

## New Link Crew Making Change at Crossley

Christine Bunz

The spirit of E.L. Crossley Secondary School is changing this year, with the newly formed Link crew spearheading the cause. The Link Crew is a nationwide program developed out of the USA and is now spreading through Canadian schools, with this year being Crossley's first to participate in the program. Members of the Grade 11 and 12 classes have banded together to form the Link Crew, whose goal is to help the Grade 9's transition as smoothly as possible into high school; encouraging them to branch out and get involved, all the while creating a greater sense of community throughout the school. The faculty and students at E.L. Crossley feel that it's time to change the school culture, bridging the divide between grades and social groups.

The Link Crew Leaders were tasked with leading the Grade 9 orientation, which, for the first time here at Crossley, was a series of interactive activities to give them the opportunity to make new friends and feel comfortable in a new environment. The leaders' work doesn't stop there, though. They are each responsible for a group of Grade 9's all year. The leaders perform academic followups including visits to their group of grade nines' classes and hosting sessions with them to teach life lessons to help them get through the year. They also perform social followups, such as going to dances, lunches, and other school events, like their "Friday Chill Session," where they met to discuss their first week in high school. Lastly, the leaders must initiate contact with their students on their own, by calling them to check in, and approaching them around school.

The results of the Link Crew's work can already be seen in the students. At the first dance of the year on September 21st, many of the Grade 9's could be seen socializing and having a great time; already feeling right at home here at Crossley. Bryan Hysert, one of the Grade 9's who spoke about his experience with Link and starting high school, said that, "Crossley felt like a community." The other grade nine students who were interviewed were in agreement that due to Link Crew, they felt welcomed and less nervous about their transition into high school. According to Victoria Breitenbach, it felt as though they, "Weren't the new kids." .

The Link Crew is a very diverse group of students who were chosen specifically to be able to relate to Grade 9's from all different backgrounds and with various different interests. Because there is a leader for every Grade 9 to connect

with, it has opened doors for them to get involved in the school. As Grade 9 student Mayah Speck stated, "There's a place for everyone at Crossley." One of the leaders in Link, Tyler Dobbie, spoke about his reasons for joining the Crew. "I wasn't very outgoing in Grade 9 and wanted to help make sure that the grade 9's this year felt comfortable enough to get involved," Dobbie said. He thought that it was fun to work with the Grade 9's and encourage them to open up. The Link leaders make genuine connections with their Grade 9's and help them to get involved in the school, whether it be making new friends, attending events, or joining clubs.

The Link crew isn't only beneficial to the Grade 9's, though. The goals of Link Crew will have an effect on the culture of Crossley as a whole, bringing students from all grades together to make genuine connections and create a greater sense of community in the school. The Grade 9's from this first year of Link will be the foundation on which Crossley's new and improved school spirit will be built. Taryn Petrovsky, a leader who spoke about Link, stated, "I think it's important to get people involved right at the beginning because they're the people who will be here the next four years." These Grade 9's will go on to become the new leaders who will continue to make positive changes during their time at Crossley, by focusing on the people in the school and bringing them together. As Michelle Gibson, a guidance counselor and Link Crew Coordinator at Crossley stated, "It's not about what is in the building, but who."