



Dear Julie,

I am writing to let you know what a huge impact YPI has had on the culture of our school. Since we piloted YPI 11 years ago, I have watched the impact of this amazing project grow year by year. This year we had students lined up at 4:30 am on our charity sign up day! The magic piece to this success is we have our entire grade 10 population participate in this project at the same time which creates a huge buzz of enthusiasm. We give them a day off school to visit their charities. Our finals take place in the school theatre and the MCs are traditionally last year's winners. Everyone in the school knows when it is YPI time! After the first year of this project, our club KWAP (Kodiaks with a Purpose) formed after a group of students expressed a desire to continue their philanthropy in their grade 11 and 12 years. To this day, KWAP bursts at the seams with over 100 students. It is so big that we have to have a KWAP Executive who meets at lunch to plan our outreach trips with the larger group. You might remember the KWAP students you met when we flew to Toronto and presented at your YPI celebration there.

Since then the impact of YPI has grown even more. Now we have 3 full classes of Independent Directed Studies classes tied to Philanthropy. These classes run outside the timetable so they are in addition to their regular classes. Students take on projects for causes that are close to their hearts and must obtain a minimum of 120 hours of volunteer time. For example, we have one group who organized a Bachelor Auction which raises money for Cystic Fibrosis. A boy in our school has cystic fibrosis, his twin younger sisters have it, and his dad passed away two years ago. Last year, the boy took a turn for the worse and now he is faced with his own mortality. The group raised several thousand dollars and were able to give his family some money to go on a trip that was on his bucket list.

From helping animal rescue charities by hosting a dog show, to putting on a Welcome Tea for new immigrant and refugee families, there is no end to the philanthropic projects our students can create if given the opportunity. Their initial inspiration came from their YPI experience when they realized the power of their own voices.

Finally, one additional wonderful educational piece that I have added to YPI with the help of our teacher-librarian is an independent novel study. Before I even start YPI, our teacher-librarian pulls all the novels that pertain to social issues. She divides them into categories (e.g. homelessness, disabilities, mental health, substance abuse, etc.) and does engaging book talks for all of my classes. The teacher-librarian designed a learning log assignment for the students so they can track their responses and make deep and meaningful connections to their own lives. For example, one student chose a book about an athlete who was discouraged from competing due to a visual impairment. This student, unbeknownst to me, had suffered similar challenges when she was younger and through her learning log, was able to share this personal journey and reflect on her emotional growth. After the learning logs are completed, the students engage in circle discussions with guiding questions prepared by the teacher-librarian. Students are put in circles based on their choice of social issue and run the discussions themselves. Students observing the discussions are able to participate as well. The teacher-librarian and I then debrief the students and have them do a final reflection on the process and what they have learned. This then leads into YPI because many students will choose the same social issue topic for their charity.

Our curriculum in BC is changing – there will now be a focus on core competencies, social-emotional learning, and project-based learning. All of these aspects are met by the independent novel study and YPI project. I believe it could become one of the Capstone Projects for grade 10s.

Thank you for providing such a brilliant project that is at the forefront of education. I have been teaching for 30 years and I have never seen a project work so effectively across an entire grade that empowers youth to gain skills for their future and at the same time promotes empathy and caring. It is truly a recipe for success!

Sincerely,

Planning 10 teacher/Team Leader/KWAP Sponsor