everything a teacher needs to get started and support everyday activities. If teachers have questions or if students want to get involved with speaking tours or volunteer trips overseas, a team of youth coordinators is available via phone, e-mail or Facebook to help with research and planning.

"The whole reason this program exists is because we know teachers are busy. It's not the core aspect of curriculum in most cases, so we make it as easy as possible to integrate," says Craig.

For example, teachers can assign projects as part of class work, like writing an essay for English or participating in a debate for Social Studies, or they can make it an after-hours or lunch-hour project, like Halloween for Hunger or the 24-hour vow of silence.

What's important is helping Canada's youth activate whatever causes they care about, getting them inspired and engaged. "Sixteen years ago, elementary and middle school students being involved didn't exist," says Craig. "That's changed. And, if you can help them find their own cause, it will become their life passion."

This conviction has taken root in Manitoba. Since We Day in November, Craig says his staff have been inundated by questions from teachers about how to get involved. "It's the fastest growth rate we've ever had in a new province. To say we were amazed by the passion and energy in Manitoba is an understatement."

The Power of "WE" in Manitoba

On November 23, 2011, 16,000 youth from Manitoba gathered at the MTS Centre to participate in We Day. Following are comments from some of the educators and students who attended this powerful event.



The Student Leadership Team, Burland School, Louis Riel School Division

Through inspirational stories, performances, and even a flash mob dance, We Day energized its audience to shift their thinking from "Me" to "We". Young people were inspired to make a difference and were reassured that they can make change happen. The Student Leadership Team from Samuel Burland School in the Louis Riel School Division had these observations:

- "This day made a huge impact. It taught me a great lesson to believe in myself. I believe that I can change the world." Grade 6 student.
- "Powerful! Sixteen thousand voices turned into one." *Grade 6 student.*
- "When someone tells you that you are too weak, too small or too young to change the world, stand up, and say, 'I am powerful—it is possible'." *Grade* 6 student.

We left We Day energized with this conviction: "We are the future, and for us, it's cool to care!"

Jason Pinder, Teacher, West Kildonan Collegiate, Seven Oaks School Division

Powerful...inspiring...tiring. These are the initial words that came to mind when I returned to West Kildonan Collegiate at the end of one of the most electrifying events to come to Winnipeg. Some describe it as a rock concert for human rights but those that make this assumption are barely scratching the surface.

Not surprisingly, one of the most profound statements of the day came from Craig and Marc Kielburger, who let all attendees know a very simple fact: social justice movements have historically been spearheaded by the youth. This is the empowering nature of We Day.

Teens are often labeled as apathetic, self-centered, over-privileged or unengaged. But in *my* experience, it has been the exact opposite. My work with kids has demonstrated to me that young people have substantial amounts of empathy, are shamelessly altruistic, are incredibly informed about issues, and display intense eagerness in learning more.

Because of We Day, I believe that our current generation is poised to create a fundamental change in our community, country, and the world. We Day has helped to light the spark. It is now up to us as educators to harness this power *and* encourage true change.



Hailey (Grade 7) and Stephanie (Grade 8), Students, Reston School, Fort La Bosse School Division

We Day was such an inspirational experience. We enjoyed every minute of it, and we live the speakers' messages into our every-day life. There was such a variety of people with different and moving speeches, who made us think about how fortunate we all are, and how many innocent children are suffering.

We Day taught us that no matter what age you are, you can make a difference, and you can be the change you want to see in the world. We took a lot from this experience and we really think it is a great concept; everyone coming together to work towards a goal we all want.

At the event it felt like we were so together, yet you didn't know everyone. We were being brought together by a cause—caring about other people, and having the determination and bravery to stand up and make a change—that is close to all our hearts.

People may tell you it's impossible, but all it takes is one voice and it catches on. You do not have to be famous and rich, all you have to do is have a dream and pursue it.











Jessica, Student, École Selkirk Jr. High School, Lord Selkirk School Division

We Day was very inspiring, and I really learned a lot about social justice, changing words to action, and generally becoming a better person who contributes to the world.

At first when I arrived at the MTS Center, I was excited and anxious to see what We Day was all about. I knew a lot of my friends were going, and they had the same feeling. When I finally stepped into the arena, I could feel everyone's energy. It was electric.

One of the first speakers to go on stage was the Premier of Manitoba, Greg Selinger. He talked about the future of Manitoba, and the role that students could play. One of my favourite speakers was Al Gore on the topic of global warming. To me, it was intriguing to hear this message in person. It made the information sink in so much more than if I were to just watch a video on the topic.

All in all, We Day was amazing, inspiring, and touching. It opened my eyes to see what is going on in the world. I have seen many ways that I can make the world a better place, and I can't wait for next year. :)

- Sent from Jessica's iPhone.

Laura Perrella, Teacher, Brant-Argyle School, Interlake School Division

Educate, engage, empower. Through their various activities, Free the Children has applied these steps to create a process used to eradicate apathy in today's youth. We Day is an incredible part of this very effective process.

You may think that only the students who attend We Day are affected but the inspiration and passion students acquire from We Day spreads like a virus. Upon returning to school, the students came up with a great variety of local and global action ideas, and eventually settled on one of each. Their local action was to collect books for Little Grand Rapids School, which had no library. We collected over 1,300 books. Their global action was to raise money to build a school in Haiti. The student leadership team created a video inviting the other two high schools in the division to join them on this project, leave the competition behind, and come together as a community.

If I had to choose one moment from We Day where I could see a palpable shift on my students' faces, it would be when Michel Chikwanine came on. Michel is a child soldier from the Democratic Republic of Congo who has taken a vow of silence to bring light to the 300,000 children who are forced to fight as soldiers. His story was told by holding up cards, which explained that he was taken from his family when he was 11, forced to fight, then forced to shoot his best friend. When the bands were playing the cheers were absolutely deafening. But when Michel was telling his story through the written word, 16,000 youth were absolutely quiet.

The words students heard and read will carry them on a wave of engagement and action throughout their lifetime.

Tyler Mitchell, Teacher, Reston School, Fort La Bosse School Division

I had the great fortune of being able to attend We Day in Winnipeg. What struck me the most about the event was the overwhelming message that one person, one student, could make a difference. I think that most students have good intentions but lack the drive or belief that they can change the world. Having such a diverse panel of presenters opened the eyes of our students. They were given real world examples of what students just like them have accomplished, and although daunting, the task of making a difference seems that much more within their grasp.

We Day not only brings the world together, and Canadians together, but the ripple effect throughout our division and school was also felt. Even within our tiny school, students that normally interacted very little with each other were coming together in joy, laughter, dance, and compassion for those suffering throughout the world. The message of togetherness and making a difference continued on the bus ride home, and into our school the next day through conversation and attitude.

Anastasia Yereniuk, Principal, Strathcona Community School, Winnipeg School Division

The excitement and energy of 16,000 students at the MTS Centre was mesmerizing. The enthusiasm demonstrated helped everyone realize that all of us can make a difference by taking charge of something we feel passionate about. We Day was clearly an opportunity to assure students that they can give a voice to a local cause in need of attention, to mobilize their peers, and to make a difference in their community. The We Day experience was huge, not only by virtue of the amazing performers and inspirational speakers, but most importantly, due to the number of young people inspired to make a difference in the world.

The very well-organized day provided a safe haven where children made new friends, and connected with like-minded youth who are willing and committed to get the job done. For me, We Day was much more than just one day of celebration and inspiration. It was a day of hope, and an opportunity to celebrate and harness the energy of a community of change-makers.

That is what We Day is all about.



Erika, Student, Brant-Argyle School, Interlake School Division

We Day: LIGHTS, CAMERA, CHANGE

Change is what took place at the MTS Centre that day. This was a day to remember, and a day to change the world. All of the presenters did what they were meant to do, they inspired us, they lifted us up, and they gave us ideas about how we can help everyone else.

Craig Kielburger was the one who started this movement. He didn't care if people said that he was too young, or if they said, "No, it's impossible." Craig kept helping people, and he got 11 of his friends to help him. Eventually, thousands of youth from around the world joined Craig and his brother Marc to make a difference. Now it's up to us to make a difference in the world.

My absolute favourite part of We Day was when Craig and Marc said, "Never is a liar." It showed me that people can say never, but that doesn't mean you have to listen. It doesn't mean it's true.

Some people may have gone to We Day to hear the singers and the bands, or to skip school, but I know that Brant-Argyle School came to make a difference.

Melody Graham, Teacher, West Kildonan Collegiate, Seven Oaks School Division

Never. Can't. Impossible. Uttered even in passing, these simple words have the power to dishearten a human spirit. Can you imagine a planet over which these words dominate? Now imagine 16,000 young people crammed into one space creating an atmosphere pulsating with vitality and hope, with hearts the only thing fuller than the building. This is what nearly burst the MTS Centre at the seams during Winnipeg's We Day.

When leading entertainers like Shawn Desman, Hedley, and Sierra Noble team up with Much Music and world-renowned activists and speakers such as Al Gore, Rick Hansen and Mia Farrow, you know there's something exceptional brewing. But hold on a moment. Shouldn't someone be sensible enough to pull the feet of these kids back onto the ground? Consider this story from Winnipeg's We Day.

At five years old, after seeing a man eating out of a Winnipeg dumpster, Hannah Taylor promised herself she would help, someday, somehow. Three years later at age eight, she established the The Ladybug Foundation Inc. to assist the needs of the homeless.

Thanks to We Day, the next generation are seeing beyond what our eyes can see, and hearing beyond what our ears can hear.

Tanis Barrett, Teacher, Minnedosa Collegiate, Rolling River School Division

How do I begin to describe the experience of We Day? It seems like I was asked a million times, "What was my favourite part?" My first response in the days immediately following the event was a personal response identifying the speakers who touched my heart. Now that I've had more time to reflect (and rest!), I would respond differently.

Now my favourite part of We Day is the impact it has had on my students. Many of them have been involved with our student social justice group (CHANGE – Citizen's Helping All Nations Grow Equally) during their time at Minnedosa Collegiate. The CHANGE members saw themselves reflected in the actions of those on stage, and seemed to be thinking: "Yes! I am making a difference in my world. I can do more!" Just as exciting to me are the responses of the students who hadn't been involved with CHANGE projects before. Seeing some of those students take the Vow of Silence, and participating in other events keeps the excitement alive.

Instead of seeing their efforts as a drop in the bucket, I think my kids have been able to see that theirs is just one bucket in a growing collection created by young people around our world.

Heidi Reimer, Teacher, Garden City Collegiate, Seven Oaks School Division

Freshly charged up on positive energy after November's We Day, my students' excitement about their upcoming trip to Kenya, Africa, exploded. Weekly meetings gave the students a chance to plan their travels and fundraising activities, which helped defray the costs of the trip. At each fundraising event, the students brought awareness to sustainable development. Moreover, the students learned that change doesn't happen by itself; raising funds and awareness requires a lot of hard work. They also learned about cooperation, and how, together, they can accomplish much more than alone. This is the spirit of Me to We, and it's definitely catching.

Then, during the 2012 spring break, a group of 14 students and two teacher supervisors from Garden City Collegiate embarked on a volunteer experience of a lifetime, to the Massai Mara community. While in Kenya, the students spent much of their time interacting with the locals, and participating in established Free the Children development projects, for example, helping to build a school and tree-planting.

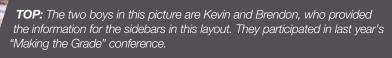
Keziah (Grade 8), Student, Linden Christian School

My experiences at We Day were absolutely life changing. Hearing, and not hearing (more about that later) what these people had to say about making a difference really makes me want to be part of the movement too!

When I got there, all I could do was look around in amazement! There were people from the floor to the roof, 16,000 Manitobans, all there to change the lives of people all around the world.

My favourite part was when Michel, a former child soldier, came up and, without words, told his story, and encouraged us all to take a Vow of Silence in support of children who suffer. Even though there was no noise in the whole place, I found it to be the most powerful and emotional thing that I have ever seen.

We Day was crazy, fun, and incredibly life changing in many ways. I know it will change mine.



BOTTOM: A silk screening workshop that students can participate in during the afternoon creative sessions at the conferences. This particular shot was taken at the Winnipeg conference for this year's series called "Go Fair Trade".

Generating Momentum

for Young Global Citizens

By Rebecca Irving

or the past 10 years the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation (MCIC) has built the capacity of students to take action on global issues in their schools and communities through the Generating Momentum for Our World conference series. MCIC held its first Generating Momentum confer-

In 2005, MCIC switched its focus from high school to the middle years level, and has been delivering at least five conferences per school year in various regions throughout Manitoba since that time. Every year the conference theme changes. So far, students have learned about such topics as the Millennium Development Goals, water and sanitation, food security, gender and education, and fair trade.

ence on the topic of Children and War for

Manitoba high school students in 2002.

Although the age and thematic focus has changed throughout the years, the ultimate outcome of our Generating Momentum conferences has remained the same: equip students with the inspiration, skills, and motivation to take action on global issues in their schools and communities, and pass along this inspiration to others. The conferences themselves follow a particular model, which not only engages participants with a particular issue, but also gives them the skills and confidence they need in order to turn their motivation and ideas into action. The intention of Generating Momentum is not to be a one-day workshop, but is instead a catalyst for students to develop

their own action plans using their creative abilities to spread the message and create change.

At MCIC, our vision is to have Manitobans working together as global citizens, so our youth programming is built around raising awareness, enabling change, and encouraging action. It is our belief that if individuals understand how a change in their actions can have a positive impact on others around the world, they will take away the tools and resources from MCIC's conferences, and will work towards positive change in their schools and communities.

Over the years, these beliefs have transformed into realities, as students have engaged their peers with the various global issues after attending a MCIC conference, so our reach has extended far past the participants of our conferences. For example, the message from the 2010-11 Making the Grade: Boys and Girls in the Global Classroom conference series, which involved 374 students from 63 schools, eventually reached roughly 5,332 Manitoba students through the follow-up activities of participants. If we look at the three year period from 2008-11. MCIC was able to raise awareness of global development issues with a conservative estimate of 14,132 students across Manitoba.

We've seen a variety of action projects, big and small, from Douglas Elementary giving each student a stainless steel water bottle, to Inkster School organizing their first Sustainable Development conference. We always emphasize that students don't have to reinvent the wheel, and that

they should look to see if there are any other initiatives in their school that they can collaborate with. However, in some cases, students will have to "invent the wheel", and must start from scratch at their school.

This was the case when students from Neepawa Area Collegiate Institute attended our Making the Grade conference in Strathclair, Manitoba. We spoke with Katherine Kingdon, who accompanied her students to the conference, and she detailed the process, and some of the challenges, that her and her students faced when they returned to their school motivated and ready to take action, only then to realize they were the ones that had to initiate change.

Katherine began by making sure that the students who attended the conference were serious about going, and even more importantly, that they were ready to take action once back at the school. The students met and brainstormed some ideas beforehand, but came up with more general ideas and found it difficult to focus on one particular topic. During the Opening Plenary of the Making the Grade

Brendan, a Grade 8 student from Frontenac School in Winnipeg who attended the January 2011 Making the Grade conference in Winnipeg, had this to say about the impact of the conference, and the importance of spreading the word: "They should take action, because if you do it, and more people keep on doing it, it will spread more awareness."

conference, students rotated through five different stations that simulated barriers that children in the Global South face in attending school. By the end of the conference, her students knew what they wanted to focus on: water.

The Water and Sanitation station had girls carrying water before they could attend school. When they finished the task and arrived "at school", some girls discovered that their school had no washroom facilities for girls, and they were unable to attend. Katherine's students had no clue that girls in other parts of the world faced such challenges, and were instantly motivated to form a Global Action group at their school and raise awareness about this issue.

The students researched the issue and then presented the information to all Grade 7 and 8 students over six individual presentations. Once they completed the educational component, they started fundraising for the Ryan's Well Foundation, with which they were in contact throughout

Erickson Collegiate started their S.T.A.R (Students Taking Action for Rights) after attending a MCIC conference, and spread awareness in their community by writing a letter to their school board asking them to purchase fair trade sports balls instead of the conventional non-fair trade balls currently in use.

the process. The group made clay globes and sold them as key chains with the help of the school art teacher, and with financial support from their school. They also organized other fundraising activities, such as bake sales at the school. In total, they raised over \$700, all of which was given to Ryan's Well for their projects in the Global South. Even though it was a learning experience for everyone involved, they were hugely successful with this project, and the group is still going strong, and has even grown to include students at the senior levels in their school.

All of these actions combined have a huge impact on people in Manitoba, and around the world, so it is our hope that the students continue to generate momentum for our world.

Rebecca Irving is a Youth Engagement Coordinator at the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation (MCIC). Contributions to this article were also made by Katherine Kingdon, teacher at Neepawa Area Collegiate Institute; and Brendan, a Grade 8 student at Frontenac School.







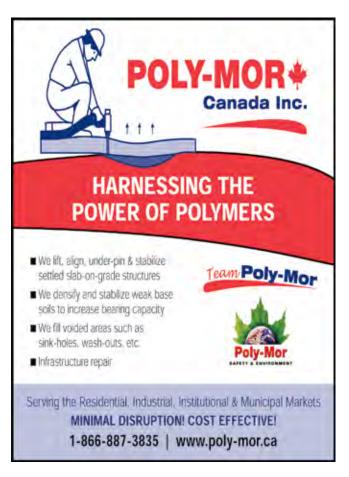
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