



SEVEN OAKS  
SCHOOL DIVISION  
*community begins here*

# Community

B E G I N S H E R E

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## Citizenship: A Lesson in Community Responsibility

When it comes to educating, sometimes it's easier to show than to try to explain a concept, and that's the case with citizenship. From school to school and teacher to teacher, there are different variations on the meaning of the term.

"It's how I as a student, or we as educators, develop a sense of community," says Bonnie Jarco, principal of H.C. Avery School. It's asking, "How do we make the community better for those who come after?"

"It's the notion that you are not just taking, but also giving to your community," says Jan de Denus, principal at Victory School. "Our responsibility as teachers and educators is to help students understand where they fit into the larger scale – the world scale – more than just where they fit at the school."

Ultimately, citizenship boils down to a handful of key words: participation, responsibility, and community.

### Students Making a Difference

Sarah Blunderfield was a special needs student who attended Victory School. When Sarah passed away from complications of her condition, the school wanted to find a way to remember her.

Working together, students and staff built a garden on the school grounds, planting over 100 bulbs last fall. When the bulbs sprout this spring, the flowers will become a memory of Sarah that will be shared by the entire community.

Victory School is also home to the Peace Club, a group of grade five and six students who, moderated by a guidance counselor, discuss issues of peace. The Club does much more than just discuss peace, however. Club fundraising activities such as bake sales and origami sales have resulted in donations to Afghanistan and the Red Cross.

Other schools take different approaches to promoting citizenship. At H.C. Avery School, students raised money for the United Way by holding penny, nickel, and dime drives. Donating their own money left over from allowances and the change they received after spending their lunch money, students managed to raise \$1,831.

H.C. Avery also has a C.A.R.E. Club (Concerned Adolescents Respecting

the Environment) where students are involved in an ongoing community cleanup. In addition, the Club raises money to donate to a local cause. Thanks to their fundraising bake sales last year, students were able to buy Christmas presents for the Children's Hospital.



### Helping Hands From High Schools

In Division high schools, citizenship is often promoted through the courses themselves. For example, at Garden City Collegiate, students in the Family Studies program take part in the Manitoba Head Injury Program at Seven Oaks Hospital.

"Students in Family Studies spend a day visiting with patients who were injured by drunk drivers" says Diane Peters, a counsellor and Family Studies teacher.

"The presentation begins with scenes of fatal car accidents here in Manitoba. Drug use and its effects on driving are explored. Finally, the students listen to

volunteer patients tell their stories. It is a very powerful way to remind students about the value of being a good citizen throughout their life."

Another program at Garden City is the Y.I.P (Youth In Philanthropy) program. A youth committee meets regularly to study different charities, visit them, discuss them, and choose the one(s) to which they will donate \$5,000. Diane Peters calls it "a life changing process" in which "the students are empowered to make all the decisions."

Leadership and student voice are very important parts of citizenship learning at Maples Collegiate. Students develop their skills through such programs as the Teacher Advisory Program, with its compulsory volunteer component for all students, and the World of Business program where students organize a community carnival with all proceeds donated to charity.

One of the most recognized programs is the Maples Unity Group, whose members were recently awarded the YMCA Youth Peace Medal for 2003. The Unity Group – which is described as "students and staff dedicated to the elimination of racism" – meets regularly to plan activities that will help create a more peaceful world. These activities include such things as food drives, volunteering at Winnipeg Harvest, attending Human Rights Conferences, and an annual Unity March to the Manitoba Legislature.

## Citizenship and Special Education

At Garden City Collegiate, special needs students have a significant role in citizenship initiatives.

"We have special needs students washing toys at the Children's Hospital," says Janice Hill, Garden City Collegiate's special education teacher. "They also run the school's recycling program."

"We're working on special needs students being integrated more here at the school," says Hill, noting that integrating the students promotes understanding and tolerance among the greater student population.

"The regular population is doing well at befriending them and taking them under their wing. My kids enjoy going out on breaks into the halls, and finding friends outside of the class."

## Going Above and Beyond

Many schools reward students with extracurricular credits for involvement in citizenship programs. However, in many cases students initiate programs themselves.

To start clubs or fundraising for different causes, students usually talk to their classroom teachers or the principal, who works out any roadblocks such as getting buses if needed and setting times up times to meet.

"Sometimes they [students] don't realize what they can do until they start," points out Bonnie Jarco. "It's encouraging a level of learning and an informed perspective."

Jan de Denus adds, "parents are getting more and more used to their children reading an article or learning about an issue and saying let's do something to help."

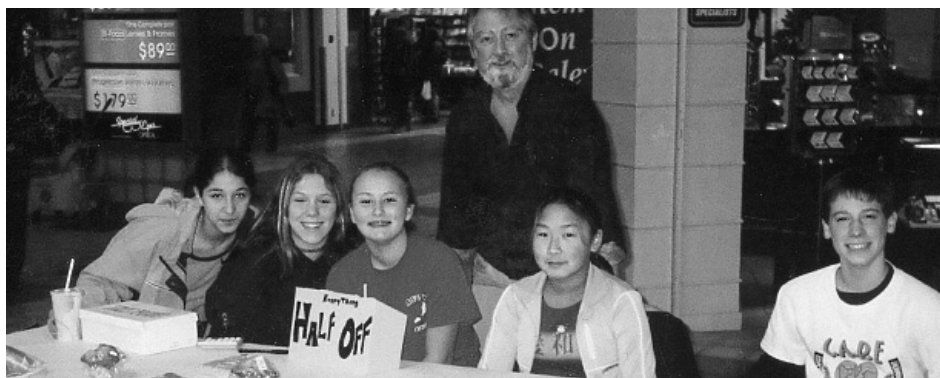
## Involving the Community

What students ultimately learn is that their community does not end at the edge of the school grounds.

Bonnie Jarco points out how some members of the community hold certain stereotypes towards adolescents. But when people see H.C. Avery students in the mall, for example helping out with Darcy's Ark – a local animal rescue

facility – they see students differently. "The community sees students are polite and get involved and have interests. The feedback from the community is good, and it's good for students to hear it as well."

"Our community is so supportive and almost amazed at student initiatives," Jan de Denus says. "Children are not only the future, they are the present."



## The Big Picture

Janice Hill refers to citizenship as being "embedded into everything we do. From Language Arts – with the books chosen, the discussion, the characters – to math and trying to teach students to understand the financial system. It's all working towards building happier, more confident students, and making them more willing to contribute to the larger community."

"The aim of schools is to create citizens – good citizens, with an appreciation for themselves, the community, and the world," says Dawn Wilson, an English/Social Studies/Geography teacher at Maples Collegiate.

"Citizenship teaches students to ask what their job in the community is and how they are responsible," adds Jan de Denus. "We hope the learning follows them as they grow."

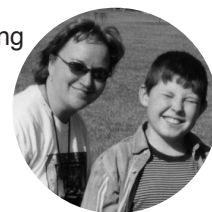
## A Student Perspective

So do what does citizenship mean to the students themselves? A grade eight student at H.C. Avery says her involvement in C.A.R.E. (Concerned Adolescents Respecting the Environment) Club has a positive influence on other students within the school.

"The grade sixes look up to the grade eights. They see them doing good and so they do good too."

She's even considering the possibility of starting up a C.A.R.E. club when she's in high school, or following the example of a current high school student, dropping by the elementary school after hours to continue her involvement in the club.

She wants to give something back to the community – and that's a lesson in citizenship she'll share with others for years to come.



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