

Trillium Project on Youth Confidence in the Future and Learning



The Peterborough Social Planning Council has been chosen as one of 5 social planning councils to work with the Canadian Education Association on a 12-month community youth engagement/mobilization project. The initiative will be undertaken in 5 cities to:

- increase knowledge of young people's confidence in their learning and future
- nurture youth confidence, participation and democratic citizenship;
- support youth-school-community collaboration;
- advance strategies for policy/practice changes; and
- share 'next practice' models for use in Ontario and the rest of Canada.

Community Development Halton, Hamilton Social Planning and Research Council, Peterborough Social Planning Council, the Social Planning Council of Sudbury and the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto will be active partners in all phases of the project.

"These SPCs were approached because Canadian Education Association (CEA) wanted to ensure there was a mix of communities, in terms of income and diversity. (We) approached SPCs that had previously worked with schools and/or school boards and had good working relationships with other community agencies.", states Christa Freiler of the CEA.

CEA will work with local SPCs and school boards/high schools to develop a process to allow youth to learn the principles of civic engagement and social planning that are representative of the diversity of Ontario communities.

Secondary schools and their school boards in Burlington, Hamilton, Peterborough, Sudbury and Toronto will also play important roles in this initiative.



Projected Outcomes:

1. Increased knowledge about whether young people have confidence that their learning is preparing them for the future and a greater understanding of how young people in Ontario communities are responding to a changing world. Working with young people themselves and community and school leaders, the project will develop a survey on Youth Confidence in Learning and the Future. It will look at whether young people believe that they can have a positive impact on their communities/world and that community/school institutions are responsive and effective in performing their designated roles. The project will focus on learning both in and out of school (i.e. formal and informal learning), using/adapting UNESCO's four pillars of learning:

- a) Learning to know - learning to think and learning to learn
- b) Learning to do – acquiring occupational and 'people skills' that are important in the workforce
- c) Learning to live together – demonstrating democratic citizenship, community participation, solidarity with others (instead of 'us and them'), environmental stewardship, and valuing diversity
- d) Learning to be – nurturing human development and the whole person, including identity, creativity.



2. Enhanced capacity, collaboration and sense of collective efficacy (i.e. coming together to solve common problems) between school and community sectors. The project will create community processes in five communities which will include issue identification, conduct community focus groups and ensure the completion of on-line surveys, analyze findings, and develop proposals and action plans to address policy/practice areas where change is required or learnings are to be shared. Specifically, the process will provide insight into the issues youth feel are important to a high quality of life in their school community, their civic community and their provincial community



3. Improved capacity and knowledge to translate ideas and strategies into action, through the creation of local action plans, the establishment of processes/structures for moving forward, and the prior commitment ('buy-in') of key school and community people. To increase the likelihood of success, the action plans will identify strategic changes rather than coming up with a "shopping list" to improve community and school learning environments; the process will include participants from community and school members who are situated to bring about change.

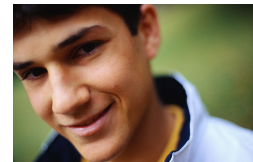


4. Increased understanding and commitment to democratic citizenship and community participation by young people, through expanded opportunities and the creation of structures (e.g. local youth panels) for them to be heard, to work collaboratively with adults in the community, and to be meaningfully engaged in a research/mobilization project in their communities. Through the establishment of a cross-community 10-12 member Youth Panel and local community soundings, young people will help shape the questions and process, analyze findings, and develop proposals for change.



5. Resource and knowledge sharing through:

- i) the development of 'next practice models' of collaborative community planning and mobilization between schools, communities and youth. (Next practices are emerging innovations that could open new ways of working.
- ii) a provincial (Ontario) report on young people's confidence in learning and the future and proposals for change; and
- iii) a knowledge mobilization and dissemination strategy that includes a dynamic interactive website.



What we need to do:

Community Capacity Building tools: this is a project that aims to build capacity in communities. Part of the project is to develop data collection tools (an online survey and focus group questions) that communities can use to assess the attitudes and perspectives of adolescent youth regarding their outlook on their futures, their learning (in and out of school) and their aspirations.

Provincial Youth Panel: the project will include the development of a Youth Panel with two representatives from each community. This panel would attend two meetings in Toronto: 1) to provide feedback on the research tools and to discuss the results and 2) next steps once the data has been collected and analyzed.

School Board Partnership & Involvement: Part of the SPCs' responsibilities is to facilitate involvement from the school board(s) support the initiatives in their schools, and to involve them in the project (e.g. to participate on the Provincial Steering Committee)

Focus Groups: The survey project will be supplemented by focus groups, the goal of which is to hear from youth who have dropped out of the high school system. Further, the overall intent of this project is to create interest in the planning process as well show youth the importance of civic involvement.

Timelines

The project commenced in May, 2010 and will be completed in 2011.

For more information about our InfoNotes contact Dawn Berry Merriam at 705-743-5915 or email dawnbm@pspc.on.ca.



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