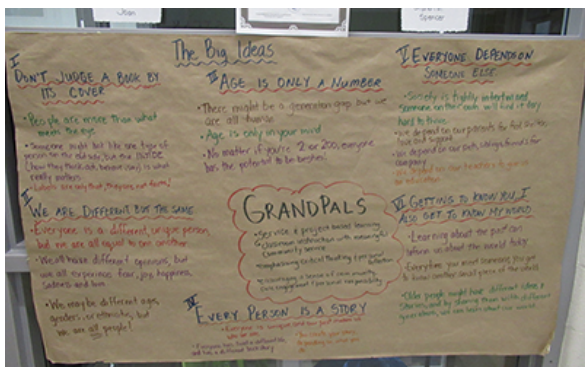


Spencer Avenue School hosts Grandpals Gala



By Jasen Obermeyer

Students of Orangeville's Spencer Avenue Elementary School hosted their first-ever Grandpals gala, to celebrate the culmination of a nearly six-month project that saw them working and learning with seniors in the community.

The Grandpals project is an inter-generational, project and service based learning program that was originally developed at Montgomery Village Public School in Orangeville six years ago. The project is service learning, a method of teaching that combines classroom instruction with meaningful community service. This form of learning brings together critical thinking and personal reflection, encouraging students to gain a sense of community, civic engagement, and personal responsibility.

"It's a way for the students to look outside of themselves and have a community role," explained Elizabeth Mangos, the junior/intermediate teacher for the gifted classroom in grades four to six.

In total, 16 students worked with their Grandpals every week from November to March, asking the seniors different questions on different themes (home, work, adventure, being Canadian, struggles/difficulties they faced), and then finished the project on their own, which included Bristol board displays, a Google doc for more in-depth information, and a cardboard book the parents can take home and read.

Ms. Mangos described the project as not just having students get to know their Grandpal, but look at the bigger goal of the project, with the students seeing the big picture of understanding themes related to intergenerational connections, and a broader historical understand and connection. "As a teacher I appreciate how the project provides many rich curriculum connections."

She added the Grandpals involved with the project have also benefited by sharing their lives and getting an opportunity to influence and educate the upcoming generation.

Ms. Mangos described the gala as a "celebration across the ages" assisting the students on social interaction, as many tweet or text, and when writing things down, they use "ur" instead of putting "your" or "u" instead of "you."

"It's more of a way to get students to talk and to communicate outside of texting, gadgets, and Instagram and snap chat."