

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Graham L. Pollett, MD, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2012 September 13

CHILD AND YOUTH NETWORK: ENDING POVERTY DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 110-12 re Child and Youth Network: Ending Poverty Demonstration Project be received for information.

Background

The City of London Child and Youth Network (CYN) aims to improve the well-being of children and youth by tackling the issues of poverty, literacy, and healthy eating/ physical activity. This report speaks specifically to the work of the Poverty Working Group in the Poverty Demonstration Project.

Project Description

The Poverty Demonstration Project was launched in the Glen Cairn neighbourhood of London in October of 2011, as a means of supporting youth and families at risk of generational poverty. Children who experience poverty, especially persistently, are at higher risk of suffering health problems, developmental delays and behavioral disorders. They tend to attain lower levels of education and are more likely to live in poverty as adults.

In October 2011, a Community Development Coordinator was hired through funding by the CYN, and the Health Unit is the lead agency for this project. The aim is to help youth achieve positive educational outcomes, ultimately resulting in long-term career engagement. A Steering Committee guides this project, with representation from CYN, the Health Unit, the City of London, the Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre, Glen Cairn Public School and the TVDSB.

The anticipated outcomes for this project are as follows:

1. Enhanced protective factors for students to assist in breaking the cycle of poverty
2. Engaged students with opportunities for social, emotional, physical, mental and spiritual growth
3. Positive relationships between students and mentors
4. Positive transition from elementary to secondary school and
5. Increased alignment between school, home and community supports.

Project Update

Recently, the grade 8 students from Glen Cairn Public School travelled to Laurier Secondary School to participate in the Going Bananas Health Fair. At this event, students were able to learn about the different agencies located in their neighbourhoods and how to access them. They also had the opportunity to engage with secondary students in a fun and interactive way. Students enjoyed the experience and learned a great deal about their community. They also expressed they felt more confident to transition to their nearby secondary school.

Other activities include the development of two new clubs focussing on literacy at Glen Cairn Public School. Both clubs are youth focused: a Comic Book club and the Anime Club, a drawing club. The formerly organized Cooking Club and Photography Club still exist and have great participation from the students.

A literacy night for intermediate students and their families is currently being organized as there are not many literacy resources available for youth. To create ownership over the event, the grade 7 and 8 students, along with the Project Coordinator and Grade 7 teacher, have been heavily involved in the organization. Presently, they are working on the promotional materials, including a video, which will be shown during the school assembly to advertise the opportunity.

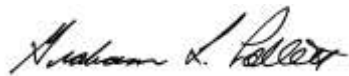
The literacy night will involve students from the Photography Club who will take pictures and students from the cooking club who will be prepare the food. Eleven neighbourhood agencies with a focus on youth literacy will be participating along with students and staff from Laurier Secondary School. Teachers and students will be available to answer questions about some of the issues challenging students transitioning to secondary school. This is an opportunity for some peer mentorship relationships to develop as students will be engaging with their peers. All of the community agencies do provide leadership and mentorship opportunities for the youth.

The Coordinator is currently researching similar clubs at secondary schools in an attempt to link the Glen Cairn Students with peers that share a common interest. Linking elementary students to secondary students is a key motivator for students not dropping out of school.

Summary

As seen in this report, building linkages to community partners, helping students connect to the secondary school environment and drawing on existing resources are important factors in the success of this project and thus, the success of the youth. The Community Development Coordinator will continue to enhance services in the school while helping youth during one of their most important transitional periods of their growth and development.

This report was prepared by Ms. Lisa Kelliher, Community Development Coordinator, and Ms. Christine Preece, Manager, Young Adult Team, Family Health Services.



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<p>This report addresses the following requirement(s) of the Ontario Public Health Standards: Chronic Disease Prevention Standard 3, 4 and 11. Child Health Standard 4 and 8.</p>
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