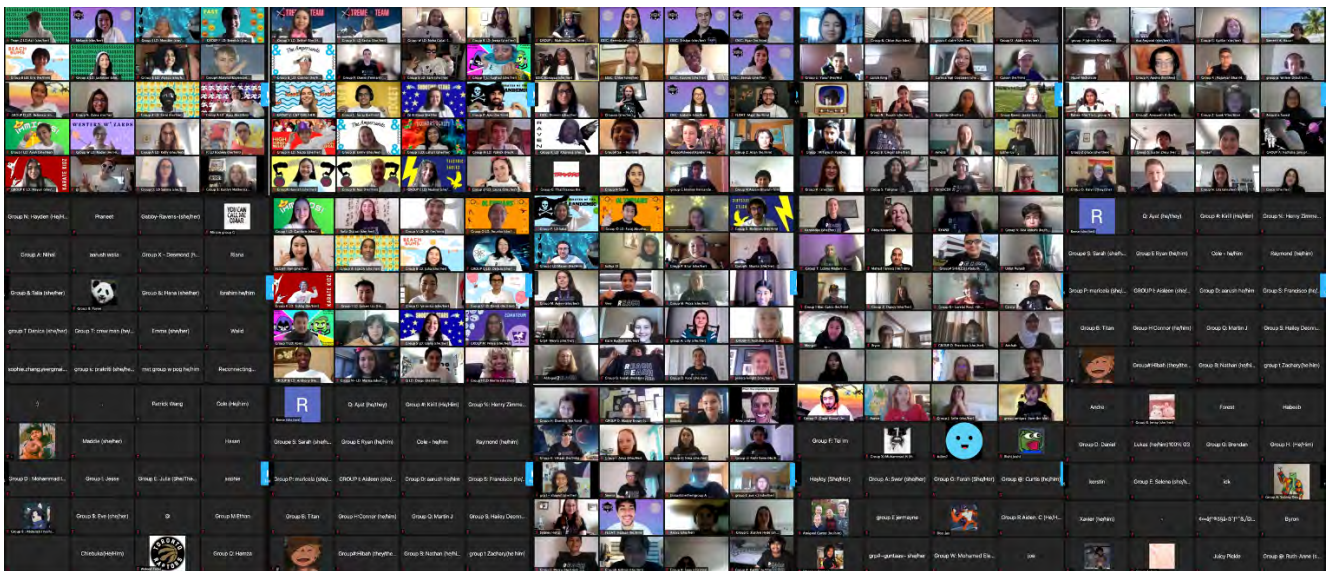


EMPOWER EDUCATE ENRICH



2021 Annual Report



Early Outreach Conference

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Please note: all in-person photos displayed in this report were taken at the 2019 Early Outreach Conference prior to COVID-19.



LEAD DREAM REACH

USC EARLY OUTREACH



Letter from the Coordinator

In a year of real and challenging change, the Early Outreach Conference (REACH) has been no exception to developing innovative and impactful solutions to bring people together in a time when they need it most.

This year's Early Outreach Conference was our first virtual one, and also our largest conference to date. Over 330 Grade 7 and 8 delegates from the Thames Valley District School Board registered to attend two action-packed days of programming led by our Western student volunteers. Our guest speakers spoke on a range of topics, with a focus on motivation, wellness, and new perspectives. Two new in-house program elements were designed to introduce delegates to leadership styles and equity, diversity, and inclusion.

We are immensely grateful for the generosity of the City of London, the YMCA, Brescia University College, and the University Students' Council. Their contributions to Early Outreach allowed us to pivot to an online format, and send each delegate a hand-packed box in the mail with merchandise and school supplies.

REACH would not have been possible without our Leadership Developers (LDs) and their support, adaptability, and endless enthusiasm. This team of 60 was unwavering in their positivity and commitment to REACH, and our program was a success in large part because of their tremendous help.

I would also like to express the deepest of thanks to the Early Outreach Executive Committee for being incredibly creative and hardworking, despite the many challenges we were presented with this year. The 12 of you demonstrated what it looks like to lead with kindness and empathy, and your contribution to REACH is so appreciated.

To our Grade 7 and 8 delegates: thank you for reminding us to be hopeful, to be inclusive, and to be curious. Your impact on this program is truly the most important of all, and we are so honoured to have been a part of your journey.

Reach in, reach out,



Keemia Abbaszadeh
2020-21 Early Outreach Coordinator



2020-21

INTRODUCTION

About the Early Outreach Conference

The Early Outreach Conference began in 2006 as a community outreach initiative created by the University Students' Council at Western University. The Choose Your Own Adventure program brought approximately 50 Grade 8 students from London to Western's campus to experience post-secondary education.

Since 2006, the conference has grown into a program that connects with the London community and deeply enriches the lives of over 200 Grade 7 & 8 students and university volunteers every year.

In 2021, the Early Outreach Conference (REACH) brought together 340 Grade 7 & 8 students from London and the Middlesex County, the largest cohort to date.



REACH has developed strong partnerships with both on-campus and community stakeholders in the past 15 years of the program.

The main purpose of REACH is to educate Grade 7 & 8 students about the value of pursuing higher education, while empowering them to see their own value as individuals. Throughout the conference, the students, referred to as delegates, engage in programming including mock lectures, financial planning workshops, and leadership activities. Along with post-secondary education, REACH focuses on building interpersonal and self-reflective skills through positive role models and relationship building.

VISION

All youth are granted equal opportunity to map out their futures and reach their full potential

MISSION

To cultivate community, build confidence, and explore post-secondary options in a safe and inclusive environment

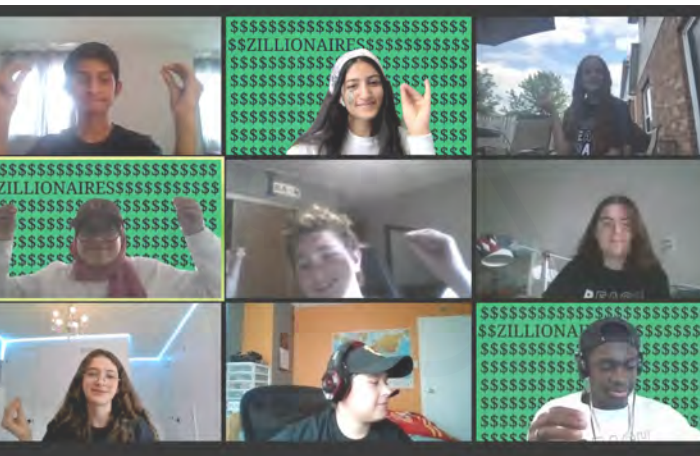


VALUES



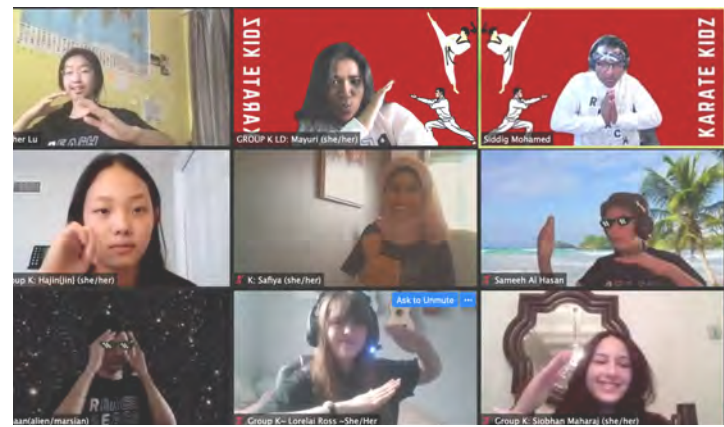
EDUCATE

To educate delegates about the different paths post-secondary education has to offer and to provide them with the necessary resources for making informed decisions about their futures



EMPOWER

To empower delegates through goal setting, and highlighting their unique strengths to achieve personal growth



ENRICH

To enrich delegates' experience by encouraging discovery and by connecting them with role models they relate to and can receive guidance from

OUR TEAM

Structural Hierarchy

The Executive Team is selected in August and spends the following eight months planning REACH. This includes weekly meetings throughout the year and full-time commitment the week prior to the conference. Responsibilities are divided between positions on the team and significant collaboration ensures REACH is the best possible.



Executive Roles

Conference Registrar

- Act as the primary liaison between schools and school boards, parents, and the conference
- Organize sign-in/sign-out procedures during the conference
- Maintain paperwork tracking delegate participation

Leadership Development Directors

- Interview, select, train a team of 55-65 Leadership Developers (student volunteers)
- Support the Leadership Developers leading up to conference and during the day-to day of the conference

Marketing Directors

- Develop recruitment campaigns and manage conference social media
- Oversee creation of posters, custom clothing and graphic design work
- Assist with organization of fundraising initiatives

Programming Directors

- Arrange all guest speakers and mock lectures taking place at Western and Fanshawe
- Organize day-to-day conference scheduling and logistics such as equipment, room bookings and supplies
- Plan engaging and educational workshops for delegates

Coordinator

- Oversee the Early Outreach Conference Executive Team and Leadership Developers Team
- Set the annual strategic agenda and goals for the conference

Finance Directors

- Prepare and keep track of conference budget
- Coordinate fundraising initiatives including grant writing
- Prepare presentation for delegates on financial accessibility



Strategic Planning Director

- Acquire formal feedback from delegates, parents, schools and Leadership Developers
- Produce an annual report for the conference highlighting successes and areas of improvement for the future

Leadership Developers (LDs)

62 STUDENT VOLUNTEERS FROM WESTERN UNIVERSITY

Leadership Developers (LDs) are essential to the functioning and success of REACH. LDs are partnered for the conference and are responsible for facilitating activities for their group of 8-12 delegates. LDs work directly with the delegates during the duration of the conference and create the safe and welcoming environment necessary for delegates to gain the most out of the conference.



Western University students submit a written application, followed by an interview hosted by the Leadership Development Directors. Those selected for the role complete approximately 18 hours of training and submit a Vulnerable Sector Police Check. The LD training process covers topics from team-building activities to empathy and active listening workshops, as well as professional training from organizations such as the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Many LDs recognize that the nature of the conference also results in personal reflection and growth themselves. Reach boasts an interconnected community on the Western campus and beyond, with supportive program alumni returning to provide guidance and workshops based on their expertise.

Bethel Ng - LD



"To me, REACH means bringing together a community of students of all ages and creating an environment where they can all learn from each other. It is an experience that exposes you to a broad horizon of opportunities and options in your future, - an event you definitely would not want to miss.

Not only did REACH allow me to gain leadership skills, but it continued to motivate me to keep lending a helping hand out to others because younger students and ourselves are the future. If anything, REACH excites me about the potential that our future generations have and it brings joy to my heart!"

"Throughout the year, I worked to plan REACH alongside a team of amazing people who continue to inspire me! During the conference itself, I has the unique opportunity to watch from the sidelines as the LDs mentored and empowered their delegates to learn and grow throughout the weekend, and to hear all the positive feedback from the delegates' families!

REACH was such a meaningful experience; it meant a lot to help so many Grade 7 & 8 students realize just how many cool opportunities are awaiting them after high school. Also, being involved in the conference introduced me to a community of caring, conscientious Western students!

Being involved in REACH this year helped me realize my skills and strengths, and also develop my communication skills!"

Tristyn Snow - Executive



Delegates

Delegates are the Grade 7 & 8 students who attend and are the heart of REACH. In partnership with the Thames Valley District School Board, the executive team focuses on reaching out to elementary schools that are likely to gain the most from the program.

The conference has also been established in the London community for over 15 years and therefore has built a solid foundation of schools and teachers who support and encourage their students to attend the conference. As of 2014, the conference provides busing for students from Middlesex County to increase accessibility to the conference.

"I enjoyed Reach and I loved the time with my group and the people I met. I would recommend this to any of my friends. My group was so nice and funny. I was able to relate really well and I felt Included. I wish I could do this again next year!"
- 2021 Delegate

"I just wanted to thank the execs and the LDs for everything this weekend, This is 100% an experience that I'm gonna remember for the rest of my education, and probably for after that as well."
- 2021 Delegate



Schools our delegates have attended:

- Aberdeen P.S.
- Annandale P.S.
- Ashley Oaks P.S.
- Bonaventure Meadows P.S.
- Byron Northview P.S.
- C.C. Carothers P.S.
- Caradoc North P.S.
- Caradoc P.S.
- Cartier P.S.
- Cedar Hollow P.S.
- Centennial Central P.S.
- Chippewa P.S.
- Clara Brenton P.S.
- Cleardale P.S.
- Delaware Central P.S.
- Eagle Heights P.S.
- Emily Carr P.S.
- Eva Circe Cote F.I.P.S.
- F.D. Roosevelt P.S.
- Fairmont P.S.
- Glen Cairn P.S.
- Hickson Central P.S.
- Hillcrest P.S.
- Innerkip P.S.
- Jack Chambers P.S.
- Jeanne Sauve F.I.P.S.
- John Dearness P.S.
- John Wise P.S.
- J.P. Robarts P.S.
- June Rose Callwood P.S.
- Kensel Park P.S.
- Kettle Creek P.S.
- Lambeth P.S.
- Laurie Hawkins P.S.
- Lester B. Pearson Art School
- Lord Elgin P.S.
- Louise Arbour P.S.
- Mary Wright P.S.
- Masonville P.S.
- Mountsfield P.S.
- Nicholas Wilson P.S.
- Northbrae P.S.
- Northdale P.S.
- Northridge P.S.
- Orchard Park P.S.
- Oxbow P.S.
- Parkview P.S.
- Pierre Elliott Trudeau F.I.P.S.
- Prince Charles P.S.
- Princess Anne F.I.P.S.
- Princess Elizabeth P.S.
- Riverside P.S.
- Royal Roads P.S.
- Ryerson P.S.
- Sir Arthur Currie P.S.
- Sir Isaac Brock P.S.
- Sir John A. Macdonald P.S.
- Southside P.S.
- Southwold P.S.
- Springbank P.S.
- St. George's P.S.
- St. Mary's Choir and Orchestra School
- Stoney Creek P.S.
- Stoneybrook P.S.
- Strathroy Community Christian School
- Tecumseh P.S.
- Tweedsmuir P.S.
- Valleyview P.S.
- W. Sherwood Fox P.S.
- West Nissouri P.S.
- Westfield P.S.
- Westminster Central P.S.
- Westmount P.S.
- White Oaks P.S.
- Wilberforce P.S.
- Wilfrid Jury P.S.
- Wilton Grove P.S.
- Winchester P.S.
- Woodland Heights P.S.
- Wortley Road P.S.
- Zorra Highland P.S.

81%

of delegates indicated that REACH changed their perceptions of post-secondary education

95%

of delegates indicated that they learned new things from the Topic and Elective talks



Delegates rated all presentations and workshops an average 4 out of 5.

79%



of delegates indicated that after attending REACH they are considering attending post-secondary education

Top 3 Favourite Electives

Business

Medical Sciences

Engineering

97%

of our delegates indicated that the conference made them think about their future

91%

of our delegates indicated that the conference encouraged them to follow their passions

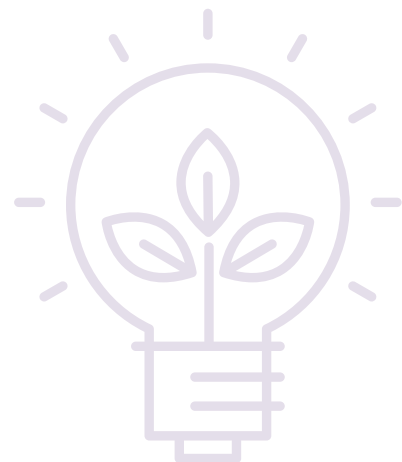
90%

of our delegates would recommend REACH to a friend

“Yes all the leaders and people hosting were so positive and kind which really showed. I think everyone felt more engaged into the whole conference because of their enthusiasm as well. I had a wonderful time thank you all so much!”

“This was way more fun than I thought it would've been! I really enjoyed all the activities and discussions.”

“Thank you so much for making us all feel so extremely welcome, and I really thought this was going to be just another program where we listened to speakers throughout the day, but you guys made it so interactive and helped talk about the harder subjects that were more sensitive.”



PROGRAMMING

Mock Lectures

Delegates participate in interactive workshops designed to imitate post-secondary lectures. These workshops are facilitated by Western University and Fanshawe College professors and students, showcasing studies such as Chemistry, Astronomy, Political Science, Engineering, Kinesiology, Medical Science, and Music.

Self-Esteem Talks

Delegates are divided into groups to participate in small group workshops facilitated by LDs. Self-esteem talks aim to provide a safe and comfortable place for delegates to discuss topics such as body image, mental health, bullying and more.

Volunteerism Workshop

The purpose of the volunteerism workshop is to motivate delegates to understand the value that can be found in volunteering. This includes networking and building connection, learning essential skills such as time management and leadership, as well as contributing back to their community. This workshop is hosted by a YMCA representative.

Community Fair

REACH recognizes that upon their entrance to high school, students are required to complete at least 40 hours of community service. Representatives from local organizations provide delegates with resources.

Guest Speakers

In the past, speakers have included the Mayor of London and Scott Hammell, a motivational illusionist. These talks aim to teach students about leadership and barrier-breaking from people who have robust, real-world experience.

REACH Game

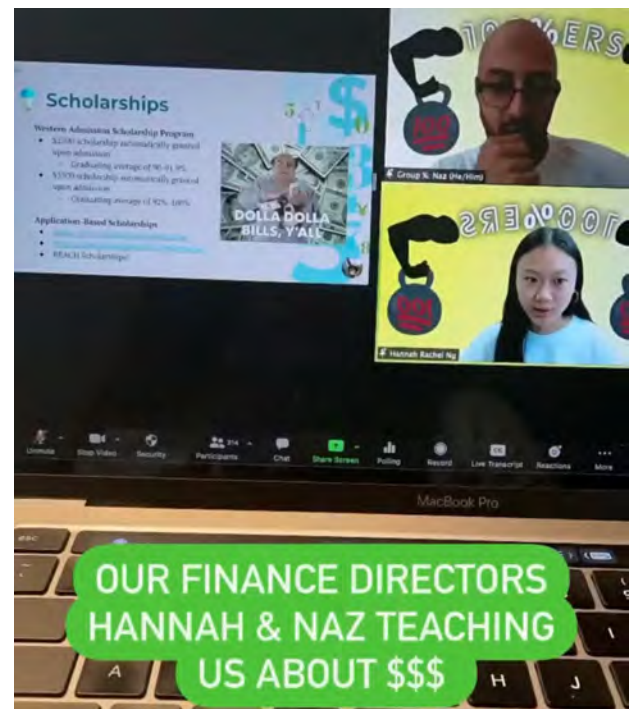
The REACH Game is an original game designed by the conference that mimics a life-size version of the Game of Life. Delegates and LDs must make decisions regarding higher education, money and day-to-day tasks.

Social Activities

REACH hosts various social activities for the delegates to interact with each other and relax. This includes a dance, a movie night, and a coffeehouse where delegates are encouraged to hit the stage and show off their talents.

Finance Presentation

The finance presentation is led by our Finance Directors, who provide the delegates with tips and advice on what steps they can take to be better prepared for the financial responsibilities associated with post-secondary endeavours after high school. They discuss topics such as managing money, the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), loans, and scholarships.

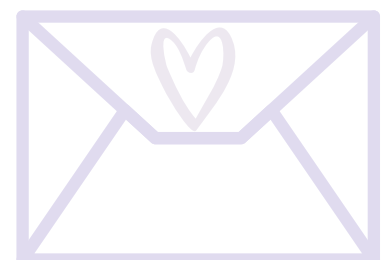


College Talks Panel

The college panel features students speaking on their experience at Fanshawe College or one of the affiliated colleges at Western University. It allows delegates to understand the key differences between university and college, while motivating them to pursue the path that suits their skillset and needs the most.

Letters to Self

Using a specialized website, delegates have the chance to write a letter to their future self. Delegates are reminded to use these letters to reflect on what they've learned, and what they would like to tell their future self. The letters will be emailed to them in the future!



NEW PROGRAMMING

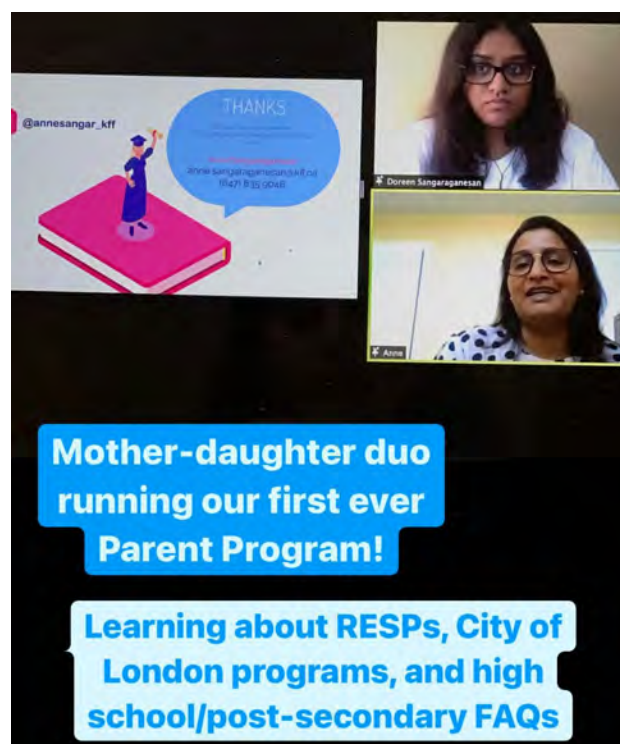
Parent Program

Parents are often the unnoticed pillars of support for their children during their post-secondary education. The Parent Program was designed to prepare parents and help them gain a better understanding of financial planning and resources they can turn to in the future, hosted by a government grants & RESP specialist.

We also invited a City of London camp counsellor to speak about opportunities available and the types of skills students can build through these programs - teamwork, leadership, initiative. We provided parents with tips on how to begin the "career conversation", and how to support their children through high school and the application to post-secondary.

Animal Leadership Inventory

Leadership is at the core of REACH, and there is not a singular leadership style or way to lead. This workshop walked delegates through four different base leadership styles. They had the opportunity to connect with their peers of the same leadership style and discuss what they need to succeed as leaders, and what makes them unique.



Virtual Scavenger Hunt

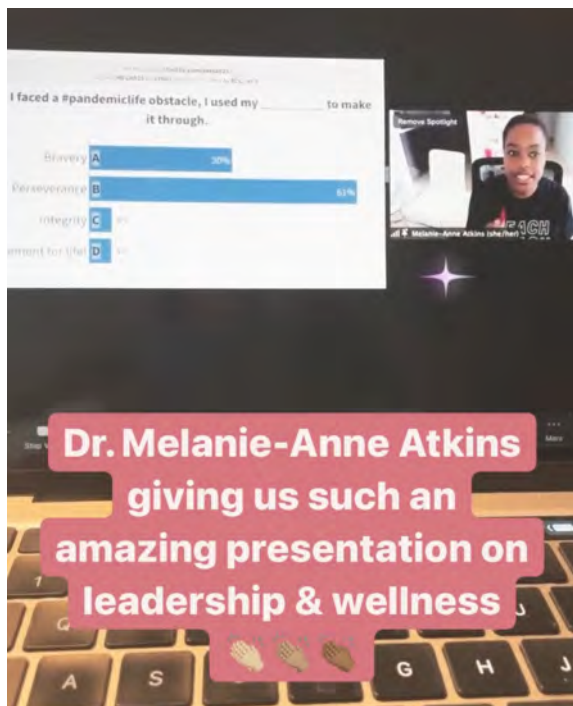
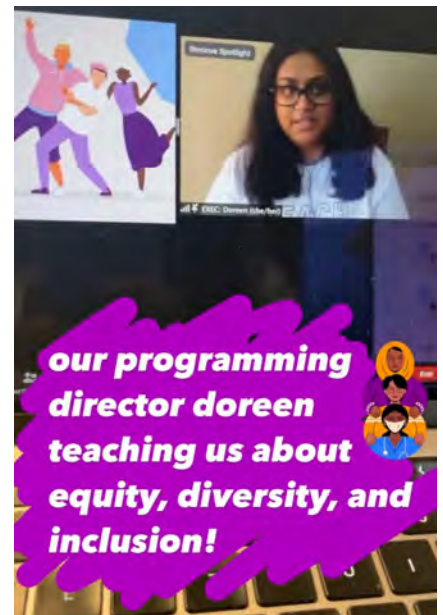
LDs read out a list of obscure items and the delegates scramble to be the first person to find items or fulfill challenges before time runs out. This activity allows delegates a more hands-on, engaging, and active experience.

Speed Friending

Delegates have the opportunity to meet other delegates from different groups. Each randomized group has 7 minutes to get to know each other, with conversations directed by prompts sent out by the LDDs.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Presentation

Our EDI presentation aims to set the foundation for our students to learn about equity, diversity and inclusion. We also discuss how to apply each concept via advocacy and inclusion strategies, in a format that is targeted directly to the Grade 7 & 8 student audience. We end off the presentation with learning about intellectual empathy and how to be kind to other people and ourselves.



Leadership and Wellness Workshop

The Leadership and Wellness Workshop focuses on self-reflection, and learning how to develop a wellness plan and be the best you. Dr. Melanie-Anne Atkins talks about struggles and successes faced by students in the pandemic. She emphasizes character strengths and how to help students realize how resilient they are, and how they can find a voice of strength and leadership

Random Acts of Kindness

Delegates have the opportunity to engage in activities that spread positivity & kindness.

1. *Write positive messages on sticky notes and put them around the house*
2. *Write a letter or postcard to essential workers in your community*
3. *Sidewalk chalk art to brighten up your street*
4. *Pick out a few gently used clothing items to donate*
5. *Write a thank you note to someone who has inspired you*
6. *And many more!*

FINANCES

We are proud to offer our conference as an opportunity that is completely free to students. This is one of the ways we are accessible and inclusive to the London community. We strive to acquire as much funding as possible every year to ensure we have the best programming available, and are able to accommodate as many delegates as possible.

Our total expenses for the 2021 conference amount to \$30,184.16. The main components of our expenses include providing Back-To-School kits to all the delegates which included Western merchandise such as notebooks, pens, water bottles, snacks, and REACH stickers and T-shirts! We also provided LDs with a box of merchandise and a \$40 gift card to cover their meals.

REACH IS
100%

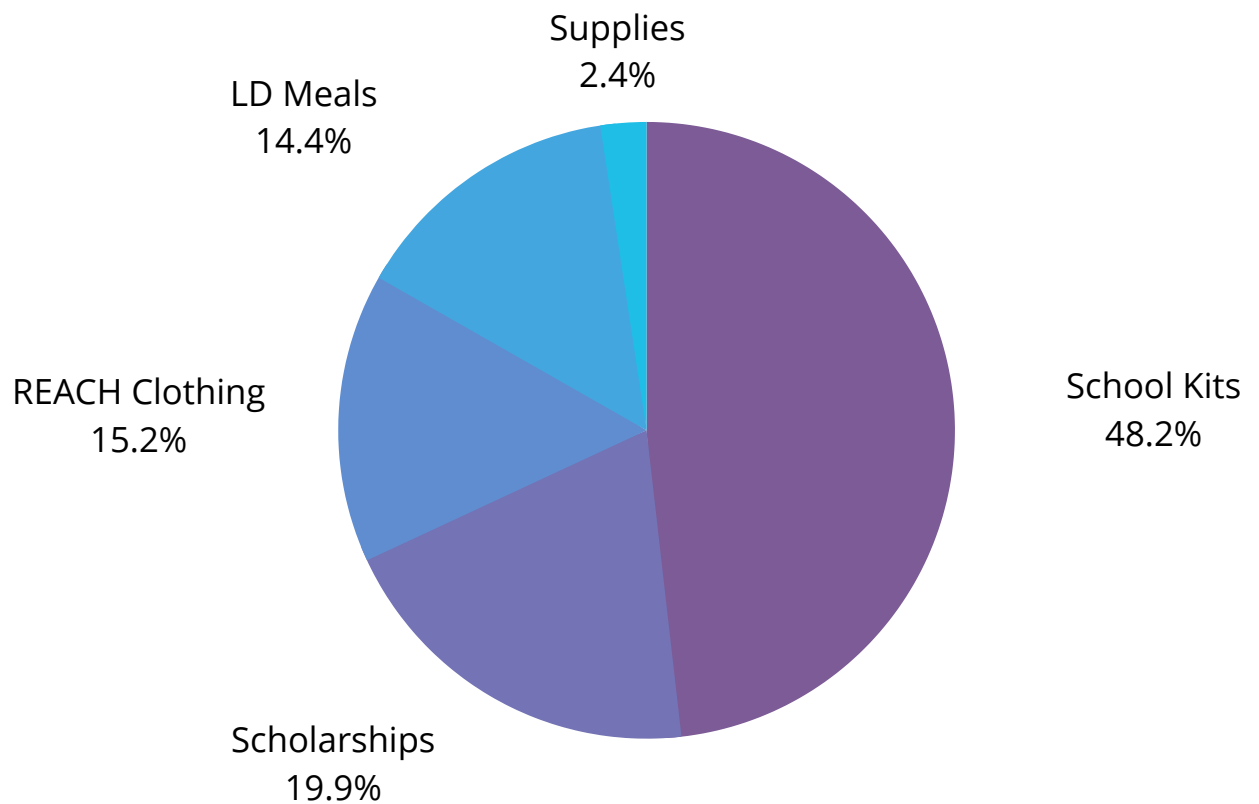
**FREE FOR
DELEGATES**

**COST PER
DELEGATE**

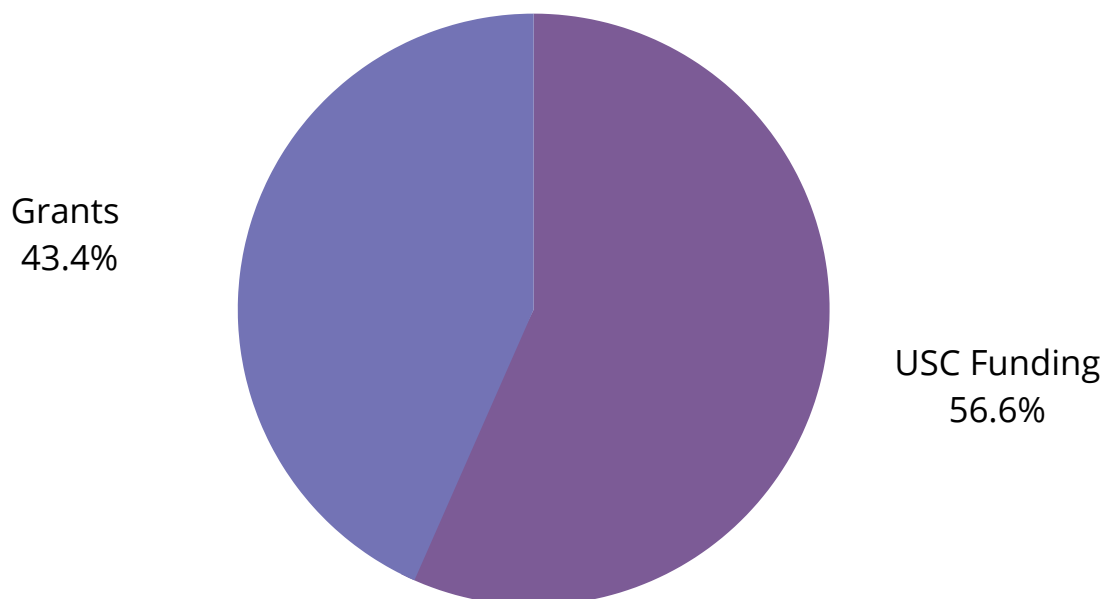
\$61.60



EXPENSES



REVENUES



**Expenses were based on virtual-only programming in 2021.
In-person REACH expenses include significant accommodation, food, and transportation costs not incurred this year.*

REACH SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

With the assistance of our Finance Directors, the additional money received from community grants and USC funding allowed us to introduce the REACH Scholarship Program. Thirty delegates were selected through an application process, and were awarded \$200 each.



All delegates had the chance to submit an application for the scholarship and were required to answer two questions:

- 1. What was one thing that you learned from REACH?**
- 2. Tell us about what you want to do after high school (there is no right answer!).**

Delegates were given the opportunity to either submit a 250 word maximum written response OR a one minute maximum video. We offered these alternatives so delegates could apply using their strengths and the format they are more comfortable and confident with.

This scholarship program was created with the purpose of giving students an opportunity to get a head start on saving up for their future plans, with the hopes to reduce any financial barriers. We are proud to have introduced this initiative in 2021.

We hope to continue with the REACH Scholarship Program in the coming years.



PARTNERSHIPS

The Early Outreach Conference would like to extend our thanks to all our partners who help make the conference a possibility every year!



PARENT FEEDBACK

"My daughter has special needs and has been learning remotely since March 2020. She loved the conference! She was engaged and laughing and enthusiastically answering questions. The team leaders kept all the children engaged and the meeting were filled with lots of useful and interesting information. My daughter is still wearing her Reach t-shirt and talking about that weekend. It is a fantastic experience for children in grade seven and eight. Thank you so much."

"For a shy guy, this was presented extremely well-sensitive to all personalities, encouraging, open, fun- it was clear from the closing ceremonies how much this meant to the delegates. Thank you. I don't have suggestions at this point, but I know my grade 7 son did NOT want to attend REACH, and now is asking to go back next year. So GREAT JOB. :) "

INNOVATIONS AND ADAPTATIONS

This year looked a little different, but was still very special. The conference REACHed its goal, and had a positive impact on the delegates!

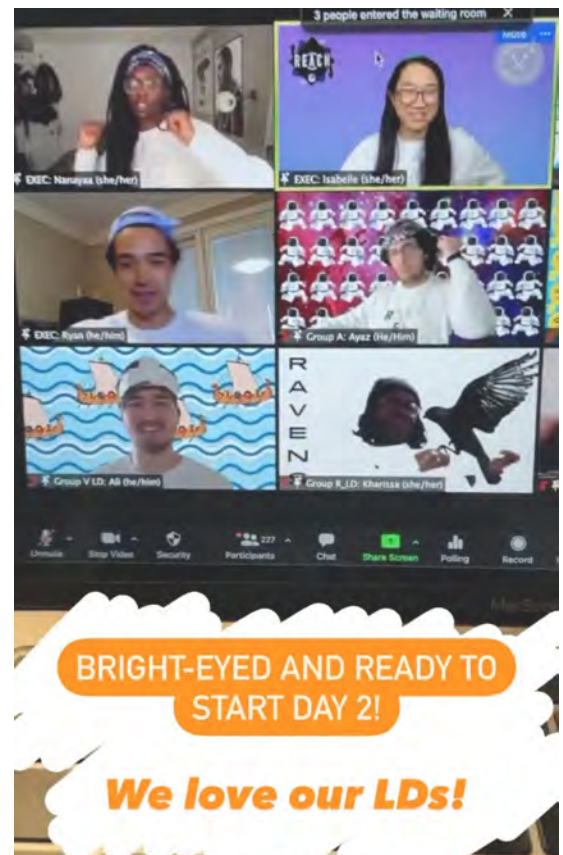
One notable change was the format which was held online through the Zoom platform. Our school visits were also conducted online using Zoom. It was very different from in-person presentations which allowed us to better interact and engage with the potential delegates and teachers.

Despite the inability to meet in-person to prepare for the conference, this year's executive team worked exceptionally well together. They attended weekly meetings, and used Google Drive as home base for all resources. A Google Drive folder also gave LDs and delegates access to all the links and documents they needed during the weekend.

Many modifications were also made to REACH programming. The talent show was an exciting collection of pre-recorded videos by the delegates. Instead of our annual REACH game, we hosted a virtual game night with over 30 breakout rooms of games. Speed friending and self-esteem talks were also conducted using breakout rooms.

Throughout the conference, there were many dance parties, also known as "energizers," to help keep everyone upbeat and excited, especially during the early morning programming.

REACH 2021 was unlike any conference we could have anticipated, and we are so proud of the success as told by our delegates.



What would you say to a Grade 7 or 8 student next year who is thinking of registering for REACH?

"I would say that you made the best decision of your life! You're going to have a blast!"

"That Reach is an amazing community and that you learn a lot."

"Definitely sign up even if you know that you want to go to school. You will still learn so much about yourself and life."

"It is a great place to laugh and smile with new enjoyable friends! Very fun and creative activity's with amazing advice for the future! (: "

"You NEED to attend REACH. It is awesome, trust me. It is so fun and also educational. You learn about what you could do for your future and have tons of fun."

"Thank you so much! It meant so much to me. Everyone was sooo great, it was one of the best times. Everyone was so sweet and it felt like one big family (: "

"I would encourage them to pursue it. REACH is a great program for those looking and trying to understand the concept of how University and College life works. The presenters and LDs are very engaging and their presentations and the way the present themselves encourages one to show off their true colours and follow their passions. The people there are very wonderful to interact with and never failed to put a smile on my face, so of course I would recommend this program to other students."

**Thank you to everyone who made this
year's conference possible!**

Reach in, reach out.



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