
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Feb. 28, 2014

Office of the Premier
Ministry of Education

Students empowered to change culture of bullying

SURREY – Premier Christy Clark, Education Minister Peter Fassbender and 600 students from Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley have teamed up today on a common goal: erasing all forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, in B.C.

“We need to work together to come up with clear strategies to stop bullying and intimidation, whether it’s happening at school, at the mall, or online,” said Premier Clark. “The best way to ensure our efforts remain effective and relevant is to make sure youth are in the provincial discussion. That’s why we’re supporting this student-led forum – to make sure their voices are heard.”

Today, B.C.’s ERASE (Expect Respect and A Safe Education) Bullying Strategy takes a new step forward, with a student-led forum at Panorama Ridge Secondary School. Students are starting the work of developing real solutions to change the culture of all forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying.

At the forum, the Premier announced the 19 students who have been selected from across B.C. to form the new ERASE Student Advisory. The Premier has tasked the advisory with some specific goals. Their first task is to develop social media guidelines for schools, to provide direction to students, parents and educators on how to use social media ethically and responsibly both inside and outside the classroom.

"We are already taking great strides forward in B.C. when it comes to our bullying prevention initiatives and providing online resources to help youth," said Fassbender. "But even with these successes, there is more work to be done. Lasting success requires a culture change that must be driven by students. That’s why we are empowering students to come up with their own ideas, so they can lead the way in promoting positive behaviours with their peers."

Joshua Nicholas, a Grade 10 student from Maple Ridge, facilitated the ERASE Student Forum, along with a six-student panel. School leadership teams made presentations on innovative and effective projects they are undertaking in their schools to address bullying and foster a positive school climate and culture. The itinerary included a student activity facilitated by Travis Price, the founder of Pink Shirt Day.

Students participated in an “interactive tree” activity to have their voices heard on bullying prevention. The students were invited to write a message on a note to add to the tree. Their ideas will be captured and passed along to the ERASE Student Advisory.

A live Twitter feed ran during the forum, with the hashtag #ERASEforum. Students interested in participating via Twitter went online and joined the Twitter conversation. For those interested in joining the Twitter conversation following the forum, go to: @ERASEbullying.

“I know from talking to parents that students who feel safe and connected to their schools are far less likely to be involved in inappropriate activities,” said Jane Thornthwaite, parliamentary secretary for student support and parent engagement. “The benefits of having the ERASE Forum and involving students in our bullying prevention strategy will extend far beyond today.”

B.C. is a national leader in bullying prevention and is the first province in Canada to develop a comprehensive 10-point strategy. Launched in June 2012, B.C.’s ERASE Bullying Strategy has caught the attention of several provinces. Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Nova Scotia have contacted B.C.’s Ministry of Education to find out how they can implement similar strategies in their own provinces.

For a report on B.C.’s ERASE Bullying Strategy and what has been accomplished since its launch, go to: http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/downloads/ERASE_Report.pdf

For a factsheet on B.C.’s ERASE Bullying Strategy, go to:
http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/downloads/ERASE_FACTSHEET.pdf

A backgrounder follows.

BACKGROUND

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19 B.C. students selected for ERASE Student Advisory

The following students have been selected for the new ERASE Student Advisory:

- Céline Blais, Grade 10, Summerland: Céline belongs to the Conseil Scolaire Francophone Provincial Student Council and has worked with younger students on building self-esteem and bullying prevention.
- Devon Harris, Grade 8, West Vancouver: Devon wants to help educate other students on how to be a helpful bystander by standing up against bullying.
- Janaya Hirsch, Grade 9, Abbotsford: Janaya is involved in the “Here I Stand” project which focuses on preventing bullying and educating youth on the potential dangers of social media.
- Tyler Hewitt, Grade 12, Savona: Tyler believes children should be taught how to respect others, work together, put their differences aside and focus on each other’s positive traits.
- Nathan Blanchard, Grade 12, Chilliwack: Nathan is a member of the Diversity Alliance Club, which seeks equality for all, and he has also hosted discussions on bullying prevention and social media.
- Maya Treuheit, Grade 12, Sechelt: One of Maya’s favourite quotes is “A person is a person, no matter how small.” She is a district student trustee and is interested in working with her fellow students to help prevent bullying.
- Hannah McDonnell, Grade 10, Ladysmith: Hannah has witnessed bullying and she believes social media has made it more difficult for adults to prevent bullying.
- Eunice Rasmussen, Grade 12, Esquimalt: Eunice is the community director for Hollaback!, a global organization aiming to end street harassment, and she believes in working together to stop bullying.
- Chelsea Barnicott, Grade 11, Haida Gwaii: Chelsea is a student council member and she believes vigilance is required when using social media and that people have a responsibility in setting good examples for younger children and the community.

- James Adams, Grade 11, Merritt: James' spirituality and culture is very important to him. He is connected to many elders in his community and believes school can be made a better place by understanding one another's stories.
- Raine Carnegie, Grade 10, Revelstoke: Raine has worked with both Free the Children and Stoked Youth Network, and has volunteered in Thailand. He has strong technical skills and has built his own computers.
- Emily Friesen, Grade 10, Kelowna: Emily believes the best way to change the culture of bullying is to help all students understand that they are not alone. She has developed a social media platform to share compliments and distribute positive messages.
- Tonya Chantyman, Grade 11/12, Quesnel: Tonya is described by educators as a confident, articulate young woman with great leadership potential.
- Donovan Shaw, Grade 11, Williams Lake: Donovan is a member of Stand up!, which is dedicated to bullying prevention and promoting positive behaviours.
- Brooke Janzer, Grade 8, Kimberly: Brooke volunteers with Free the Children. She has extensive knowledge of social media and technology.
- Brooke Robertson, Grade 10, Kaslo: Brooke enjoys thinking about innovative ways to address bullying issues in schools. She would like to work with the Village Council to campaign for bullying prevention bylaws.
- Duva Karunakaran, Grade 11, Vancouver: Duva is the Assistant Coach for Special Olympics soccer, and he works to raise awareness and acceptance of students with physical and intellectual disabilities. He is also President of Hamber's Tech Club.
- John Wu, Grade 12, Surrey: John is student body president. He created a video for Bullying Awareness Day and has worked to raise awareness and prevent bullying.
- Holly Gill, Grade 11, Richmond: Holly volunteers at a drug and alcohol counselling office with the South Asian Family Association. She is on the student council, works on the school newspaper and with the RCMP National Youth Advisory Committee.

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