

# **Application for the Premier's Award for School Board Innovation & Excellence**

## **Regina Public School Division**

Chair: Dr. John Conway  
Director: Loretta Elford

### **Program Name: ACT 2000 A Student Leadership Development Program**

#### **Goals:**

- To facilitate the implementation of the Board of Education Mission Statement and The Shared Values by focusing on student leadership development.
- To empower students to deal with personal incidents of discrimination and to understand and respect cultural diversity.
- To facilitate staff leadership in addressing issues of racism and cross-cultural education.
- To share information and curricula to assist schools in the development of school climates which reflect cross-cultural understanding and equity.



**Regina Public Schools**  
THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE REGINA SCHOOL DIVISION NO. 7 OF SASKATCHEWAN

# ACT 2000

## Anti-racism and Cross-cultural Training for 2000 and Beyond



### Board Involvement

*ACT 2000* is a youth leadership development program that prepares students to assume leadership in addressing issues related to racism and cross-cultural education. The program carries out the mandate of Human Rights Equity and the Shared Values, two policy areas initiated by the Regina Board of Education.

In 1991, the Board of Education authorized a policy development process that involved consultation with many organizations and individual stakeholders in the community. The result was a Human Rights Equity Policy that would direct actions within the system, and the development of future Board policies in the areas of diversity, equity and race relations. One outcome of the policy was the institution of a Shared Values Board Advisory Committee chaired by a Trustee and made up of religious and cultural leaders representing the Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Aboriginal and Black communities in the City of Regina. The Shared Values of *'I Belong, I Respect, I am Responsible, I Want to Know'* form the foundation of the Board's philosophy around diversity and the teaching of values within the Public School System in Regina. Two board members continue to sit on the Shared Values Advisory Committee, along with community representatives who advise the Board of Education on cross-cultural initiatives.

In 1995, the Shared Values Advisory Committee and the full Board supported the initiation of an anti-racism and cross-cultural leadership development program for Regina Public Schools students. As the program developed, the name "*ACT 2000*" was born. The program brings the Board's Shared Values to life in Regina Public Schools, and carries out the mandate of the Human Rights Equity Policy which directs the school system to address the needs of all students in a pluralistic society. *ACT 2000* was funded in the beginning through a partnership with Heritage Canada. Since its inception, the Board of Education has continually approved funding for the project, received annual reports, supported the training by their presence, and funded an evaluation of the project.

### Description of the Program

*ACT 2000* increases the number of teachers and student leaders throughout the school system who are able to address issues related to anti-racism and cross-cultural education. Teachers attend a two-day orientation workshop to plan and carry out the student retreat. The student training involves an intense, three-day campus retreat that builds trust and communication among the participants. A team of students from each school, representing many cultures and races and a balance of genders, are selected for their leadership potential. Students from Grade 7 to Grade 11 are selected for the leadership development.

Students are placed in small cross-age family units who work together to learn more about racism and discrimination, and to develop their own vision of a racism-free world. They do this with the assistance of community speakers, videos, and group discussions. On the final day, students work in school groups to complete an *ACT 2000* Action Plan for their school. With the personal and social skills students have gained over the three days, they are in a position to work with the teacher leaders from their schools to make a difference in their schools and in their communities.

Student leadership activities in the schools have included raising awareness with special events, presentations and assemblies, as well as Arts presentations for students and for community members. Many projects integrate the *ACT 2000* plans with other curriculum activities. A detailed description of the three days of training are available on the *ACT 2000* web site: <http://rbe.sk.ca/act2000>.

The program is unique both in length and depth of training offered to students in the Common Essential Learning area of *Personal and Social Values and Skills*.

### **Benefits/Costs**

Each year the participants in the *ACT 2000* program provide the Board with their reactions to the program.

- **Students** tell us that they feel empowered to deal with personal incidents of discrimination and to be supportive to peers experiencing similar situations.
- **Teachers** tell us that they feel more equipped to deal with cross-cultural education.
- **Schools** tell us that they value the sharing of information with other schools, and the assistance they get in the development of school climates which reflect cross-cultural understanding and equity.
- **Community** speakers tell us that they feel valued and involved when they can tell their stories and use their expertise to help make students aware of what it is like to experience discrimination.
- **Five other school divisions** have benefited from the program by sending a teacher/student team to participate in the training sessions.
- **The Secondary Teacher Education Program** at the University of Regina used the expertise of *ACT 2000* teacher leaders to develop a plan for a similar program for secondary teachers. The University program is to graduate teachers who can be leaders within their own schools in the areas of equity and cross-cultural understanding.

Each year, the Board of Education approves funding for the program and also applies for grants to enable new schools to train leadership teams. Contributors in the past have been

Heritage Canada and the Indian/Métis Education Development Fund. A program that will directly affect attitudes and provide opportunities to learn leadership skills, requires intensive experiential learning provided in a safe and comfortable setting. The learning must be supported by confident, knowledgeable teachers. The cost of an off-campus educational experience such as *ACT 2000* is far outweighed by the very evident change in student attitudes and teacher confidence that occurs during the three days.

Administrative candidates in 2000 were asked what they thought was the most important innovation that the School Division has made in the last five years. Candidates said that Shared Values and the activities associated with them, such as *ACT 2000*, are most important because they have the capability of changing school attitudes toward equity and contributing to the development of school climates in which all students can experience a sense of belonging.

Feeling that they belong and will be treated with respect contributes directly to a student's ability to learn. The greatest benefit of this program is seeing the powerful impact that articulate students can have on their peers and the adults in their lives.

## **Evaluation**

Since 1995, over 300 middle years and high school students have received this intensive training and have become *ACT 2000* leaders. Forty-nine of the 59 schools in the Regina Public School Division have *ACT 2000* teacher/student leaders. By the year 2001-2002 the goal is that all schools will have trained leaders who will participate in this program. A formal evaluation of the client groups was completed in 1999.

Student responses to a survey indicate that among other things, *ACT 2000* training provided them with the tools and confidence to:

Accept others who are different from me	98.0%
Help to stop racism in my school	93.5%
Work with others to solve a problem	86.0%

Students also demonstrated that they know the meaning of words such as:

Racism	100%
Discrimination	99.5%
Identity	98.0%
Stereotyping	99.5%

Teacher evaluations showed that the training was helpful in promoting team-building, leadership skills, awareness of individual differences and the ability to address tough issues with everyone's input. Teachers themselves thought the methods used in the orientation were effective in:

Preparing them for their role as a teacher leader	100%
Developing confidence in their facilitation skills	88.0%
Selecting and developing student leaders	97.0%

If funding is available, future plans include completing team development in all schools and developing Phase Two of the program in order to deepen the understanding and skills of current student and teacher leaders. We remain committed to sharing this program with interested school divisions.

*ACT 2000* is a project that has the potential to change the heart of our city and community. The impact of this initiative will be felt for years to come as these students take their place as contributing members of the community.

**"I believe in the vibration of hearts. The heart is the seat of love or hatred."**

Sister Therese  
Sri Lanka