



# Innovative Partnership leads to successful \$1.4 million Mental Health in Schools grant

**For Immediate Release: November 17, 2022** - Chinook's Edge School Division (CESD), Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools (RDCRS) and McMan Central Region joined forces to determine how a new provincial pilot project could impact students throughout Central Alberta. Their efforts have resulted in a \$1.46 million grant, as part of the [Alberta Government's](#) efforts to expand mental health and learning supports in schools.

"Together we saw a way forward that will make a huge difference to our students," said Dr. Marcie Perdue, CESD Associate Superintendent of Student Services whose efforts in nurturing the partnership and guiding the grant submission led to the successful grant. "I think they saw the power of this collaboration, because we can essentially support students in all of Central Alberta. We already have a strong connection with one another and we work in some of the same communities, so we are able to be innovative in designing how the work will look. Part of our approach will be sharing staff resources and expertise, which is not common among school divisions. Our focus was simply on determining how to meet the needs of kids and to be ready to go as soon as we received word! We have developed a pyramid of supports and a clear path forward - and we are so excited to get started."

The pilot project, which will be in place until December 2024, will have five Mental Health Consultants providing direct support to our students in both divisions, along with three Family Enrichment Workers through McMan for CESD (as RDCRS already has a different approach in place). The sharing of existing staff expertise is unique, involving the strong RDCRS trauma-informed practice and the CESD [Social Emotional Wellbeing](#) course for students (SEW 15), among other projects.

"We are very thankful to Alberta Education for the funding for this collaborative project as we continue to focus on the mental health of our students," said RDCRS Associate Superintendent of Inclusion, Jodi Smith. "This grant will allow us to increase mental health resilience amongst students and families by continuing to offer learning opportunities in the areas of social-emotional learning. This grant will also help increase access to community mental health support and services for our most vulnerable students."

The Chinook's Edge Board of Trustees has been active in advocating to various levels of government for their involvement in increased mental health support for students moving forward.

...continued on page 2



Page 2...

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"Our Board has been advocating for stronger mental health support for our students, and students throughout Alberta. We are extremely grateful that the Alberta Government is taking such bold action on behalf of our kids," said CESD Board Chair, Holly Bilton. "We had a meeting with the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction late last spring to verbalize this priority, and the government has answered with a strong and clear commitment. We are so excited to collaborate with Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools and McMan Central. Together, we are confident this will assist us in serving the needs of students."

The project leads will now begin a recruitment process to fill the five Mental Health Consultants roles, and begin implementing the planned staff collaborative work. The plan is to have all items outlined in the grant application in place soon, so the project has a full two-years of pilot implementation.

"We appreciate that the government has recognized the importance of supporting mental wellness in schools through the funding of this joint 2-year pilot project," said RDCRS Board Chair Anne Marie Watson. "This funding is critical for building capacity among our teachers and staff to respond to the mental health concerns of students, and for students to gain access to community mental health support in a timely manner."

Sherri McAllister, Executive Director McMan Central Region which is providing the Family Enrichment Workers component, said: "McMan Central is pleased to be working with Chinook's Edge School Division on this pilot project to support student and family mental health in a collaborative and innovative way."

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