



HEARTS OPEN FOR EVERYONE



EDI WORKSHOPS

INSIGHTS, FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
**PARK MANOR SENIOR
PUBLIC SCHOOL**

JUNE 2023



PREPARED BY

HEARTS OPEN FOR EVERYONE (HOPE)

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Workshop Series Overview

In June 2023, we conducted a 2-part workshop series at Park Manor Senior Public School, looking both inward and outward in relation to our biases, beliefs, intentions, and our sense of belonging. There were a combined 367 surveys completed by Grade 7 and 8 students at the school.

These workshops delve deeper into the effects of racism, giving students the opportunity to gain a different perspective on the experiences of racialized groups, understanding our need for belonging, the importance of showing compassion toward others, and the effects of our actions – whether intentional or unintentional. Class discussions can shed light on the challenges others may face and the many different ways our actions and words can affect others.

Overall, the workshop series and assembly received positive feedback from the students.



Learned something new.

74%

More than 1/2

Felt the gratitude exercise was useful and found the overall workshop fun and enjoyable.

Agree that everyone needs a friend.

80%

82%

Felt the ideas presented at the assembly were easy to understand.

Interested in learning more about diversity and inclusion.

61%

91%

Feel they are compassionate toward others.

Findings: "We All Need a Friend" Assembly

The overall feedback from the students regarding the assembly is largely positive. They found it useful and appreciated the inclusivity of the session.

The personal examples and stories Oluseun shared were well-received and helped students in understanding the topic better. The overall message of not judging people based on their appearances and focusing on their inner qualities resonated with a large majority of the students.

The interactive nature and the opportunity to answer questions resulted in a more engaging and powerful presentation. Some students even mentioned that the presentation was informative and that this is an important topic everyone should learn about.

There were varied opinions on the scope of the presentation, with some expecting more focus on inclusivity for all races. A few students had a hard time following the presentation, and had difficulty relating to the chosen images, mentioning that it they could have been geared toward their age group.

Despite this, many students found the presentation interesting and valuable, and it helped them view things from a different perspective. The message really hit home for students of colour since they experienced similar challenges as Oluseun's kids. Though some expressed fears about public speaking, they clarified that it didn't impact their opinion of the presentation.

Overall, the presentation provided by Oluseun Olayinka made a positive impact in fostering understanding and inclusivity among the students. Her personal connection and relatability were very much appreciated.



Findings: Looking Inward – Workshop 1

This workshop helped with gathering thoughts about differences and to further understanding views on being left out and the need to fit in.

The students really enjoyed the interactive and engaging aspects of the activities, such as the gratitude exercise, thinking of things that make them happy, and pairing up with someone they don't usually interact with, getting to know them and learning new things about each other. The environment that was created for these workshops allowed students to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and asking questions.

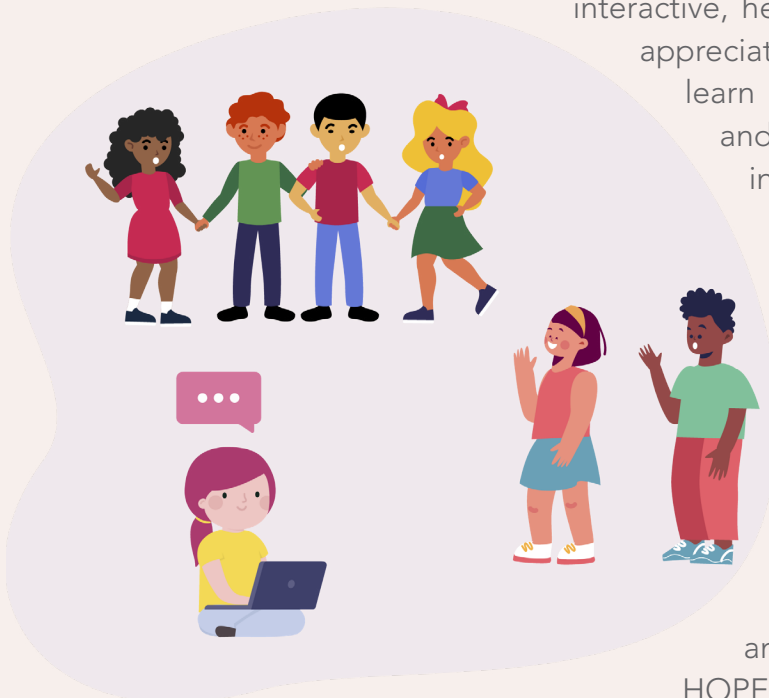
Pairing students up with someone they wouldn't normally speak to was intentional, giving them the opportunity to form a connection and reinforcing the importance of belonging. Unsurprisingly, some students faced challenges, noting they felt uncomfortable and awkward to partner with someone they didn't know well. This may be largely influenced by those who expressed that they are more introverted or don't feel like they belong. There were also some that felt the workshop had room for improvement, including a preference for being paired with familiar individuals or having clearer instructions.

Overall, the workshop was well-received and was considered fun, educational, intriguing, enjoyable, calming, informative, interactive, helpful and useful. Students appreciated the opportunity to

learn and connect with others, and the importance of inclusivity and learning about others' struggles.

They also noted that the workshop increased their awareness, created a sense of belonging and inclusivity and that they would like to learn more about diversity and inclusion at school.

This positive experience among the students is what HOPE set out to achieve.



Findings: Looking Outward – Workshop 2

The feedback from the second workshop is quite varied, as some expressed having a positive experience, while others felt neutral or less engaged. Many students found the workshop useful, enjoyable and informative.

Students appreciated the opportunity to learn about different perspectives and to reflect on their own experiences. The partner activities were also seen as fun and helped them better understand the workshop's topic. The workshop was valued and seen as an important topic to cover.

Some students provided constructive feedback, noting that this workshop was not as engaging as the previous one and that it was difficult to follow. There were a few that wanted clearer information and more scenarios for the activities, while others suggested different formats or more interactive methods of sharing thoughts and feelings. A few students understandably found it challenging to share their feelings in front of their classmates.

Although there were fewer engaged students than originally intended, there were still many positive responses. Students gained an awareness of the importance of empathy, compassion and communication – key social-emotional responses that the workshop was intended to cover.

Almost 80% of students have been in a situation where their intention did not match the impact it had on the other person.



Considerations

More than 1/2

Did not feel positively toward having more gratitude lessons at school.

33% Feel like they do not belong

Of those who didn't feel like they belong, felt uncomfortable to ask questions in class

83%

62% Of those that enjoyed the gratitude exercises want to do more at school

Of those who felt the workshop was useful want to learn more about EDI at school

77%

One student noted that they are not open to making friends of all races, while another mentioned experiencing racism.



Identity

When looking at those that did not identify as either male or female, two Grade 8 students noted they are still trying to figure out their sexual orientation, one student in Grade 7 identifies as part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and two students prefer not to disclose that information.

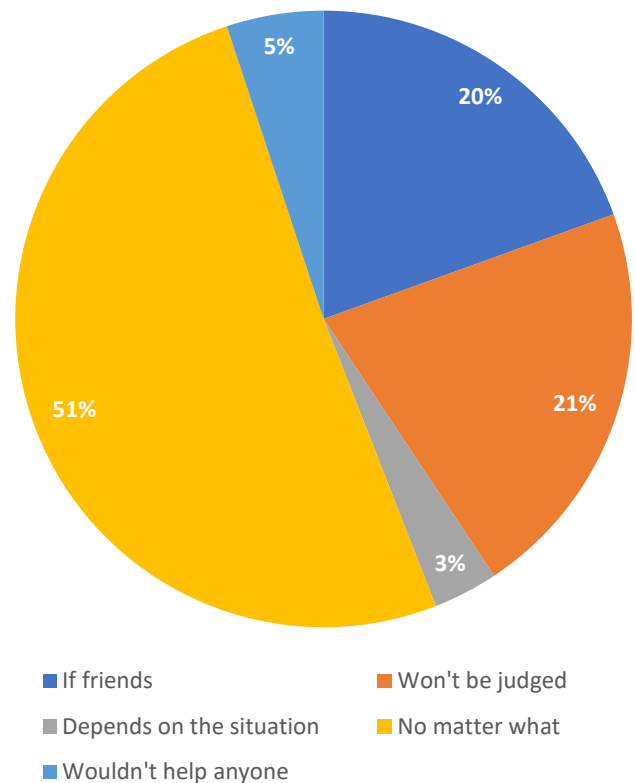
Students are aware of their actions and the implications they can have on others. Almost 80% of students have been in a situation where their intention did not match the impact it had on the other person. However, only 36% of this group did not feel comfortable communicating with the other person when it became necessary to work out difficult situations.

Upon asking about their comfort level during the workshop, most students felt that they did not feel comfortable approaching their friends or any other person when stuck in difficult situations.

Although there were students that felt that they would help someone in need no matter what, there were many during the in-class exercise that mentioned that they wouldn't feel comfortable going up to just anyone.

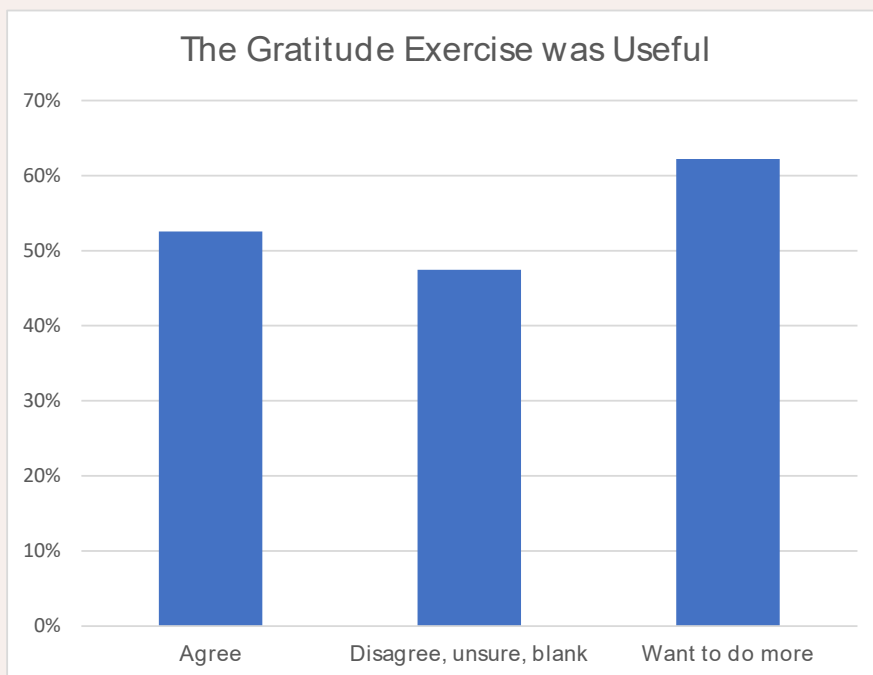
During the handshake activity, the few students who did not feel comfortable suddenly asked to use the restroom to prevent themselves from having to participate. For those that did participate, there was a general sense of enjoyment when they shared what they had in common. They were able to make connections and they discovered something new about their classmates that they did not know before.

Would Help Someone in Need



Observations & Recommendations

Students overall felt good writing (and thinking) about what makes them happy. Offering students the opportunity to participate in more gratitude exercises at school can be considered.



When asked if they have someone they can trust, such as a mentor or someone they can turn to, most students in each class did not raise their hand, indicating they do *not* have anyone they can turn to.

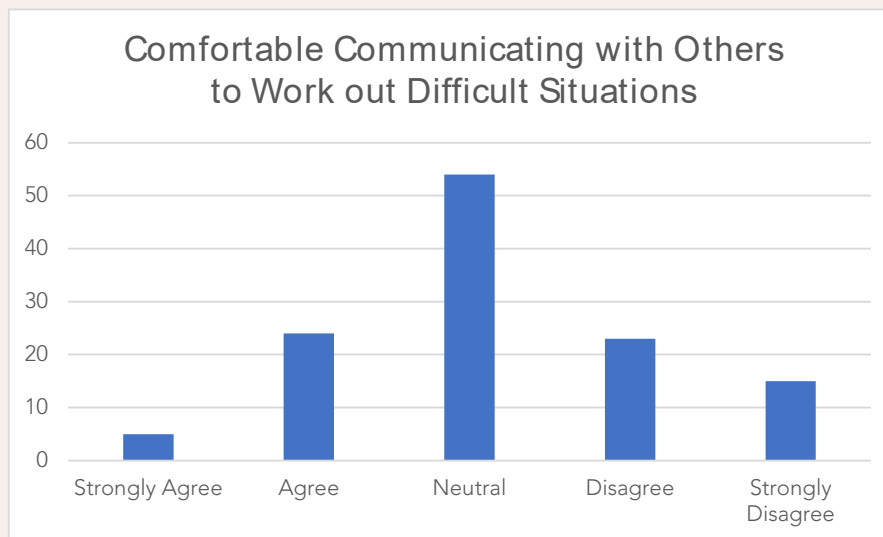
In another situation, a boy opened up about his feelings and ended up being made fun of. The topics discussed regarding fitting in and not leaving people out were disregarded in this respect. This kind of treatment can easily result in a person wanting to close themselves off to others and refrain from speaking up. As other students become exposed to this type of behaviour, they too will adapt to this environment and close up and not want to participate because they see what happens with others.

Further to this point, students admitted that they are more likely to avoid helping someone in need because they are more concerned with what others would think. Due to this frame of mind, it is even more crucial to create a welcoming environment, a safe space in each classroom and within the entire school where all voices can be heard.

Observations & Recommendations (cont.)

Another observation was that racist terms would be exchanged between a student of colour and a white student. This was taken as a joke between friends, however, it wasn't clear if this was affecting them on an emotional level. Additionally, those that get picked on appear to have lower self-esteem and allow negative comments to roll off their back. The more this behaviour becomes the norm, the increased chance it is for students to become more tolerant towards this behaviour, which can affect their social development and can create an overall negative environment for others.

A consideration for improving the overall wellbeing of students within their classrooms can be to develop a stronger bond or engage with them as a mentor/role model. This can change the overall dynamic of the class, and foster more open and understanding individuals, which can then develop into stronger communication skills and the ability to better empathize with others.



The group activity during the second workshop involved partnering up with someone students were comfortable with and brainstorming a situation where the impact of someone else's actions did not match their intent, and vice versa. Students had a hard time thinking of personal situations and preferred being given a scenario or more examples they can relate to, while others who found this workshop relatable, did not find this exercise as challenging.

More students opened up and were more engaged in some classes in

Observations & Recommendations (cont.)

comparison to others. The lack of engagement can be a result of those who noted that they were introverted and preferred to be by themselves, and those that had a completely different understanding of the word “workshop” (thinking it was a hands-on activity). Something that could have helped in this situation is if there was more transparency and explanation of the upcoming workshop series to help them come with a better frame of mind.

When sharing my personal story, there were a few classes that appeared to have a lack of interest or engagement, while other classes were a lot more attentive, and showed genuine interest and empathy for what my family went through – so much so that they identified the story as being helpful in fostering connection. In some cases, there were groups that were more respectful than others. Whether they were in Grade 7 or Grade 8 did not make a difference.

A lot of the overall perceptions and opinions differed from class to class. For example, a class that appeared to have a good connection with one another was more comfortable and open in terms of communicating with others; whereas, in classes where bullying and discrimination is evident, there is more of a disconnect, and those who are targeted seem to be closed off and less inclined to communicate with others.

Based on observations from an educator, students appeared very engaged and were thinking hard about the topics discussed. Even those who are generally quiet spoke up and were more involved in the discussions. Another educator noted that although students hear about diversity and inclusion, and it has been discussed through the school board, these workshops really made them think, reflect and participate.

HOPE’s aim was to create a friendly and comforting atmosphere, which seems to have helped based on the student’s perception of the presenter’s approachable nature. Although only 60% of the students felt like the speaker made them feel comfortable, 79% of that group said they would participate in more workshops with this speaker.