

Banff Elementary School Grade Eight Community Initiative Projects

Banff Elementary School grade eight students have been busy this spring working to find creative solutions to real-world problems through their Community Initiative Projects. Inspired by the work of Dr. Robert Kelly, associate professor from the University of Calgary and author of *Educating for Creativity*, students launched six projects to address issues related to the United Nations Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals.

The purpose of the “Muffin Monday” group was to address “Zero Hunger.” They provided breakfast to ninety grade seven and eight students every Monday for the month of May. Tim Hortons, JK Bakery, IGA and Wildflour generously donated muffins while Nesters kindly provided oranges and Jolene’s Tea House gave over 500 tea bags. This group wanted to draw attention to the issue that some students cannot afford breakfast. There was a very positive response from students and staff, who were not only fed, but also had a chance to connect with each other before school promoting mental health.

The Period Poverty group focused on “Reduced Inequalities” by providing sanitary products for students who are unable to purchase an adequate amount each month. They led a drive wherein they raised 506 pads and tampons. Students in need will be able to easily access these products.

The Meatless Monday group brought awareness to “Responsible Production and Consumption” by addressing animal cruelty in some agribusinesses. They gave an insightful and well researched presentation to grade seven and eight students, challenging them to cook one vegetarian meal per week. Students who participated in this activity had their names put in a draw to win a \$100 gift card to our local vegetarian restaurant, Nourish Bistro.

The Greenhouse Group also tackled “Responsible Consumption and Production” by starting a greenhouse plot with the Banff Greenhouse Gardening Society. They planted vegetables and herbs to donate back to the BES foods program. The purpose of their project was to draw awareness of how organic, locally grown produce is good for people and the environment. The students were so appreciative towards the Town of Banff and the BGGGS who donated the plot.

The purpose of the PRISM club is to address “Gender Equality.” PRISM stands for Pride, Representation, Inclusivity, Support and Mentoring. The students have created a safe environment for LGBTQ+ students and allies to interact, support each other, and develop school initiatives including ordering library books with LGBTQ+ representation. The PRISM club meets weekly at the newly renovated room in the grade seven and eight wing called the CUBS Cave. So far, the group meets weekly and has recruited fifteen participants.

As part of the BES Community Initiative Projects, a group of grade 8s noticed that some students did not have anyone to hang out with at lunch. So they created a Spirit Club wherein students could gather to talk and play games. The Spirit Club also heard of buddy benches used at other schools to promote friendships and mental health. The idea of the buddy bench is that students can use the bench to talk and connect with each other. Widhal Construction did a beautiful job of designing, building and making a contribution to the bench. Other generous donors included the BES Parent Council, VIP Golf and Canadian Rockies Public Schools District office. So far, the Buddy Bench has been a huge success with students of all ages.

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Overall, the BES Grade 8 Community Initiative Projects have been a great success. Students have learned critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, finding consensus, building their creative capacity and communication skills. By exploring their passions, they have built positive relationships with the community and each other to make a positive difference. Each group hopes to leave a legacy for students in the future to carry on their projects. Student would like to extend a huge thank you to all of our sponsors.







