

FEELINGS Juice: Drama and Song

Youth learn best from other youth.

We confirmed this when local students developed a drama presentation which they performed in Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo. Goals of this project included helping other students develop needed skills to strengthen creative problem solving abilities, manage conflict effectively, promote healthy solutions, and the drama production gave the performers the opportunity to deliver a strong positive message to other students their own age. Our aim was to reduce the levels of bullying and harassment in our schools and make schools a safe place for every student. In addition, youth participants in the *STEAM Dream Team* were empowered in various areas of competencies including; increased skills in leadership and peer-mentoring; public speaking skills, program development and collaboration.

In recent months, nine grade seven and eight student graduates from the S.T.E.A.M. program at St. Anne's School (Cambridge) were busy planning and rehearsing for performances. The creative drama "Feelings Juice: Drama and Song" is based on the foundations of the S.T.E.A.M. (Supporting Temper, Emotions, and Anger Management) program. Through the use of music, students connected with their peers and the members of our community. A student guitar club was formed and they wrote the *STEAM Theme* song. Students were coached in drama skills workshops and they developed a storyline about a school basketball game. A total of eight performances were hosted this spring to over 1,700 student and teacher audience members.

One student, Kelsey Tavares, was the successful applicant for two grant proposals which funded the project and supported youth to be leaders and mentors to their peers. After being involved in the *STEAM Dream Team* production, the students stated that involvement in this project has helped them in various areas, such as: cooperating with others, solving disagreements, understanding other feelings, being more assertive, speaking in front of an audience, increased their self esteem, speaking up in what they believed in, listening to others, solving problems, making friends, increased their self confidence, sharing of ideas, trying new things, and developing leadership. Students described overcoming their shyness and fear of performing in front of an audience of hundreds. They also stated that involvement in this project "changed their lives".

A DVD was created, with student support, during the process of developing the song and play. This DVD is used as a form of education for schools that may not have had the opportunity to view the live presentation.

Through mentorship roles, key adults in the field of child and youth mental health were able to support the students in their leadership role. Adult support was built on a strong infrastructure in the context of a school-based program including

mentoring and support from teachers, the principal, family and school board, social work community agency, and university student intern project facilitation. The *STEAM Dream Team* enabled the students to be involved in a proactive approach to creating a healthy community without bullying or harassment.

S.T.E.A.M. Program Description

S.T.E.A.M. is a school-based prevention initiative developed by KW Counselling (1999) in consultation with the Waterloo Region Separate School Board aimed at enhancing children's socio-emotional competence and the prevention of the emergence of behavioral problems. Overall, the S.T.E.A.M. curriculum is based on a cognitive behavioral approach, and specific goals of the program focus on building skills for emotional competence to assist social problem-solving; to improve self-control (emotion regulation skills); to develop positive self esteem; to build effective peer relations; and to respond positively to new social situations.



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