



I-Think 

# Year-In Review

2022-2023



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# Unlocking remarkable possibilities for the future

**What an incredible year we had! We spent 2022-2023 working to improve the experiences of our programming for whole school communities, and also achieving charity status.**

Our team grew a lot in the last year, and we have welcomed fantastic people onto the team - those who run programs, find real-world partners, design our materials and retired educators who bring knowledge and wisdom to this work. We are honoured to have supporters who are invested in our mission. Whether they are our cheerleaders, donors, or real-world partners, we are nothing without our community.

At I-Think we know that a better world depends upon equipping young people with the skills and confidence to drive change. Traditional classroom learning doesn't engage students in this way. This is why we work to unlock innovative and collaborative learning in classrooms, in turn unlocking remarkable possibilities one classroom at a time.

We are incredibly excited for the 2023-2024 school year, and can't wait to see what we unlock!

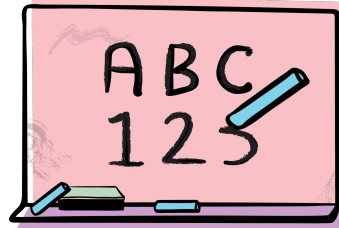
- **Josie Fung**, Executive Director

# Our Impact

At I-Think, we work with all levels of educators so that every school is a place where everyone is thriving and is passionate to learn. After this year our numbers have grown to:



**135,000 +**  
students



**2,500+**  
teachers



**1,250+**  
leaders





## Why Real-World Problem Solving?

At I-Think we believe that young people have the creativity and insight to help tackle real-world problems, helping to shape not just today but the future as well. We know that traditional classroom learning doesn't always engage students in this way.

This is why we work to unlock innovative and collaborative learning in classrooms, in turn unlocking remarkable possibilities one classroom at a time.

Real-world problem solving engages students in deep thinking, developing agency, voice and confidence to share their thinking on the challenges that matter to them.

# I-Think Challenge Kits make it easier to do what's hard.

"I-Think is all about teaching our students to think critically about the world around them. By approaching the challenge in a respectful and critical way. These are tools that are transferable to other areas in their lives, further developing our students into active citizens."

– Nathan Tidridge, Teacher  
Waterdown District High School  
Hamilton-Wentworth DSB

- ✓ Connect young people to real-world problems they care about
- ✓ Develop relationships between students, schools and awesome organizations who value student voice
- ✓ Learning and pedagogical growth for teachers, alongside student learning.
- ✓ Connect curriculum, engaging learning opportunities and community impact.
- ✓ Design learning that develops and applies transferable skills like innovation, creativity, communication, critical thinking and collaboration.

# A new approach to meaningful engagement: The I-Think Whole School Experience

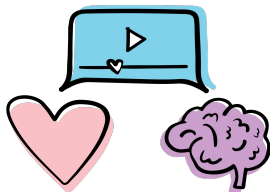
Tough topics can't be tackled alone. Whether it's climate change, well-being, racism or fostering equitable and inclusive learning environments for all - real learning, action, and change happens when we think and take action together. This was the second year of the **I-Think Whole School Experience!** It enables whole-school learning by connecting deep learning for students, pedagogical sparks for teachers, and capacity building for leaders.

*The **I-Think Whole School Experience** is a collection of guides and tools that help schools:*



## **LEAD** together

Professional Learning for school leaders focused on tools to support staff in processing their learning and identifying actions for the challenge.



## **LEARN** together

Principal-supported Professional Learning program that engages dialogue on difficult topics that educators encounter.



## **THINK** together

Teachers facilitate students through a 6-8 week real-world problem solving journey.



## **CELEBRATE** together

When we create together, we should celebrate together. Celebration helps to recognize the valuable thinking and ideas that students have created!

## CHALLENGE KITS

# Remembrance Day

## Current and Future Traditions

In Fall 2022, with the support of Veterans Affairs Canada, we piloted the Remembrance Challenge Kits across 6 schools in Ontario.

This pilot was the result of a research and development period which focused on redesigning Remembrance Day with intention, and offering numerous entry-points for both students and educators to connect an anti-oppression stance with action.

During the Research and Development period, three (3) challenges were developed, bringing focus to student thinking, school engagement and actionable outcomes.

Students' thinking, insights, and recommendations have been, and will continue to, inform their school's intentional design and practice of Remembrance Day current and future traditions.

## Impact Numbers

6

*schools*

20

*classrooms*

800+

*students*

25

*educators and  
school leaders*

3

*experts*

## Remembrance Day Challenge

“Young people CAN connect to Remembrance in its traditional forms, but **the impact is so much greater when they get the opportunity to reimagine Remembrance.** When our students create the learning and acts of commemoration, they create a lasting impact and attachment to this important, annual, national moment. **If we want new generations to connect to Remembrance Day then we have to let go of what was done, and allow them to create what we will do.** If we empower new generations they will find their way into the stories, the reflections, the solemnity and gravity of Remembrance.”

– Ian Duncan, Teacher and Department Head  
Garth Webb S.S, Halton DSB

“By approaching the challenge in a respectful and critical way, the continuous evolution of Remembrance Day is centred and **students are empowered to be a part of that process.** I-Think is providing the tools for students to actively participate in Remembrance Day, helping it to better **reflect the needs of the various Indigenous and Canadian communities** across the land. These are tools that are transferable to other areas in their lives, further developing our students into active citizens.”

– Nathan Tidridge, Teacher  
Waterdown District High School,  
Hamilton-Wentworth DSB



## Impact Numbers

50

students

2

summer interns  
found

8.9/10

Challenge Kit  
student satisfaction

## CHALLENGE KITS

### Climate Action Challenges

I-Think partnered with the Oshawa Centre to pilot a Challenge Kit that explored how they might help the mall property teams to make the mall environmentally sustainable. We then ran a summer camp version of the challenge partnering with Dufferin Mall and University of Toronto Summer Camp for grades 5-7.

Property teams at shopping centres want to contribute to reducing their environmental footprint, in terms of limiting how much waste is generated, how much carbon is produced and how much energy and water is used. They also want to create a space that supports health and well-being, along with biodiversity and ecosystem health. Property teams are trying to do as much as they can within the spaces where they have control.

During the Oshawa Centre pilot students were able to recommend incredible options to the Oshawa Centre team! These ideas included converting the top level of the parking garage into a community garden and more.

We were so blown away by the students during the pilot that we hired two as summer interns to refine the Challenge Kit and create a series of resources to expand student understanding moving forward.

## REFLECTIONS

# Climate Action Challenges

"After the field trip it **improved my awareness of the problem**, we always see numbers on the screen but it improved my perception of it as well."

– RH King Student

"Because you're not just sitting in a classroom, **you're actually going and talking to people**, and actually discover instead of just watching it in a YouTube video so it has more potential to stick to us. **A new environment gives us a fresh perspective.**"

– RH King Student

## CHALLENGE KITS

# (Re)Building Community

Over the last 3 years, schools have been challenged in building connection among school community members in ways that support their well-being. Students say they feel disconnected, face challenges in building relationships and connecting with peers in productive ways. The pandemic reinforced the importance of community, while challenging many of the ways schools build it. Building community is essential for transformational learning, yet we're continuing to see and feel the impact of 3 years of disruption.

This year we ran our (Re)Building Community Challenge Kit during our 100 Classroom Challenge and with Halton District School Board. This Challenge Kit was all about (re)building community in schools.

Schools need to design around a new reality, one that acknowledges the loss of connection and relationship building experienced by all in a school community and the increased barriers to engaging, connecting and belonging.

## Impact Numbers

44

**schools**

147

**teachers**

48

**leaders**

4250+

**students**

## REFLECTIONS

# (Re)Building Community

“Community is important regardless the size, friends, school, etc. It is important to have this support system. Going through high school, community is a big thing, and the pandemic made it so hard for us to feel part of one.”

– Student, Craig Kielburger  
Secondary School

“I started to learn about people’s perspectives and how to change expand others’ perspectives to work towards peace through mutual understanding.

It can be hard to understand people's thoughts and perspectives without knowing what they are thinking. We had to listen hard.”

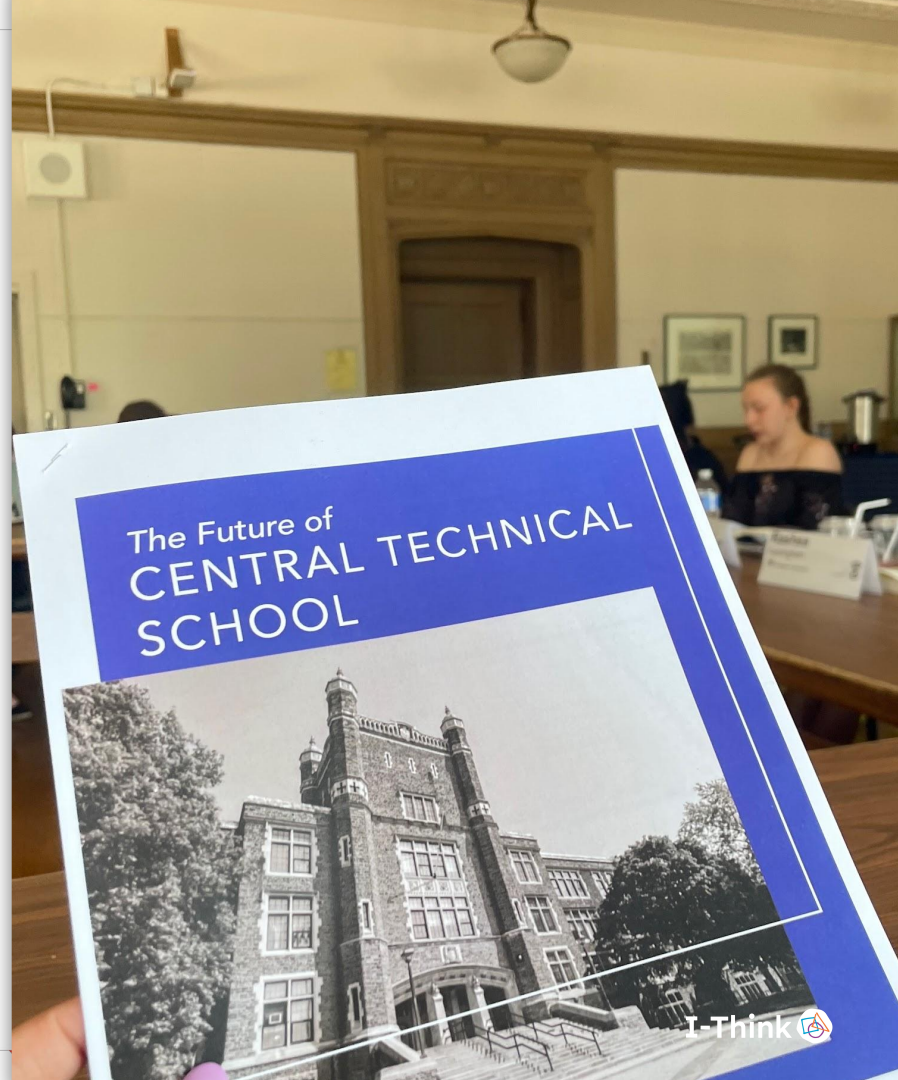
– Student, Lord Dufferin Public School

# Central Technical School

We launched a custom program with Central Technical School which is part of the Toronto District School Board that engaged the whole-school community in creating a new strategy. A team of students led the work by engaging with the community and using those insights to create the strategy.

The student team shared their strategy and recommendations with CTS School Leaders and Educators, and various TDSB staff. We are now continuing working with the CTS team to help implement recommendations in the 2023 - 2024 school year.

To support student excellence and achievement, a team of CTS educators have been building capacity in the frameworks and mindsets of Integrative Thinking and Real-World Problem Solving. The educators participated in a parallel learning program that will set them up to support the student program, classroom instruction and school improvement.





## Reflections from Central Technical School

# What the students are thinking

"We are the key to our future. We have to let students imagine and decide a future they want, and ensure ways we can take action for it."

– Student, Central Technical School

"We're doing this for future generations, as well as ourselves, so they don't have to go through what some of us have gone through, with our identities being told that they're wrong, or dealing with discrimination for any sort of reason and feeling uncomfortable in a space where we're supposed to learn."

– Student, Central Technical School

"If we only teach problem solving as a theoretical activity, that doesn't apply, we are not preparing us for our present or future. We know we're going to face really hard real-world problems. We deserve a chance to work on them now. Not just later."

– Student, Central Technical School

## RJS SCHOLARSHIP

### *Celebrating tenacious, optimistic and confident problem solvers*

This scholarship was established by Roger and Sue Short, Roger Martin and Jennifer Riel. Each year we award the RJS Scholarship in Integrative Thinking to a student who has become a better thinker and problem solver because of their experiences with Integrative Thinking.

The scholarship provides \$4,000 for each year of a student's undergraduate program at the University of Toronto. Previous scholarship recipients have pursued diverse programs, including political science, art history, biology, biomedical physics and business.

This year **Theo O'Connell** received the scholarship. Our team was amazed by his commitment to real-world problem solving and his continued use of Integrative Thinking beyond the classroom.



## Student Voices At I-Think

This year we were honoured to have Laurel Gain, the recipient our 2020 RJS Scholarship, working with us during the spring and summer of 2023, as an Environmental Engineer.

She worked diligently in running a pilot climate action Challenge Kit in partnership with Oshawa Centre and JLL for RH King high school students. With her hard work the pilot was a success and helped to inform her work leading two summer interns.

*"Integrative Thinking has really allowed me to change my mindset and outlook on problem solving in every aspect of life."*

*- Laurel Gain*







# Celebration of Thinking

Our Celebration of Thinking held annually in June is an opportunity for parents, teachers, and students to imagine remarkable possibilities together. This poem is all about being open to possibilities when problem solving:

*"When you think you have all the answers and know what's best, keep thinking.*

*When you think your ideas are right for all, keep thinking.*

*When you feel you have all sides of a story, keep looking.*

*When you are certain you have thought it through, you haven't.*

*When you think something doesn't matter because it doesn't impact you, it does.*

*When you think your opinion doesn't matter, know that it matters."*

- Gillian Grant, Parent

Photo of Spencer Alexander at the 2023 Celebration of Thinking



# Partners and donors who have helped us unlock remarkable possibilities!

Thank you!





# 2020-2023 Board of Directors



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Director

# Leadership Advisors and Coaches

Our Leadership Advisors and Coaches lead Leadership professional learning programs and coaching sessions.

Their classroom and school leadership experience brings unique insights, a depth of knowledge and a treasure trove of stories to ignite possibilities in educator and leadership practices.



**Mike Gallagher**



**Manon Gardner**



**Audrey Hensen**



**Jane Phillips Long**



**Kelly Rizzo**



## What's Next?



### Let's Develop Challenge Kits

We want to develop a series of challenge kits so that students have a meaningful challenge for every subject area. Let's connect on the real-world problems that you care about.



### Scale

How do we grow our work so that every school has access to our programs and resources in Canada? I-Think Challenge Kits unlock the future skills that students need to be our leaders and problem solvers.



### New Ways to Share Student Voice

We are focused on finding new ways to share and spotlight student voice. Let us connect you with brilliant voices to inspire your team and our collective future.

## Connect With Us

✉ [connect@I-ThinkTogether.org](mailto:connect@I-ThinkTogether.org)

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