

# Justin challenges York teachers

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cation — like honesty, respect, empathy, perseverance and optimism — have to be taught by example, Trudeau said.

"I don't know that you can teach character," he said. "You have to teach with character, you have to model character, demonstrate character. That's how we learn. It's not something you can test on and no one ever achieves perfect character. We all struggle with character every day and it's up to us to pass along that struggle with courage, integrity and the idea of fairness with responsibility."

He said integrity was more than just being honest or knowing the difference between good and evil. "Integrity is the balance of conflicting goods," he said. "We must be open to other opinions and other perspectives and balance everything we do."

He challenged teachers to be brave enough not only to answer questions, but to teach students how to ask open-ended, probing questions of their own. He said something is missing from society today when the goals of good grades, a good education and a good job, even when achieved, often leave people unhappy and unfulfilled.

"The world is full of miserable millionaires," he said. "What are we missing? Einstein said the problems we have created cannot be solved at the level of thinking that created them — teachers can bring about that



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Quest for Character conference attendees at the York Region public school board applauded a speech by Justin Trudeau on Friday.

change in thinking."

He prompted laughs and cheers when he said "curriculum is incidental" to that goal and it doesn't matter nearly as much.

"Students have to learn reading and writing and some stuff with numbers," he said to more chuckles. "They learn that anyway. We have to teach them to think. To be brave. To take risks. To question and to challenge."

And then, sounding eerily like his dad, he continued: "Let's give them the tools. Let's give ourselves the tools."

Trudeau took several questions after his 40-minute speech, including one from teacher Gillian Lambie, who wondered how to counteract the negative influences of mass media.

"It's overwhelming to kids' minds, your mind, my mind — I missed Survivor last night because of this thing," Trudeau responded amid laughs. "You can help by encouraging critical thinking and asking tough ques-

tions. If you look up a question on the Internet, you'll get eight different answers. If you don't know critical thinking, you'll never find the answer."

Two Aurora High School students, 16-year-old Sarah Jackson and 14-year-old Sarah Martin, wondered how, as student leaders, they can promote character education when students "don't really care and just give up."

Trudeau replied when students find ways to express themselves and validate their opinions, then it will matter to them.

"Maybe we're not treating our students with the respect they deserve or the respect they need. If we don't respect them, how can they respect us?"

The girls thought his answer was "Amazing." "Every year kids are losing values or the values are changing," said Jackson. "No one cares anymore. He sees things his own way and maybe that will help us tell the other students about it."

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