

Summary of CREATING CONNECTIONS CONFERENCE
~April 7, 2006 ~

~ Canmore, Alberta, Canada ~

In April, Gloria Wells of Alberta, EDC and Intercamhs co-hosted the first provincial conference advance school based mental health in Alberta, and potentially elsewhere in Canada and the U.S. At the invitation of Gloria Wells, a resident of Alberta, and a Board Member for Intercamhs, with the assistance of the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), which acted as conference co-convenor and co-sponsor and contributions of the Intercamhs Board, the Alberta Coalition for Healthy School Communities and the Calgary Health Region, approximately 75 participants, representing the Public Education and Health sectors in Alberta, and leading practitioners from the U.S., Australia and Alberta, met to share current practice across the school based mental health spectrum. Participants identified opportunities for ongoing networking and collaboration in this work. A compilation of information on conference speakers and conference sessions can be found at www.creatingconnections2006.org.

Altogether, there are ten short and long term outcomes arising from the conference, with future opportunities for action in Calgary, in Alberta, in North America, and with Intercamhs. A more complete update is posted on the aforementioned website.

This first effort to foster more comprehensive collaboration and action in school based mental health within the Province of Alberta led to some promising avenues provincially, to be sure. And, in addition, through the support and expertise offered through our partnership with EDC and Intercamhs, the learning and opportunities for development proposed have the potential to enhance Canadian and North American collaborative efforts in this arena. Kudos to all involved in this very successful conference!

Short term outcomes from this conference include the following:

- The identification of a number of resource people, who will become the core of a working group to assist in the development of Albertan and cross-border initiatives to support school-based mental health in North America. This of course, would include their membership in Intercamhs, as well.
- The preparation of a Summary Report of the proceedings for use as a reference for future action in Alberta, other provinces who

- have requested a copy, and members of Intercamhs who may wish to review its contents, which will also be posted on the Creating Connections website by September 1, 2006.
- The invitation to provide leadership to a Provincial Dialogue Session on Addressing Critical Issues in School-based Mental Health at the upcoming provincial Alberta Coalition for Healthy School Communities Conference in September, 2006.
 - The development of a pilot project in a school division within the Calgary Rocky View Region, with the support of the Calgary Health Region, and linked to the Markin Institute for Community Health at the University of Calgary, to implement a systemic mental health promotion initiative, commencing August, 2006.

Long-term initiatives targeted include:

- Linking of the findings and actions arising from these days to potential innovative efforts within the context of the Alberta Student Health Partnership Initiative, Alberta Mental Health Board, and Regional Health Authorities.
- Development of a consortium of Albertan, U.S. and Australian universities to work toward a range of online opportunities to support teacher education, and cross-sectoral graduate training in school based mental health topics.
- Linking of the proceedings of this conference in Alberta to support the initiation of a Pan-Canadian Working Group on School Mental Health under the auspices of the Canadian Association of School Health.
- Support to the efforts of Intercamhs in the development of a cadre of entries in school based mental health in the upcoming IUHPE conference to be held in Vancouver in June, 2007.
- Development of an Albertan, and possibly North American, "listserv" and internet communication platform to support ongoing dialogue and collaboration.
- Exploration of the possibilities to establish a pilot initiative in Alberta, and perhaps linked to cross-border partners, that would focus on the development of media-based strategies in supporting understanding and acceptance of school based mental health programming.