



My name is Sheena Hirdaramani. I have been fortunate enough to be teaching the Civics curriculum incorporating YPI for over fifteen years now. During that time, I have seen the lasting impact that YPI has had on my students. YPI has been so integral to my Civics lessons and I honestly feel as though it is the most worthwhile part of students' learning in this grade 10 course.

YPI is introduced at the very beginning of the Civics course. I explain key terms to students and we discuss important issues in society related to this project. Once students have a good grasp of the purpose of this activity, students must then create graphic organisers in which they provide the essential information about their charity and they then have to analyze the charity website as if they were potential clients requiring the services. Once this task is complete, students, as a group, evaluate the social issue associated with their charity, answering a series of questions and doing library research. The next step is contacting their chosen charities and planning for their presentations. Finally, students complete their culminating course activity in which they must write a letter to the provincial government justifying why/why not YPI should be a mandatory part of the curriculum throughout Ontario.

Over the years, I have seen students have the most wonderful experiences with their chosen charities. They have grown to be more aware, compassionate individuals who have seen the importance of being informed and taking an active role in their communities. It is rare that I have read a letter to government in which students don't advocate for the YPI program. Regardless of difficulties they may encounter in working with other classmates or actually arranging visits to their charities, over 98% of students have always written about the need for change in our society where government intervention needs to be more pronounced and where awareness programs regarding social issues needs to be promoted more. My students have had very positive experiences in doing YPI and are definitely better individuals for having had the experience.

In closing, I need to mention an example of how influential YPI can be in the lives of students. Many years ago, I had a group of students win the \$5,000 for Sheena's Place, a charity that helps those dealing with eating disorders. My students were so impacted by their experience with this charity that they asked me, along with another teacher, whether we would be willing to be the teacher advisors for a fashion show promoting body positivity. From that, "Fashion for a Cause," was created in which students of all shapes and sizes walked the catwalk carrying signs with body positive messages. We collected can goods as admission to our assembly and donated the goods to the Daily Bread Food Bank. This fashion show still exists today in our school in a different format and with a different teacher, but I am so proud to say that it was my students that were so inspired to inspire others about social acceptance. I cannot sing the praises of YPI enough and I truly feel thankful as a teacher to have been working in a school that chose to do YPI from its onset.

Sincerely,

Ms. Sheena Hirdaramani
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