OJEN ROEJ
ONTARIO JUSTICE EDUCATION NETWORK
RÉSEAU ONTARIEN D'ÉDUCATION JURIDIQUE

Sharing the Experience:
The May 2007 Justice Education Symposium

For attendees of the recent Justice Education Symposium and those who were unable to attend, the Ontario Justice Education Network (OJEN) has created a summary of the conference's highlights to keep everyone informed about issues, events and programs that were discussed and relate to justice education in high schools. This is an effort to spread the information and enthusiasm to others involved in justice education around Ontario. OJEN, as a collaborative provincial organization, plays a disseminating and networking role in supporting the expansion of justice education across the province. The OJEN website, www.ojen.ca, hosts template links and options for delivering new justice education initiatives. As a component of promoting and fostering justice education, OJEN is establishing a comprehensive resource of initiatives in Ontario.

Symposium Organizers

On May 24th and 25th 2007, OJEN and the Law in Action Within Schools program (LAWS) at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Law jointly hosted a Justice Education Symposium at the Faculty of Law. This symposium, entitled *Justice Education in Schools: Best Practices and Post-Secondary Partners* aimed to bring together those involved in high school – post-secondary partnerships to share information about new and ongoing developments in justice education delivery.

Ms. Sarah McCoubrey
Executive Director, OJEN

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LAWS
LAW IN ACTION WITHIN SCHOOLS

Ms. Alexis Archbold, Director,
LAWS program

Symposium Participants

On May 24th and 25th 2007, 57 attendees participated in the Justice Education Symposium. Among them were teachers representing 13 secondary schools, and professors, program administrators and students representing 11 post-secondary institutions including Conrad Grebel University College, Humber College, Loyalist College, McGill University, University of Ottawa, Queen's University, Ryerson University, Seneca College, University of Toronto, University of Western Ontario, and York University. Student and community groups in attendance included the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, Community Legal Education Ontario, Ottawa Public Legal Education Initiative, and Pro Bono Students Canada.

Introductory Remarks from key members of the Legal Profession

On one of his last days as Chief Justice of Ontario, the Honourable Roy McMurtry attended the Symposium and spoke about the benefits of justice education for at-risk youth, the justice system and society overall. More specifically, he welcomed the opportunity for teachers, legal professionals and post- secondary program administrators to share best practices in delivering justice education programs.

Dean Mayo Moran of the University of Toronto, Faculty of Law welcomed symposium attendees to the law school and spoke about the importance of reaching out to youth, highlighting initiatives developed by the law school.

Ms. Elizabeth Goldberg, CEO of the Law Foundation of Ontario shared with symposium attendees the important role of the Foundation in providing funding for legal education initiatives. She encouraged attendees who had innovative ideas for teaching justice education but needed financial support, to apply to the Law Foundation of Ontario.

Speakers

Presentations at the Justice Education Symposium enabled professionals delivering justice education to share resources and expertise, learn from one another, and discuss issues relevant to high school education today.

The Justice Education symposium included presentations on the following issues:

Teaching the Civics curriculum and character education

Allan Hux, Program Coordinator for Social & World Studies and Humanities, described Civics studies as an entry point for connecting students with the community. Tim Dingwall, a secondary school teacher at Harbord Collegiate Institute, also spoke about the importance of the Civics curriculum in promoting informed and purposeful citizenship. He shared with Symposium attendees a sample lesson of the justice enhanced civics program he delivers to students at his school.

Handling controversial questions and engaging students

Danielle McLaughlin, Director of Education and Administration at the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, explained how using the framework of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* helps encourage students to question the value, effectiveness and reasonableness behind laws and public policies. She emphasized the importance of promoting critical thinking and approaching issues with the view that there is no right answer. Anyta Kyriakou, a secondary school teacher at Mary Ward Catholic Secondary School, discussed her own teaching experiences with encouraging classroom dialogue and student engagement on controversial issues.

Reaching at-risk youth through the Student Success program

Sarah McCoubrey, Executive Director of the Ontario Justice Education Network, highlighted efforts by OJEN to reach out to immigrant, aboriginal, and at-risk youth through justice education. Greg Sitch, secondary school teacher at Oakwood Collegiate Institute shared his experiences as a teacher in the Student Success team at his school. He described improved results he witnessed in his students and encouraged others to consider the Student Success Initiative in their justice education programs.

Drawing from resources within the legal profession

Fiona MacCool, Coordinator at Community Legal Education Ontario, showed attendees a wide variety of legal online resources teachers could tap into on www.CLEOnet.ca. Mr. Chris Webb spoke about the interesting questions he received while visiting students as Crown counsel and his personal motivations for getting involved. Students from Central Technical School shared their experiences with working at a law firm as part of a summer placement program run by LAWS.

Developing law school initiatives that reach out to secondary schools

The Justice Education Symposium was an opportunity to hear from Alexis Archbold, Director of the LAWS program, Charmaine Lyn, Assistant Dean at McGill University, Faculty of Law, Gina Alexandris, Assistant Dean at Osgoode Hall Law School and Mr. Justin Chan, Community Outreach Coordinator at the Ottawa Public Legal Education Initiative and law student at University of Ottawa. The section below describes each initiative in place at the law schools. Colleges at the Symposium also expressed their keen interest to collaborate with high schools to develop programs that link their respective institutions in ways that enhance justice education and improve academic results.

Law School Initiatives Reaching Out to High Schools

Unique programs at law schools have connected law students with high school students. Some of these programs incorporate tutoring and mentorship opportunities and they all share the same goal of sparking students' interest in the law and its impact on social issues.

McGill High School Outreach Program (website being developed)
The Faculty of Law at McGill University has developed a three week program where law students visit partnering area high schools for the first two weeks to share their experiences and present on legal issues and on the third week, invite high school students to visit the law school.

Osgoode Hall Law School's Teen Osgoode Program for Secondary Schools (website being developed)
The TOPSS program incorporates student mentorship, law presentation delivery, mock trials, competitions for high school students to creatively express ideas about the law, and open house visits as part of its outreach initiative.

University of Ottawa's Public Legal Education Initiative
<<http://publiclegaleducation.org>>
This new student group at the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Law delivers law-related classroom presentations to high school students. They are looking forward to partnering with more schools in the Ottawa area. A number of presentations were developed over the past year including presentations on Terrorism and Anti-terror Legislation, Drugs and Society, Rights to Private Healthcare, and Online Privacy.

University of Toronto's Law in Action Within Schools
<<http://www.lawinaction.ca>>
The LAWS program run by the University of Toronto, Faculty of Law partners with two area high schools to deliver two separate unique pilot programs. At Central Technical School, a three year law and justice themed high school curriculum has been implemented. At Harbord Collegiate Institute, a special law and justice themed grade 10 Civics/Careers course is in place.

Best Practices, Challenges and Lessons Learned

Much was learned and shared during the two days of the Justice Education Symposium. Educators and justice education partners exchanged ideas and methods that are working. It also helped attendees to clarify where future improvements are needed.

Summary of Best Practices:

- *Getting through to students requires engaging them and asking them to think critically about challenging social and justice issues.* The Canadian Civil Liberties Association, McGill High School Outreach Program, Ottawa Public Legal Education Initiative, and Teen Osgoode Program for Secondary Schools each address contemporary legal issues in their presentations to students. Secondary school teachers like Anyta Kyriakou, who spoke on the subject, have expressed the importance of engaging students in interesting and controversial dialogue.

- *Strengthening the network between educators and the justice community enhances students' learning experience.* Many at the Justice Education Symposium shared this view. Fiona MacCool who informed attendees of various legal online resources teachers could utilize, and Crown Counsel Chris Webb's discussion about his rewarding experiences with classroom visits expressed the importance behind building partnerships between schools, the community and the legal profession. Ultimately, students from Central Technical School, beneficiaries of the LAWS program, were most convincing in demonstrating the innovative learning experiences that can be achieved through partnerships.

- *Law students are an important resource in helping deliver justice education.* Among the numerous programs directed at reaching out to high school students, most involve the direct efforts of law students. These students work on a volunteer basis, they relate to youth readily and can act as mentors to inspire and motivate. These qualities suggest that law schools and their students are well positioned to develop programs that assist high school students, and that justice education is strengthened when they coordinate efforts, share their experiences and strive to expand their reach.

Summary of Challenges:

- *Shared awareness and knowledge of each other's programming is still in its beginning phase.* As this was the first Justice Education Symposium it is not a surprise that many attendees had only just learned of the justice education programs going on in other organizations and institutions. The Justice

Education Symposium will serve as a platform to bring justice education partners together and establish an ongoing network of professionals who may assist one another in program delivery.

- *Sustainability and law student turnover is an issue among post-secondary initiatives.* Views were expressed that law students' course schedules were demanding and their failure to see results or immediate impacts can lead to high turnover. Part of the solution to this challenge is to instill a sense of continuity within law student volunteers in the program and strengthen relations with high school students such that each year is not seen as discrete and disconnected from the year before.

- *There is a high demand for justice education and a need to assist teachers in meeting that demand.* At the Symposium, justice education was linked to Civics, Careers, and Values education curricula. Justice education was also highlighted as a subject that can more easily engage students and spark their interest. Law 11 and 12 teachers often approach the subject as a learner. They face the challenge of sorting through lots of general resources and having to be up to date. This challenge further supports the importance of developing a network between educators and the justice community. An established network between these partners can produce effective results from programs such as credit recovery or the Student Success initiative, avenues to deliver justice education to non-academic students.

Summary of Lessons Learned:

- *Teachers are encouraged to develop law and justice programming for students.* There were many unique models presented at the Justice Education Symposium and ideas for developing unique programs in the future. Ms. Elizabeth Goldberg, CEO of the Law Foundation of Ontario (LFO), informed attendees that the LFO would accept applications for funding for legal education programming.

- *Civics as a course is an extremely important part of the high school curricula.* It is an entry point for connecting students with the community. It raises important moral, ethical, religious issues for students to consider and is a platform for values and character education.

- *Legal professionals themselves benefit from participating in justice education.* Chief Justice Roy McMurtry pointed out "our job as judges, and lawyers and court staff, is dependant on a well-informed public who trust that the system will protect their rights." On a more personal level, Crown counsel, Chris Webb noted that his participation in justice education events provided him "balance

and perspective" enabling him as Crown to make what he believed to be more positive decisions.

Moving Ahead…

The Justice Education Symposium inspired a number of exciting developments in justice education programming. Members of the law faculties in attendance have already decided to form a network to better share information and results related to their high school outreach programs. Loyalist College has expressed interest in building a courthouse on – campus to better serve students taking part in their Justice Studies curricula. Teachers from Sudbury who attended the Symposium also spoke with OJEN about developing a partnership between the OJEN committee in Sudbury, local-area high schools and Laurentian University. Seneca College has scheduled their own justice education conference on October 16 2007 to discuss topics related to high school justice education, including how to involve Seneca students in their Justice Studies program with high school outreach. The conference will also follow up on issues discussed at the Symposium earlier this May. A second Justice Education Symposium hosted by OJEN and LAWS is anticipated for May 2008.

A Spotlight on Resources and Links

The Justice Education Symposium exposed attendees to a wealth of information about community resources that facilitate justice education teaching in the classroom. Through discussion and presentations, the Symposium successfully brought together a network of active justice education partners who look forward to collaborating in the future. The following is a preliminary list of related resources highlighted at the Symposium. OJEN will continue to add to this list.

Ontario Justice Education Network <<www.ojen.ca>>
OJEN collaborates with community, student, education and legal organizations province - wide to disseminate justice education and resources to high school classrooms. OJEN performs a networking role bringing justice education professionals together to support expansion of justice education across the province. The OJEN website, www.ojen.ca, hosts legal education resources, template links and options for delivering new justice education initiatives.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association <<http://www.ccla.org/schools/>>
The CCLA delivers classroom presentations to high school students using the framework of the Canadian Charter to get students thinking about balancing rights and thinking critically about the law.

Community Legal Education Ontario's resources website<<http://www.cleonet.ca/>>

CLEONet provides legal resources to community workers and advocates as well as low income and disadvantaged communities. CLEONet offers information on every-day legal issues which individuals might encounter.

Law in Action Within Schools <<http://www.lawinaction.ca>>
The LAWS program at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Law delivers two separate unique pilot programs. A three year law and justice themed high school curriculum has been implemented at Central Technical School. At Harbord Collegiate Institute, grade 10 students attend a Civics/Careers course that is specially structured around law and justice issues.

Law Foundation of Ontario <<http://www.lawfoundationon.org>>
The Law Foundation achieves its mandate by awarding grants to organizations for law-related projects and initiatives. Among other priorities, it funds legal education, legal research and legal aid programs.

McGill High School Outreach Program (website being developed)
The Faculty of Law at McGill University developed a three week program with two area high schools enabling law students to visit partnering schools to share their experiences and present on legal issues. On the third week, high school students visit the law school.

Ottawa Public Legal Education Initiative <<http://publiclegaleducation.org>>
This new student group at the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Law delivers law-related classroom presentations to high school students. They are looking forward to building a more extensive network of participating schools in the Ottawa area.

Pro Bono Students Canada <<http://www.probonostudents.ca/>>
This program matches law student volunteers with community agencies with a need for legal services but with insufficient resources to compensate legal counsel. Law student volunteers usually work for public interest and non-profit organizations, tribunals, legal clinics and lawyers working pro bono on a particular case. Students take part in many types of law projects, public legal education being one of them.

Public Interest Day
<<http://www.law.utoronto.ca/students_content.asp?itemPath=2/10/7/0/0&contentId=1206>>
The Public Interest Day organized by University of Toronto, Faculty of Law and Osgoode Hall Law School provides law students with an opportunity to survey the numerous public interest careers available to them in the near future. This is also an opportunity for high school students to get an idea of what future careers they may be interested in. Students can speak one-on-one with various NGO representatives at the event.

Student Success Teams <<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/6ways/teams.html>>
Every high school has a Student Success Team comprising a principal, guidance counselor and student success teacher(s). Over the past two years, 1100 teachers have been hired as part of the Student Success initiative. These teams strive to identify and support struggling students, provide more options for learning, monitor student progress and help ensure students earn the necessary credits to graduate.

Teen Osgoode Program for Secondary Schools (website being developed)
TOPSS offers high school students a number of ways to interact with the law school and its students. It links high school students with law student mentors, delivers law presentations to high schools and organizes mock trials. Osgoode also organizes open house visits and annual competitions for high school students to creatively express ideas about the law.