

C.H.A.N.G.E. the Way Conference

Global CONNECT class, Dundas Valley Secondary School

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Our Authentic Challenge:

The Global CONNECT class started with the question, “What could a group of students from Dundas Valley SS do to make a positive difference in the world?”

Major Goals:

The students’ idea was to run a conference that was fully student driven and focussed on Human Rights and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The goal of the Global CONNECT class was to educate and inspire students, to use their voices, passions and become active in order to change the world for the better.

Promising Practices:

The primary challenge was planning, organizing, and delivering a full day conference for more than 700 attendees and numerous digital participants. Using the Knowledge Building principles, the students identified the issues that they concluded were the most pressing. Again, using the KB principles, students collaborated to match their strengths and passions to the identified tasks. Using the diversity within the class and international communities, student organizers were able to examine and evaluate ideas through a variety of lenses. Together, they built capacity for further learning, and ensured the conference’s ultimate success.

Advances and Challenges:

Some of the challenges that the students faced were the logistics of holding such a large event. Managing the venue and a budget were new experiences for many of the students. Communicating with sponsors, speakers and attendees provided valuable, authentic learning in working with various personalities, and provided rich opportunities to build interpersonal skills as well as extended relationships with community partners. Moreover, the Global CONNECT students learned valuable lessons in the areas of managing issues around weather, bussing and traffic considerations for attendees, providing scheduled breaks for organizers during the event, ensuring all stations were consistently covered, and time management. Moreover, students recognized that they had to remain focussed and meet hard deadlines in the face of other demands on their time as they prepared for the conference.

Reflections and Next Steps:

The members of the Global CONNECT class agree that if carrying out a similar event, they would rework items such as timing of sessions to better mesh with the needs of bussing back to schools for attendees. Dividing tasks in to sub-committees and encouraging teams to problem-solve and take the lead in their own learning built confidence and capacity among students. The Global CONNECT team has had extremely positive feedback from attendees, speakers, and participants through personal interactions and emails discussing the energy and new commitment of others to the support and promotion of the Human Rights movement. Truly, the vision of the Global CONNECT class has been realized through their learning journey, the importance of the Knowledge Building principles to the process, and the great things that can be accomplished when youth from around the globe come together to share their learning.