

Winter 2016-2017

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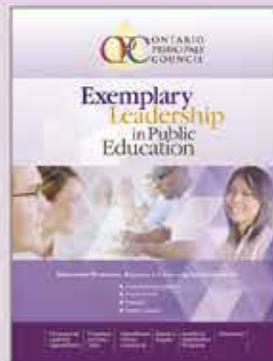


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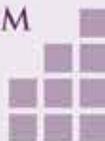
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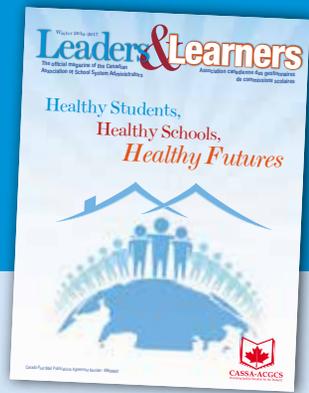
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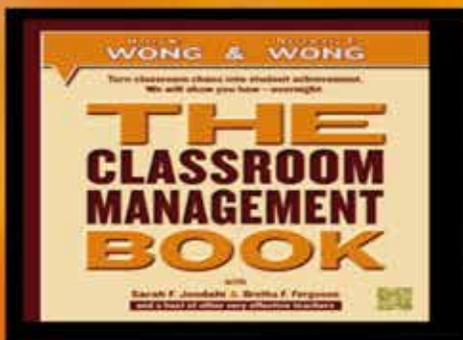
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## As system leaders, we must be intentionally directed in bringing the wellness priority to the frontline.

I am thrilled to serve as your current CASSA President during this dynamic era in education, where we have much to celebrate. My experience in special education, safe schools, continuing and alternative education, and serving as Director of Education at the Durham Catholic District School Board, shape a perspective which embraces a growth mindset, inquiry and collaborative learning. As such, I look forward to participating in an open dialogue with you as colleagues in educational leadership, true to CASSA's mission: strengthening the capacity of school system leaders and influencing the directions that impact education and student learning.

In keeping with our theme of *Healthy Students, Healthy Communities, Healthy Futures*, we aim to promote a culture of caring where learning and professional growth takes place routinely in our school systems.

Over the years, I have learned that all children, youth and adults can learn and achieve success with the appropriate instruction and support. As part of the CASSA executive team, I look forward to being involved with various organizations across the country, with common interests in education, particularly in keeping with our strategic priorities in the areas of student success, mental health, human rights and indigenous education. Together, we can share our knowledge and experiences, strengthening Canada's reputation for excellence in quality publicly funded education.

With the growing emphasis on mental health in schools and in the workplace, the time is right to listen, learn and model our knowledge in the area of well-being. As system leaders, we must be intentionally directed in bringing the wellness priority to the frontline. Just as we aim to implement best teaching

and learning practices in academics into our schools with personalization and collaboration, we must look at how we are integrating self-care as a habit of mind for our school administrators, educators, support staff and all employees.

Ontario's *Foundations for a Healthy School*<sup>1</sup> indicates that the research is clear: healthy students are better prepared to learn, and education is a key determinant of health.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines a health promoting school as one that constantly strengthens its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working.<sup>2</sup> WHO offers some characteristics of a health promoting school which we, as leaders, can reference as a benchmark for our schools. A health promoting school:

- Fosters health and learning with all the measures at its disposal.
- Engages health and education officials, teachers, teachers' unions, students, parents, health providers and community leaders in efforts to make the school a healthy place.
- Strives to provide a healthy environment, school health education and school health services, along with school/community projects and outreach, health promotion programs for staff, nutrition and food safety programs, opportunities for physical education and recreation, and programs for counselling, social support and mental health promotion.
- Implements policies and practices that respect an individual's well-being and dignity, provide multiple opportunities for success, and acknowledge good efforts and intentions, as well as personal achievements.
- Strives to improve the health of school personnel, families and community members, as well as pupils; and works with community leaders to help them understand how the community contributes to, or undermines, health and education.



Anne O'Brien  
CASSA/ACGCS President

What can we do as leaders to promote healthy schools? Recently, I had the privilege of bringing the voice of CASSA to the *First Nations Schools First Symposium*, which focused on ensuring the success of all Indigenous students. In addition, I attended the Annual O.P.C. International Symposium themed *Global Trends for All Generations: Exploring Work-life Balance and Well-being*. Through events like these, CASSA joined many school system leaders and had the opportunity to hear from renowned speakers on educational leadership, policy, knowledge management and partnership on promoting healthy schools. These sessions examined our responsibility in meeting the needs of a new generation of school leaders.

Through professional learning opportunities like these and our Annual CASSA Conference in Halifax on July 4-7, 2017, focused on *Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities, Healthy Future*, we can learn, lead, discover and collaborate in making our schools and workplaces leaders in well-being and achievement.

### References

1. [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthy-schools/resourceF4HS.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthy-schools/resourceF4HS.pdf)
2. [www.who.int/school\\_youth\\_health/gshi/hps/en](http://www.who.int/school_youth_health/gshi/hps/en)

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*“The research is clear: healthy students are better prepared to learn, and education is a key determinant of health. Elevating wellbeing as a goal for education in Ontario recognizes its fundamental importance to our learners and their futures.”*

– Healthy Schools: Foundations for a Healthy School, Promoting wellbeing is part of Ontario’s Achieving Excellence vision. A companion resource to the K-12 School Effectiveness Framework.



**Ken Bain**  
CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

**T**here can be no doubt that healthy students (physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually) result in healthy schools, and that healthy schools are part of a healthy community.

The Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) Board of Directors is committed to seeking to improve the health and wellbeing of our students, schools and communities. Last year, we held a very successful annual conference in which we addressed social justice and

student responsibility, including a mental health strand. This year we are convening in Halifax, Nova Scotia, to examine how schools and communities can work together to create a healthy future.

One of the ways in which CASSA positions itself as a voice for education is to publish and distribute our *Leaders & Learners* magazine. Our intent is to highlight cross-Canadian initiatives that support our goals and annual theme.

This issue of *Leaders & Learners* highlights some promising practices from the 300 Drum Project in Fort Smith, NWT, how Fort McMurray Catholic Schools

partnered with local agencies in the aftermath of the devastating 2016 fire, and how Parkdale Elementary School in Quebec created the Community Learning Centre to address the varied health-related needs of its largely newcomer population. This is just a small sampling of what you’ll find in this issue of the magazine.

I want to express my thanks to everyone who took the time to submit proposals for consideration. There will be many more articles and stories in the next journal... coming out in June 2017, leading up to our conference. I hope to see you in Halifax in July!

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# Escaping the Belly of the Beast:

## *Healing After the Largest Natural Disaster in Canadian History*



*A view from behind Father Mercredi High School on the afternoon of May 3.  
Credit: Cody Chenier, a Father Mercredi High School photography student.*

By Megan McKenny, Fort McMurray Catholic Schools



*Deputy Superintendent Monica Mankowski, Father Andrew, Mental Health Coordinator Trudy Dwyer, and Superintendent George McGuigan. Quilts donated to Fort McMurray Catholic Schools were shared with staff members who lost their homes in the wildfire.*



*A welcome back to students at the doorstep of Father Turcotte School on the first day of school.*



*Alberta Education Minister Dave Eggen with St. Kateri Principal Valerie Dyck on the first day of school.*

May 3, 2016 is a day that will never fade from the memories of the residents of Fort McMurray, Alberta. It was a day where so much was lost. Every single person who was in Fort McMurray that day has changed, as have their loved ones, who watched from afar, waiting for the news of the evacuation from the wildfire now commonly referred to as the Beast.

What falsely appeared to be a beautiful morning turned horrific with very little notice. For the Fort McMurray Catholic Schools family, there were approximately 6,000 students and almost 1,000 staff to evacuate from 11 schools, and then from the city. This evacuation started with the two elementary schools closest to the quickly encroaching fire during the early afternoon and continued throughout the day.

Students were reunited with parents who could pick up their children at schools. As the staged evacuation continued, students who remained downtown or at schools in the Thickwood subdivision were moved by bus further north in the city to try and reunite families before the choice would have to be



Members of the Wood Buffalo RCMP with St. Kateri Principal Valerie Dyck and Vice-Principal Dixie Lee-Smerek following an assembly to thank first responders.

made to head north out of the city. Some students also had to reunite with their families at the evacuation centre at MacDonald Island downtown. A small number of students remained with their school families and headed north in a school bus with a staff member. In their widely documented story, this group went north and then came back south in the wee hours of the morning and the final students were reunited with their family the next day.

After the successful evacuation of the city, the Fort McMurray Catholic Schools family was able to connect via technology and the odd reunion away from our home.

It wasn't until June when residents were able to come back to their home city and see it with their own eyes and hearts.

How can a city and school district heal after the largest natural disaster in Canadian history? There are 88,000 stories of the slow motion great escape of Fort McMurray on May 3.

Monica Mankowski, Fort McMurray Catholic Schools' Deputy Superintendent of Inclusive Education, says planning began immediately.

"Even as we were still driving out of the city and seeing the destruction, we were discussing what steps we'd need to take to support our schools family. As a group together evacuated,

we watched the news of the fire on May 4 and 5. We all had lived in Fort McMurray for a long time and wanted to return to our homes. Most of the day, I was listening to make sure our staff and friends had made it to safety," says Mankowski.

"Initially, we really thought we would be able to return to schools in early June," she continues. "We gathered information from Slave Lake and High Level to hear what factors would have the most positive effect and impact on our schools. We wanted to have the families and children back in schools so they could connect. We wanted to minimize the effects of the evacuation and the wildfire on our staff, students, and families. We wanted to go home. Quickly, we mobilized with Alberta Education, Alberta Health Services, the Calgary Board of Education, Canadian Red Cross, other school jurisdictions, and United Way to develop a re-entry plan that included mental health supports."

It was soon learned that the school year would have to be over and that we wouldn't be able to reconnect as a full district family until late August 2016. Mankowski says we still needed to come together.

"Our first focus was on our Principals and Senior Administrators. They were our key decision-makers during the evacuation," says

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Mankowski. “We set up a critical incident debriefing in June prior to summer. We needed to help them process their experience and help them heal.”

The next step was our return in August. “The second phase was to provide education and professional training for staff,” continues Mankowski. “This would allow staff to understand the grief and loss process and help them apply their own experiences. Psychological First Aid sessions would allow staff to be able to respond to others when they are not coping.”

Then, before the first day of school, families were able to return to their school and pick up any personal items that may have been left behind during the hasty exit back in May. Mental health supports were available and students and teachers were able to reconnect in person.

Mellaine Fraser, Fort McMurray Catholic Schools’ Mental Health Therapist and Parent Coach returned to work with the District following the wildfire.

“I remember feeling the day of the evacuation that I could never possibly reach all of the families that need support when we get back from my family practice. I felt coming back to the District would be how I could best serve as many families as possible. I messaged the District early in May and told them, ‘I need to come back if you will have me. There is so much I can do for families.’ I had still been working with the District, but I needed to be back full-time. I couldn’t best serve our families from the outside looking in,” says Fraser.

“This opened up our families to services that many families didn’t even know were available in the District,” she adds. “Our supports have taken a weight off of the shoulders of our parents. I have been doing a lot of family counselling. Everyone is affected. And everyone is affected in different ways. We all have a story from that one day and after.”

Fraser says people have been willing to accept help. “Our families are willing to participate. They are thankful for the support. I lived through this, too. I was there. I felt the fear, I felt the pressure. I have five kids. Some families feel isolated; some feel they aren’t getting through it quickly enough. We need to start learning to count on each other. We’re not invincible. There are times when we all need help.” ○

*Megan McKenny is Communications Coordinator for Fort McMurray Catholic Schools.*

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# Walking the Path: The Jech'ani Project

By Paul Boucher and Sarah Pruys, South Slave Divisional Education Council

By the end of this school year, every student and staff member at Paul W. Kaeser High School in Fort Smith, NT will have built their own Dene drum. This is no easy feat—producing over 200 drums in just 10 short months—but Aboriginal Language Instructor Paul Boucher is the driving force behind the project and he is up to the challenge.

Boucher, a Chipewyan teacher, chose to call the project *Jech'ani*, which means “Walking the Path,” to teach students and staff about the paths their ancestors walked, and the values and beliefs they held. By learning from the past, his Grade 7 to 12 students can learn how to make the right decisions, choose the right paths, and find success for themselves. While they also learn the technical skills involved in the process of making a drum, it is equally important that students learn how the power of the drum can lead them in the right direction.

“We all have a path to walk, but how you walk it is up to you,” explains Boucher.

In the Dene culture, the drum is a sacred instrument rich in tradition that is said to influence health, wellness, and spirituality. While they will not have time to delve fully into the depth of the spirituality and sacred knowledge connected to the drum, by the end of the *Jech'ani* project, students will know how to build a drum, will be aware



*Proud to hold his new drum!*

#### Images, Top Down:

1. Boucher and his students cutting hides.
2. The drum frames.
3. A student helps build a drum.
4. The finished product.

of how to respect and properly handle the instrument, and will have an understanding of the Dene history, wisdom, and power that is tied to drumming.

“The drum-making process is a collaborative and holistic approach to assisting students in learning about the drum,” says Boucher. By having the students, 90 per cent of whom are of Indigenous descent, involved in the process from start to finish, they are more invested in the importance of the project and more likely to build meaningful connections to their culture. In addition, they are also learning hands-on skills that they may pass down to future generations in hopes that this knowledge will not be forgotten.

Creating a drum is a process centred on growth, and as students learn, they walk further down their path toward success. The journey to have a finished drum that is ready to play is not easy, but it is worth it. Boucher hopes students will take these life lessons to heart as they cut and soak their hides, stretch the hides over the frames, and go out into the woods to harvest drum beaters.

Boucher has already seen the positive power of the drum on his students, and the

ripple effect that *Jech'am* is having in the school and in the community.

As Boucher began teaching his students a celebration song to play at hand game tournaments, one young man began humming along to the beat. Slowly, the hum turned into a chant, and the chant has now become the school's song that speaks of ancestors and angels watching over the students. And what of the impact on the student who led them to create the song? Boucher is confident he is proud and more focused and mature because of his deep and personal connection to drumming and the lessons he is learning along the way.

When students pick up their drum, they are brought back to the path they are supposed to follow. They become excited and begin to ask questions, and Boucher gently encourages them to ask their parents and Elders because he believes they should be the first teachers. Drumming opens doors for children and their parents to have meaningful conversations and form stronger relationships—and for students to become an important part of their community and feel like they belong, as they are invited to perform at events.

Over the week-long process required to complete a drum, students practice patience and creativity, and learn about the relationship between effort and reward. They gain confidence, trust, and leadership skills, and their self-esteem rises. Soon, the students have learned the important values needed to walk their paths with their heads held high.

The students also learn about the proper handling, stance, body posture, and storage of the drum and the beater—all lessons that inherently teach respect toward Dene culture and help the drummer develop a relationship with their instrument.

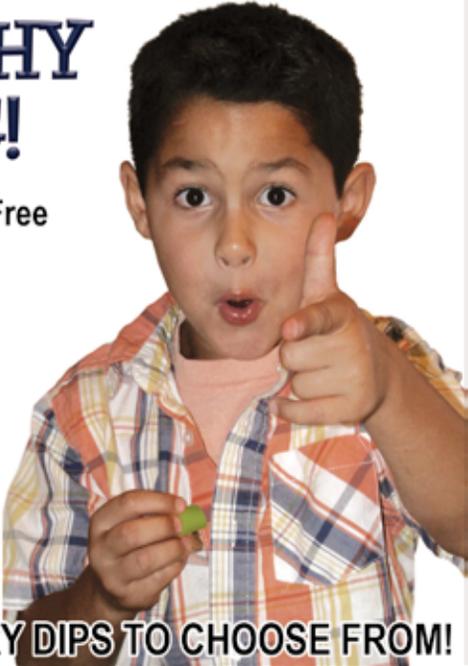
“When their eyes light up, you know you have touched their hearts,” says Boucher of his students, who stand taller and prouder when they are holding their drums.

Finally, he explains that the beat of the drum and the rhythmic chants help focus the mind, cleanse the spirit, and lead to a light heart. For the Dene people, drumming remains an integral part of all gatherings, with the mind, spirit, and heart at the centre of each song. Whether it is a prayer, healing, or celebration song, by focusing on the three entities of the body, drummers sing songs for wellness and ask to be able to continue to walk on Earth.

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Boucher also designed the *Jech'ani* project in a holistic manner intended to integrate other subjects in order to provide well-rounded and engaging lessons for all grade levels.

Art is intertwined as students personalize the inside of their drum when they wind hide around the handle, braiding, twisting, and weaving rose-shaped patterns.

English Language Arts is incorporated, too; after the drum is completed, students are required to write about their experience as a way to preserve culture. Aboriginal language is also an integral part of the project,

as the students learn Dene drum songs and words used to describe the drum.

Music and history are integrated, as students explore drum songs and their origins, as well as the types of drums and songs used at different events.

Students also practice their inquiry skills as they research, identify, create meaning, and make their learning public.

While Dene culture has evolved as times have changed, the power of the drum and drum-making has remained the same—the technique and materials are no different than they were 100 years ago, and

neither are the important lessons that are learned. ○

*Paul Boucher teaches Chipewyan to Grade 7 to 12 students at Paul W. Kaeser High School. Prior to Jech'ani, he developed ëk'ëch'a Helá or "Scramble," a word game similar to Scrabble to engage his students in learning their language.*

*Sarah Pruys is the Public Affairs Coordinator with the South Slave Divisional Education Council. She loves the strong sense of community and the amazing things happening in the schools across the region.*



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# Supporting the COMMUNITY when Tragedy Strikes:

## *A Faith-Based Response*

By Jody Primeau, Calgary Catholic School District

**E**ach of our school communities are close knit, faith-filled communities. When a tragic event, such as the sudden death or suicide of a student, staff member, or family member, strikes one of our schools, the result can be devastating. It is imperative that there are plans and supports in place for appropriate interventions to reduce the negative impact and trauma that critical incidents can have on a school community.

To this end, the Calgary Catholic School District (CCSD) has a well-established Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) that supports school communities in responding to such tragic events within the context of our Catholic faith. The CCSD CIRT is a collaborative effort between our religious education team, our counselling team, and our Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) team. The level of involvement of each of these teams is dependent on the expressed needs of the school and the individual situation. With all critical incidents, we rely on our faith to guide and strengthen us.

### **What is a critical incident?**

An incident is defined as critical when it overwhelms the system's ability to cope. Various factors determine how a school

reacts to an incident (e.g., age of the students, resources within the school, past experiences with trauma). Critical incidents may include sudden or anticipated deaths or serious injuries or major events such as fires, flooding or threats to the community. When planning a response, it is important to look at the significance of the impact on the members of the community, not the size.

At the CCSD, the Principal, in consultation with the CIRT team, determines the level of support and services required. As it is not always possible to predetermine the needs of a school, CIRT members make decisions on issues as they arise in consultation with the Principal and, as needed, the Area Superintendent or Area Director.

### **The team**

In addition to members from the district teams previously mentioned, some school counsellors and members of our intercultural wellness team (who support students and their families who are new to Canada) are also trained and available as needed. All team members receive training in our Catholic understanding of death and grief as well as the CIRT process.

School-based teams vary from school to school and include administrators, school counsellors, chaplains, and lead teachers. Outside supports such as parish priests may be brought in, depending on the wishes of

the family and school. The role of the CIRT team is to support the school-based team so it can effectively respond to the needs of its school community.

### **A faith-based response**

From the planning stages to the personal support offered to schools during the initial crisis and beyond, our faith is embedded throughout the process. A Catholic response to a critical incident strives to uphold dignity, affirm hope through scripture and prayer, minister consolation, and accompany mourners through their journey of grief.

### **The process**

An important factor in the success of a critical incident response plan is to ensure there are clear, easy-to-follow steps. A well-established plan for dealing with critical incidents provides clarity in a time of confusion and supports thorough and reasoned decision-making.

Principals are provided with a critical incident response quick reference guide that includes phone numbers of superintendents, directors and team members. It also includes a brief, step-by-step process to help the Principal formulate the response plan. The recommended steps include:

- 1. Principal or designate is to contact the CIRT lead and inform Area Superintendent or Area Director.** At this point, the

*“The calm and caring guidance of the Critical Incident Response Team assisted our school community in dealing with the sudden loss of one of our students. The skill and expertise they shared allowed us to grieve and begin healing.”*

*– Principal, Elementary School*

*“The support the Critical Incident Response team offers to our school community is invaluable. While the rest of us are emotional, grief-stricken and distracted, they take the lead and guide us through the experience.”*

*– Gord MacDonald, Principal, Holy Cross School*

*“When the unthinkable happened (one of our students was involved in a devastating accident and passed away), the CIRT team was immediately available to support our students, staff members and the family of the little girl. The blueprint they laid out for our school allowed us to make decisions and choices that were crucial in supporting our community while maintaining the family’s privacy and inviting their input into the decisions we made moving forward.”*

*– Tony Dal Cin, Principal, Elementary & Jr. High School*

team lead and the Principal can begin to design a comprehensive plan of action and identify school-based and CIRT members to be included in the response.

- 2. Confirm the death and seek permission from the family.** Although the CIRT’s role is to respond to the larger community, it is vital that decisions be made while respecting the family’s wishes. The initial contact with the family serves to offer condolences, support and prayers, and also to request permission to share the news with the school community.
- 3. Contact the district’s Communications department.** When news of the death of a community member is shared with the student population, Communications drafts a letter to send to parents and guardians. Parents/legal guardians play a primary role in supporting and nurturing their children, and they are better able to fulfill this role if they are included in the process.
- 4. Engage a school-based team.** The Principal will contact key members of the school community and arrange for a planning/coordinating meeting. A staff meeting is also planned and details are communicated with staff.
- 5. Hold a staff meeting.** It is critical to plan a staff meeting as soon as possible, as word

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and rumours can start to spread among the school community very quickly, and staff members need to be prepared to respond. The staff meeting will consist of a liturgy, sharing of information and prepared scripts for classrooms, identification of vulnerable students, and time to answer any questions and concerns. At all times, there is a focus on respect and confidentiality of the affected family. A debrief meeting for later that day is also planned at this time.

- 6. Engage the counselling team.** Maintaining normalcy in the school day while providing support for students and staff members who need it is a delicate balancing act. Not all members of the school community will be impacted by an event and it is important to respect each individual's response. A sacred space is set up in the chapel or learning commons for students who are having difficulty coping in the classroom. From this space, counsellors and chaplains can triage students who need additional counselling support and those who may need to go home. Staff members are informed that the EFAP team is available and may be on-site, if deemed necessary.
- 7. Follow-up.** Ongoing support and referrals are offered as needed. This includes specific services and support for the grieving family. The goal is to have the school engage its internal coping strategies once the crisis has passed, but ongoing support will vary by school.

### Conclusion

The CCSD aims to continue to improve its process in this very important area through continued training, reflection and refinement of practices in response to experience, feedback, and research in the field. Although it is impossible to take away the pain, grief and sadness that surrounds a critical incident, it is our belief that through our faith and a well-planned response, we can best support school communities on the road to healing. ○

*Jody Primeau is a guidance counselling consultant with the Calgary Catholic School District.*

**Although the CIRT's role is to respond to the larger community, it is vital that decisions be made while respecting the family's wishes. The initial contact with the family serves to offer condolences, support and prayers, and also to request permission to share the news with the school community.**



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# The Fire Within Us:

## A Student Mental Health Inquiry Project Summit

*Messages on the Wall of Wow.*



*The Fire Within Us Youth Mental Health Summit brought together students, teachers and counsellors to engage in conversations and knowledge exchange around positive mental well-being.*



By Vianne Kintzinger, Janelle Zebedee and Tricia Penny, Central Okanagan School District

Our journey in the development of a three day student mental health summit began in February of 2015, when student peer counsellors from one of our local high schools attended the *Balancing Our Minds Youth Summit* in Vancouver, BC. These empowered youth came back to our district with a wish to inspire their fellow students to support mental well-being and fight the stigma around mental illness.

The results from the *2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey* indicated that our students identified an increase in mental health concerns (specifically depression and anxiety disorders). Knowing that protective factors such as school connectedness, caring adults, and having someone to turn to for help is essential to support positive well-being, we, our newly formed summit committee, aimed to move from a problem-focused approach with mental health to an approach of well-being. So began our goal to develop a learning opportunity for students and staff that would bring together school teams from across our district. Together, we were committed to galvanizing those teams to reflect on their unique school cultures, brainstorm

the needs of their peers and create a school inquiry question leading to action!

*The Fire Within Us Youth Mental Health Summit* was held in November 2015 and brought together a team from 12 local middle and secondary schools. Each of these teams consisted of eight students, a teacher and counsellor. During the first day of the three-day event, we brought our teachers and counsellors from each school together to support their learning. Together, we co-created our vision for the summit and increased our learning on the development of an inquiry project.

Day two of the summit brought each of our school teams together to engage in conversations and knowledge exchange around positive mental well-being. It was truly an inspirational collaborative community event. We showcased local resources available to our students through a carousel of activity including the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Living Positive Centre, the Forces Family Support, ARC Programs and Services, Bridges, the Red Cross, Compassionate Friends, Third Space, the LGBTQ Youth Group, the RCMP liaison officers, and Child and Youth Mental Health. On that day, we learned, we laughed, we hugged, and we danced together. We celebrated each other's differences.

At the end of the day, students were asked to return to their schools and engage in a scanning process around the mental health and well-being of their school community members.

Finally, students reconnected for a planning day to identify the successes and obstacles they had observed in their school environment. After reflecting on their unique school context, the student teams developed inquiry questions, focused on how they would increase the number of their peers experiencing positive mental well-being and further support cultures in which all students thrived in their school community.

After the summit event, the school teams made plans to positively impact their schools. Grounded in the Spirals of Inquiry, each team took action within their respective school environments. We then saw inspirational work by our student teams in each of our 12 middle and secondary schools. This work was co-designed and implemented by students who took ownership of their plans to support student well-being. We were amazed by their ideas, their creativity, and their passion to make a difference.

Our larger community recognized our students' work as well. A local community donor fueled the *Fire Within Us* by

providing financial funding for each school team to further its work. Through collaboration, perseverance, and some risk-taking, the student teams created opportunities to make their work visible in their schools. This visibility looked different in each school. In some, it was an anonymous endeavour to spread kindness and love. In others, it was a school-wide assembly to activate and educate their peers. In yet other schools, it was a month of gratitude. For all of our students, each of their action plans was grounded in the vision to create a culture of well-being in every school.

In May of 2016, we brought each of our school teams back together to share their work. Our students were surprised and in awe of the work done by their peers. It was truly a day of celebration and renewed commitment to supporting mental health and well-being in every school. In the Central Okanagan School District, we are now dedicated to having a mental health youth summit every second year. During the alternate years, we will bring our school teams back together to assess the impact of their inquiry actions and make adjustments to ensure continuous, relevant support for our students.

Youth engagement is a powerful model for facilitating positive development and change. We believe that creating this sense of empowerment in youth contributes to greater resiliency and optimism. Further, within our students, it supports a sense that they can withstand—and, indeed, effect—change in their constantly shifting world. We continue to be amazed by our students’ energy, passion, enthusiasm, and thoughtfulness to make their schools better places for everyone. ○

*Vianne Kintzinger is Assistant Superintendent of the Central Okanagan School District. She can be reached at [vianne.kintzinger@sd23.bc.ca](mailto:vianne.kintzinger@sd23.bc.ca). Janelle Zebedee and Tricia Penny are both Health Promoting Schools Teacher Consultants in the Central Okanagan School District. They can be reached at [janelle.zebedee@sd23.bc.ca](mailto:janelle.zebedee@sd23.bc.ca) and [tricia.penny@sd23.bc.ca](mailto:tricia.penny@sd23.bc.ca), respectively.*

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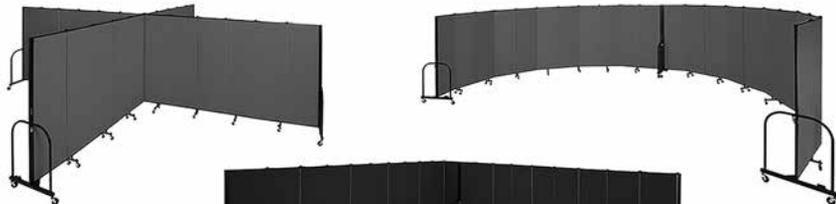
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# Clearview Public Schools is Making the Grade in Health and Wellness



By Brenda MacDonald, Clearview Public Schools

**F**rom the boardroom to the classroom, Clearview Public Schools is implementing game-changing strategies to support both staff and students. Perhaps even more noteworthy is January 2016, when it all began. This momentum was possible because of the committed members of the Board Trustees, Alberta Health Services, Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan coordinators, and many Central Office representatives, all of whom have a strong desire to positively impact staff and students in the area of health and wellness.

A bold approach taking used and expired health spending dollars and an additional supplement of unspent resources to fund and promote staff health and wellness are being implemented. Initially, the committee reviewed the best use of resources and recommended the dollars to support wellness ideas that are specific to staff, school, and a monthly awareness campaign. The student health and wellness initiative is funded by a grant from Alberta Health Services. Like other school districts across Alberta, we know that healthy students and staff have a positive impact on student learning and lifelong health habits.

## Solutions that made the grade

Clearview's most valuable assets are its students and employees! The school division wants everyone to enjoy their school

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**Although the school site wellness journey has been short, the impact has been significant.**

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environment and bring the best of themselves to school every day. To kickstart our staff wellness work, Clearview launched a survey and a monthly awareness campaign. Each school received tangibles and information on the benefits of water, healthy snacks, sunscreen, playing, eating salad and gratitude. Our hope for the launch was to educate, engage and empower staff on health, fitness, and mental well-being. We are promoting Clearview as a centre of wellness, making employees happier, more resilient, engaged and productive.

If Clearview is to be well-rounded, it also needs to support and encourage physical well-being as a lifestyle choice. As part of the health and wellness plan, staff members were able to purchase fitness equipment of their choosing with the opportunity to be reimbursed up to \$300. This reimbursement removed some the financial barriers to a healthy lifestyle. Given these favourable terms, participation was high in the program's first six months of operation, and it is hopeful that it will continue.

The on-site school projects have sparked an interest in school climate and culture around health and wellness. The school

projects included tower gardening, standup desks, Fitbit, fitness classes, yoga classes, water fountains to replace water bottles, and healthy snacks and lunches. Inadvertently, the on-site projects' primary target was staff, but positive benefits rippled down to the students. For example, the tower gardens are being maintained by the students with the advantage of being able to eat from their garden. The Fitbits are also used in physical education classes. Finally, employees and students are benefiting from the new water fountain, therefore lessening the use of plastic water bottles. Although the school site wellness journey has been short, the impact has been significant.

## A+ students

Running parallel to the staff wellness program is the student grant. A key focus is making health and wellness concepts relevant to students in ways that connected to their interests and the needs of their communities. Students examined their current school reality through a focused conversation. The conversation with the student wellness school ambassadors began with defining wellness,

ranking their school according to their definition, sharing best practices that already exist, and finally articulating how to best improve their school.

In the fall, the students re-examined their spring responses to determine if their perceptions of wellness were still the same. Finally, the students were asked to identify one aspect of health or wellness that was in their circle of influence. After some refinement, students created an essential health and wellness question around what they wanted to change in their school.

In December 2016, Clearview students united at the Student Wellness Conference to kickstart their action research projects, refine those projects with local experts, determine the resources needed and finally create a solid action plan. The youth conference offered a powerful way to make learning relevant to students' lives, develop critical thinking and organizational skills and provide a space to share creative ideas to empower other students to become agents of change.

The culminating activity at the conference was teambuilding through fitness. The students' projects are as diverse as their school communities. Some of the students' ideas included:

- Changing food choices in the school cafeteria;
- Laughter as a tool to build school morale;
- Addressing mental health issues; and
- Creating a student-directed intramural program where none existed.

The conference was crucial to project development.

The Clearview Public Schools organization believes we can empower students with knowledge, skill sets and confidence to make an incremental change in all aspects of personal health and the health of their schools. At the end of the year, the students' projects will be showcased to share the progress, successes, and obstacles and to reflect on how the students can continue and sustain their work.

**The results are in**

Although the staff and student health and wellness initiatives are in their infancy, we have seen immediate and positive results. Employees and students have noticed that Clearview is showing concern for their health and well-being. There is a genuine appreciation for the small incentives and self-directed and school-focused projects. Students are

taking ownership of their school wellness culture. These examples only fuel the synergy on the student and staff committees.

Clearview looks forward to examining various metrics to determine the success and impact of the health and wellness projects. The anticipated goals are to shift the culture to one that embraces a healthy and balanced approach to work and school and to increase health and knowledge with access to tools to make healthier lifestyle choices and adopt healthier practices. Additionally, the hope is to build a school jurisdiction that will attract

new employees and students and increase the retention of existing employees and students with long-term benefits for students' well-being and achievements. Clearview staff and student health and well-being are valued, making it a first-choice learning environment. ○

*Brenda MacDonald is Deputy Superintendent of Clearview Public Schools. She is an advocate for caring and healthy learning environments and has been an impatient optimist about student learning and education for 32 years.*

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MADE IN CANADA

# The Parkdale Community Garden: Urban Gardening for a Healthier Future

By Marylène Perron and Katherine Dimas, English Montreal School Board

*“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.” – Mother Teresa*



Schools can help create the roots of a better future for all students. Community offers concrete problems to be solved. By coming together, school and community can offer students opportunities to develop knowledge and skills that will make an impact. The story behind the Parkdale Community Garden demonstrates how powerful the school and community connection can be.

Parkdale Elementary School, located in a low-socioeconomic area of Montreal, serves a multicultural community: 85 per cent of parents were born outside of Canada and 60 per cent of students speak another language beyond English or French at home. These families face various challenges due to immigrating to a new country— isolation, getting used to winter, and learning to cook different foods, just to name a few. As parents struggle to adapt, they look to the school to help them support their integration. Quickly, the school realized it could not and should not do it alone. To tackle this complex situation, there needed to be a conscious effort to bring various partners together.

Five years ago, it was noted by many that students from Parkdale were facing multiple health challenges: poor eating habits, poor dental hygiene and high levels of stress. The school, its newly created Community Learning Center, and community organizations launched the 5 on 5 initiative to try to instill healthy living habits in students. At the beginning, the main focus was on early intervention in the younger

grades. Students and parents were both the focus of our efforts.

In September 2012, the school nurse and teachers hosted a series of hands-on workshops focusing on healthy habits supporting school success, such as regular bedtime, adding fruits and vegetables to diet, playing outside and adding physical activity to the family schedule. Furthermore, participants were also offered a variety of food items that were suitable to bring as a snack. To break isolation, an after-school collective kitchen was established at the local health services center (CLSC). During the winter months, parents and children met every month to cook recipes with produce that may have been unknown to them. The goal was to make cooking fun and to introduce families

to what was available in their neighbourhoods' grocery stores.

The next step consisted of the introduction of gardening to students and parents. In the spring of 2013, the Parkdale Community Garden was created in partnership with VertCité, an organization involved in promoting environmentally-friendly initiatives. With support from their staff, lessons took place for students to understand the growth cycle of plants. They learned that, with time and care, a little seed can produce food. Students also started composting on a small scale.

Every year, we developed a planting cycle. In the spring, the students plant their seeds. They follow the growth of the seedlings and plant them in the garden



when they are ready. Parents are invited to join their child for gardening time. It is amazing how parents of some of the most challenging students willingly come to school for this activity. We meet parents we would never see otherwise, and many participate every year. During the summer, volunteers come to water the garden and pick the produce when it is ripe. In the fall, a harvest festival takes place to celebrate the efforts of everyone involved in the project. Volunteers and school staff cook for the students so they can taste the various vegetables found in the garden. For many of the students and families, this discovery of tastes is something totally new.

During the last school year, workshops on kitchen basics and international cooking lessons were added. This way, students get introduced to new fruits and vegetables, learn how to cook them and are given the tools to make better choices. In addition, the school garden has been reaching the community through a volunteer program and the distribution of produce to a local food bank. Last summer, 130 kilograms of food were given to the community. On an environmental note, in 2015 and 2016, the garden

has been officially recognized by *Espace pour la vie*, a Montreal organization that includes the Montreal Botanical Garden, for the impact it has on biodiversity in Quebec.

Furthermore, to provide our students and our neighbours with an attractive space to hang out, an outdoor classroom was also created and two gazebos were added to generate shade. To solve the problem of flooding in the yard every spring, an arboretum was inaugurated to provide shade in the future and to naturally reduce the amount of water stagnating in the yard. By adding trees known to need lots of water, we are hoping to decrease the amount of water found in the yard, allowing students access to every area of the schoolyard all year long. As an urban school where access to nature can be limited, it also means giving students access to a green and safe space.

As this program is entering its fifth year, we can now start witnessing the results of this initiative. Students are bringing healthier snacks to school and they eat more fruits and vegetables than before. Professionals are noticing improvements in dental hygiene. Parent involvement in activities has

increased and reading scores have reached levels no one could have predicted.

Moreover, the school's reputation in the community has become more positive and additional partners are seeking to get involved with us for different projects. By bringing school and community together and working hand-in-hand toward the same goal, we are making a systemic impact that will hopefully be long-lasting. ○

*Marylene Perron, B.Ed. (TFSL), M.Ed. (Administration) is the Principal of Parkdale Elementary School and Parkdale CLC, both of which are in the English Montreal School Board. She believes one of her important roles is to magnify leadership throughout the school building and beyond. She was chosen as one of Canada's Outstanding Principals in 2016.*

*Katherine Dimas, M.A. (Child Studies) is a Community Development Agent for Parkdale School Community Learning Center (CLC) in the English Montreal School Board. She works with schools, families, and community organizations to develop partnerships that offer educational, recreational, social, and cultural opportunities for youth, families, and the English-speaking community.*

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# Bringing Family, School & Community Together to Prevent Risky Behaviours: *An Amazing Prevention Adventure*

By Viviane Briand, Lester B. Pearson School Board



**LIFE IS FULL OF  
POSSIBILITIES**



*Grades 5 and 6 students participate in the Amazing Prevention Adventure.*

**T**he idea of transitioning from elementary to high school can be a little daunting and sometimes downright scary for pre-teens—and their parents. High school can also be anticipated as one of the most exciting times for a young person, with new opportunities and choices to look forward to.

Adolescence is characterized by a host of developmental changes, one of which may include increased risk-taking. Fortunately, most adolescents make it through the often turbulent teenage years just fine. Although teens may hit a few bumps along the road, the majority do not develop significant problems with alcohol, drugs, tobacco, gambling or video gaming.

As young people are most likely to experiment with risky behaviours during this key period of transition, it is during this time that prevention activities can have the greatest impact. Targeting the time of transition between elementary and high school also promotes the numerous positive facets of high school and may subsequently decrease student and parent anxiety around this impending transition.

To most effectively promote student wellness and decrease risk behaviours, the engagement of parents is key. It is equally important to draw upon the expertise of specialized community partners. The committed involvement of school, family, and community is essential to maximize the effectiveness of prevention initiatives.

Over the years, schools have continued to broaden the scope of education to encompass student well-being, including the prevention of substance abuse and other high-risk behaviours. Research indicates, and we have witnessed it first-hand, that for young people to experience success, we need to invest in their health and socio-emotional well-being, as parents, as a school board and as a broader community.

Recognizing that the high school years could be equally exhilarating and challenging, the Lester B. Pearson's School Board's (LBPSB) Student Services Department spearheaded the Partners in Prevention Committee in 2005 with the goal of collectively developing and implementing an innovative awareness initiative geared specifically

to parents. As traditional information evenings had previously failed to attract parents, the committee set out to create a new and exciting initiative to raise awareness of risky behaviors among Grade 5 and Grade 6 students and their parents, while helping them develop strategies and skills to navigate some of the tougher choices they could be facing in high school.

From this committee, The Amazing Prevention Adventure was born. The Partners in Prevention committee is a partnership of organizations dedicated to raising parent awareness of addiction-related risk behaviours such as smoking, alcohol and drug use, gambling and excessive video gaming, among young people. It is comprised of representatives of the following organizations:

- The Lester B. Pearson School Board, Student Services Department;
- The International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviours (McGill University);
- Risk Within Reason (Parent awareness on technology and high-risk behaviours);
- Portage Substance Abuse Treatment Program for Adolescents;
- The Montreal Police (SPVM);
- Fosters Addiction Rehabilitation Center (CRD Foster); and
- The Quebec Lung Association.

To facilitate participation of students and parents from over 35 LBPSB elementary schools, the Partners in Prevention Committee hosts the Amazing Prevention Adventure in three different communities in the Montreal region. These prevention evenings draw from the expertise of community partners, engaging Grade 5 and Grade 6 students and their parents in an active learning process. Upon arrival, pre-teens receive their travel backpacks with information on risky behaviours and community resources as well as fun items and souvenirs to take home. To launch the evening, a personal testimonial is delivered by a senior high school student who has experienced and risen above adversity. Her testimonial is not intended to scare students; rather, it is shared with wisdom and sensitivity. Her personal story allows students to reflect on their own strengths and resources, while encouraging them to explore the many opportunities available in high school and to discover their own passion. Parents have often commented that the personal testimonial is what they will remember most from the prevention evening.

Pre-teens and parents then embark together on an adventure whereby, following their travel

plan, they navigate through a circuit of five interactive 15-minute destinations (short workshops) animated by our leading experts and partners. They play gambling jeopardy, learn about the teen brain, practice decision-making through role play activities, learn about lung health, and familiarize themselves with the skills to recognize and cope with stress. This interactive format to drug prevention is key. The evening is fun; snacks are provided and prizes are won. Between 100 and 150 participants attend each evening.

Following their visit to the five destinations, participants gather to discuss the key

take-home messages of the evening, a little more prepared to take on some of life's real adventures. With resources in-hand, pre-teens and parents continue the conversation as they prepare to head home. In collaboration with our community partners, the Amazing Prevention Adventure provides participants with information, resources and strategies—but the real prevention work is that the conversation between pre-teens and parents has begun. ○

*Viviane Briand is the Consultant in Addictions Prevention & Health Promotion in the Lester B. Pearson School Board's Student Services Department.*

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# Working Together to Promote Mental and Physical Health



*Down and Dirty for staff wellness!  
Spartan Race 2016.*

By Char Andrew and Kathleen Finnigan, Red Deer Catholic Regional Division; and Lorna Scarlett Muise and Jackie Tomalty, Alberta Health Services

**W**hat do you do with a group of Health Champions who are effectively addressing the healthy eating and active living needs of students? You introduce them to a team of counselors that has the knowledge, resources and skill to address mental health!

Over the past five years, our community has experienced an increase in mental health concerns. During this time, a series of conversations with school districts, mental health professionals, and other community partners occurred to address mental health in our communities. Change was needed... our children were at risk.

Senior leadership within Red Deer Catholic Regional Division (RDCRD) realized they had two separate groups of staff striving to meet the physical and mental wellness needs

of students. However, the groups were working in isolation of one another at the school level. A hallway conversation between the Associate Superintendent of Inclusive Learning and the Health and Wellness Coordinator sparked a strong, viable connection between mental health and physical health.

According to *Improving Mental Health in Schools*, an article written by Eric Rossen and Katherine Cowan, "Our challenge today is to move away from the siloed approach and ensure all students have access to a range of

mental health services and to acknowledge the effect of mental health on academic, social, occupational, and life outcomes.” Rossen’s and Cowan’s article was published in the academic journal *Phi Delta Kappan* in 2015.

“Focusing on the wellness needs of our staff and students is in alignment with our division’s vision and mission, *Inspired by Christ. Aspiring to Excellence*,” says Paul Mason, Superintendent of the Red Deer Catholic Regional Division. “Putting faith and well-being first allows us to better support the learning needs of all students.”

### Working smarter, not harder

The concept of Health Champions was introduced to the Red Deer Catholic Regional Division through a partnership with Alberta Health Services in 2008.

“All of our schools have identified Health Champions. These are staff members who are passionate about health and wellness and promote healthy living at school, at home, and in their communities. In some schools, we are able to create teams that include students, staff, and parents,” says Char Andrew, Health and Wellness Coordinator with the RDCRD. “We work with a variety of experts

## The Positive Mental Health Project is designed to be sustainable over the coming years so that it has an enduring place in our schools.

from within the Division as well as community partners to provide resources, support and professional development to our Health Champions.”

Building on the success of both the Health Champion and school counsellor model, school-based teams have been formed to design and support a climate of positive mental health. These Positive Mental Health (PMH) teams include Health Champions, Student Health Leadership Teams, School Counsellors, Family School Enhancement Counsellors, Alberta Health Services in Comprehensive Health and Mental Health as well as the Associate Superintendent, Director of Inclusive Learning, and the Mental Health Consultant.

Using the *Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health: Positive Mental Health Toolkit*, the PMH teams meet for two half-day professional development sessions in September

and March and again for two school-based, collaborative half-days throughout the year. PMH projects need to be based on data and include the student voice. Knowing the social/emotional needs of learners within school communities is key for projects to be successful. Best practices that support Positive Mental Health in each of our schools and the development of action research projects using the toolkit, data from ACOL and Tell Them for Me surveys are investigated, as are other student engagement processes that focus on key areas to promote positive mental health.

“The approach needs to be comprehensive, integrated, and authentic,” says author John E. Desrochers in his book *Rx for Mental Health*.

“This is not about one project. We are talking about a cultural shift in the way we view and approach mental health problems. This has to be a school-wide initiative

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with all staff not only contributing to it, but promoting it. This cannot be the sole responsibility of the school counsellor or Health Champion,” says Kathleen Finnigan, Associate Superintendent of Inclusive Learning for the RDCRD. “It takes a village.’ We need to look at our own attitudes and beliefs around mental illness and the messages we give our students and families.”

The Positive Mental Health Project is designed to be sustainable over the coming years so that it has an enduring place in our schools. It is a targeted and tailored approach to Positive Mental Health for each school community. Simultaneously, it sets the stage for comprehensive Positive Mental Health across the RDCRD.

Carmen Baumgarten, RDCRD’s Mental Health Consultant, is a trained facilitator for Positive Mental Health First Aid. She has trained School Counsellors, Family School Enhancement Counselors and Administrators, and she has plans to train all staff members across the division.

We provide staff with training that will support their understanding of Mental Health and professional development has

been offered in schools to address specific needs.

“We want to ensure our staff members understand the connection between health, faith and learning,” comments Ryan Ledene, Associate Superintendent of Faith Development and Division Support for the RDCRD. “The approach to implement universal strategies at the classroom and school-wide level will ensure strong foundations are in place to support positive mental health. In building a strong base, we reduce the number of students needing specialized or targeted support.”

### Moving forward

We are already seeing a shift in health and wellness and the positive mental health culture of the division. We observe our staff members feeling more confident in their ability to identify and support mental health concerns in their students and colleagues. We have faith we are moving in the right direction—we know these efforts are making a difference.

Continued focus on the importance of mental health to support healthy

individuals, family and the community will remain a foundational pillar of the enhanced program for RDCRD. Addressing school-related, individual, and family issues will be pivotal in our work to create healthy individuals, positive family relationships and strong bonds within the community. ○

*Char Andrew is the Health & Wellness Coordinator for Red Deer Catholic Regional School Division. Kathleen Finnigan is the Associate Superintendent of Inclusive Learning for Red Deer Catholic Regional School Division. Lorna Scarlett Muise is the Coordinator of the School Health Program for Alberta Health Services. Jackie Tomalty is the School Health Facilitator for Alberta Health Services.*

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# Healthy Classroom, Healthy Students

*“Promoting well-being is part of Ontario’s Achieving Excellence vision. This goal emphasizes the need to focus not just on academic success, but also on the whole child and student—their cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development.”*

*– Foundations for a Healthy School document, 2014, Ontario Ministry of Education*

By Manon Séguin, Ottawa Catholic School Board

**T**he Ottawa Catholic School Board hosts a unique classroom designed to support our youth in care and students who are at risk in creative ways. Using an integrated approach that leads to a healthy classroom environment, the school principal, teacher and educational assistant (EA) developed a student-centered program promoting well-being in a semi-sheltered class of their school. The foundation of this class addresses multiple health-related topics in a more holistic way through student engagement; curriculum, teaching and learning; classroom leadership; social and physical environments; and community partnerships as outlined in the Ontario Ministry of Education’s *Foundations for a Healthy School* document.

## Student engagement

So what is so unique about this classroom? Considering student voice, a Grade 11 student wrote her teacher.

“Ever since I started this school, you have been so loving and caring,” she says. “This classroom brings out the better side of me. As soon as I walk in this classroom if I

am having a bad day, I instantly feel better. I can’t help but smile; if it wasn’t for you, I would not be busing almost two hours a day to get to school. My peers are like my family. Thank you for changing my life and making it better; you are my school mom.”

Meanwhile, in the classroom, a Grade 9 student explains to me how she had a difficult start to school beginning in Grade 1. This resulted in a negative attitude toward school, which led to fights and bullying; however, with the approach of a caring teacher who fosters a positive classroom environment, this same student has experienced much greater success.

While she was telling her story, another student yelled out loud, “You are a ray of sunshine!” It was a genuine compliment to the Grade 9 student who was speaking. Students in this class demonstrate their understanding of positive relationships and their potential due to the fact that their teacher and EA offer opportunities to address their emotional needs.

## Curriculum, teaching and learning

Most of the students in this classroom have had attendance issues in the past; however, these behaviours have significantly improved. Students are encouraged to focus on their learning. First, this semi-sheltered class offers

individualized learning in the morning, and then students are integrated into regular classes in the afternoon. The focus on academic subjects in the morning allows specialized classes to be timetabled in the afternoon. Therefore, as students arrive at school in the morning, they are greeted by their classroom teacher, who makes a point of welcoming each one by name and taking the time to chat with them.

“I feel like I am home-schooled in a space that is comfortable—like home,” says another Grade 11 student.

In this class, students are accepted for who they are and what they are experiencing at the moment.

“It’s the only time I can say that I have friends. Everyone here has their own personal journey, which brings us all together because of our differences,” says another Grade 11 student. “There is always love in this classroom.”

In this classroom, the educators work hard to establish a welcoming environment in which each student’s well-being matters.

## Classroom leadership

Because these students have often moved from one home to another, they may be experiencing delays in their credit accumulation. Here, the teacher develops individual plans that allow students to clearly see that

graduation is a possibility. Staff members model the attitudes needed to participate confidently and safely in the learning process, and students can count on the teacher to review, and perhaps re-teach concepts they have never understood in the past. Students are encouraged to voice their needs and advocate for resources required for their success. The promotion of self-confidence and self-esteem engages students in their learning process.

### Social and physical environments

The social environment of the class allows the teacher to personally contact each student when they are absent—this conversation allows an understanding of the reason for the absence and a word of encouragement to return to school as soon as possible. Students also appreciate the opportunity to connect with their teacher via text message.

As part of the physical environment, one cannot underestimate the inclusion of three dogs that are integrated into the classroom to connect with students.

“The dogs offer a comfort zone in the classroom,” says a Grade 11 student. “They make me feel less anxious.”

Other wellness opportunities include listening to music, knitting, initiating art projects, and writing in personal diaries, among other activities.

Of course, breakfast and lunch are provided on an as-needed basis. The chosen day of the week to focus on wellness is Wednesday. Students call this day HOPE: Hang on, pain ends.

### School and community partnerships

Other deep learning opportunities are available to these students through a variety of community partnerships. They include experiential learning opportunities in the school’s greenhouse, leadership tasks with high-needs students, visits to landmarks in Ottawa, completion of volunteer hours, and so on. This permits students to contribute their ideas about different ways to interact with the community and encourages positive social interaction.

### Conclusion

The foundations of a healthy classroom are essential conditions that make the difference for our youth in care. Because these conditions are in place, students feel safe to express post-secondary ambitions. In this class, students explore career opportunities

and want to make a difference by potentially pursuing careers that interest them for different reasons, including:

- A Children’s Aid Society worker or police officer, “because they are helpful.”
- An aerospace engineer, “because it’s a dream.”
- An artist or entrepreneur, “because it’s possible.”
- An at-home daycare provider, “because children are beautiful.”

These students want to make a difference. It is evident that this healthy classroom environment is opening doors to well-deserved, healthy futures for each of these students. ○

*Manon Séguin is Superintendent of the Intermediate/Secondary Student Success Department at the Ottawa Catholic School Board. She is also Student Success Lead at the Board while holding responsibility for Families of Schools in the East end of Ottawa. Manon has been an educator for 35 years—first as a Teacher, then as a Vice-Principal, and then as a Principal. She has been Superintendent for seven years.*

*The names of students and their school were omitted by the author to protect their privacy.*

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# CASSA Board Evolves and Grows



**CASSA-ACGCS**  
Promoting Quality Education for Our Students

By Ken Bain, Executive Director, CASSA/ACGCS

I am delighted to report that the Association of Nova Scotia Educational Administrators (ANSEA) has joined CASSA! We welcome Guy LeBlanc (Executive Director) and Lisa Doucet (President) to the CASSA board and look forward to their insights from Nova Scotia.

Every year CASSA experiences a turnover in some board of director positions.

Leaving the board is Roger Nippard, who has been with CASSA for many many years and departs having been our past president for the last two years. Also leaving are John Waterhouse (CASS), Barb Isaak (MASS), Don Rempel (LEADS), Shawn Moynihan (OPSOA), Steven Colpitts (AAESQ), Cindy

Fleet (PEI), Jeff Thompson (Newfoundland and Labrador), Gregg Ingersoll (NBSSA), and Shelly Peplar (Nunavut).

Joining the board are Colleen Symyrozum-Watt (CASS), Mike Borgfjord (MASS), Karen Edgar and Joy Badder (OPSOA), Christopher Fuzessy and Veronique Marin (AAESQ), Anne Bernard-Bourgeois (PEI), Bronson Collins (Newfoundland and Labrador), Craig Caldwell (NBSSA), and Bill Cooper (Nunavut).

The last few changes I will highlight reflect the transition in the president role from Cindy Finn (AAESQ) to Anne O'Brien (OCSSOA). I want to welcome Reg Klassen (MASS) as President-Elect. Reg has served as a member of the board, a director at large and is now president-elect.

I want to offer my profound thanks to Cindy Finn (AAESQ), who represented CASSA so well across the country. Cindy moved the organization forward and is a truly dedicated professional committed to the goals and values of the association.

Lastly, I am looking forward to working alongside Anne O'Brien. Anne is the Director of Education for the Durham Catholic District School Board in Ontario. She brings 30 years of experience and a strong commitment to seeing that CASSA remains a strong voice for Canadian school system leaders!

Thanks to those who have served and I look forward to the sense of renewal that can occur as new leaders emerge around the board table. ○



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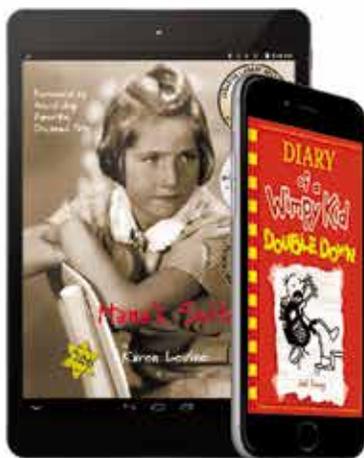


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