

## Exemplary Environmental Leadership/Sustainability Program or Initiative

**School Board:** Grand Erie District School Board

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**Name of Program/Initiative:** Environmental Youth Symposium

**Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative**

<http://www.granderie.ca/board/director-and-superintendents/directorsannualreport/environment/Pages/default.aspx#.VOeXUvnF8uc>

### Description of Program/Initiative

Through the organization of an annual Environmental Youth Symposium, the Grand Erie District School Board is promoting students to actively be involved in environmental projects and initiatives within our schools. Students and staff present at this symposium will have the opportunity to gain insight and knowledge into their environment, appropriate green practices and leadership strategies. As the Grand Erie District School Board moves towards greener initiatives, including waste reduction and green building, we desire to create environmental stewards within each of our schools.

The Environmental Youth Symposium invites 250 secondary students from across the school board to participate in the day which includes a keynote speaker in the morning and break-out workshops in the afternoon. The event takes place at Camp Trillium in Waterford, Ontario.

The event is organized and sponsored by Facility Services and a small committee of GEDSB staff volunteers. Transportation and release time (1 per school) is provided to all participating schools. These items and the costs of the speaker(s) are expenses which are incurred by Facility Services.

Key members of the community, along with local environmental organizations have partnered with GEDSB by providing their leadership and expertise in various workshops for participants.

For the first time in April 2015, the event will be held for elementary students with a similar format geared towards elementary students who are our future environmental leaders.

### What has been the Impact on Student Learning?

The purpose of the events is to actively engage, educate and inspire youth to become environmental stewards and leaders whether at home, school or in their community.

Benefits of the annual events are visible through the student's leadership and environmental action particularly in the school community. Many student participants have become leaders in implementing the Ontario EcoSchools programs in their schools.

The event provides students with an interactive and engaging avenue for environmental education learning to occur.

## Environmental Youth Symposium:

On Wednesday May 21<sup>st</sup>, over 175 students from secondary schools across Grand Erie District School Board gathered for the Board's 2<sup>nd</sup> Environmental Youth Symposium. This year's event took place at Camp Trillium in Waterford and included a keynote speaker in the morning with break-out workshops in the afternoon.

The purpose of the day was to actively engage, educate and inspire youth to become environmental stewards and leaders whether at home, school or in their community. The day was a success as students were entertained and inspired by the various workshop presenters including: Joel Hilchey, a youth leadership expert who spoke on taking risks and changing the world as he juggled and played with mouse traps (Joel is pictured below juggling); Scott Hammell, a youth speaker and escape artist who demonstrated his abilities of escaping a strait jacket as he encouraged students to take on challenges (Scott is pictured below tied up tight in a strait jacket); Bernie Solymar from Nature's Calling Environmental Education challenged students to develop their survival skills (Bernie is pictured below with a group of students); Anita from Bonnieheath Estate Lavender told the students a story about their farm and life's journey (pictured below). Finally, Grant Linney from Climate Change Reality presented on the current environmental state of our world.

Special thanks to Facility Services for sponsoring the event and the committee members who planned the day: Tara Topping (teacher at Paris District High School), Tom Sitak (teacher at Pauline Johnson Collegiate), Jen Hart (Occasional Teacher) and Katie Hashimoto (Supervisor of Energy & Environmental Conservation, Facility Services)

