



News Release

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The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities

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November 13–18, 2006, National Bullying Awareness Week

Students Take Action Against Bullying

More than 150 student leaders are participating in the Youth Action pilot projects of the Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities throughout the 2006/07 school year. Taking an innovative approach, the project engages students aged 11–18 years in identifying and addressing important issues, such as bullying and violence, in their own school communities.

“Youth Action is a unique concept that the Society developed to impact this challenging group” said Executive Director—Education, Will Simpson, “In order to reach Junior and Senior High students, programming must provide opportunities for youth to take ownership and develop their own strategies to attend to issues that they consider important”.

The Youth Action projects involve five main components. In curricular or extra-curricular groups, students: (1) select a focus, (2) collect data through action research, (3) analyze and interpret the data, (4) design projects to address concerns, and (5) evaluate the success of their projects.

By taking students through this action process, schools identify the issues that are significant to the student body and are able to support students in gaining a personal connection to the projects they design and undertake. Through this project, not only are schools able to effectively address issues, but provide a valuable opportunity for students to adopt leadership roles and develop teamwork, communication and presentation skills. The culmination of this project will be a Youth Action Conference May 29, 2006, which will be open to all students in Alberta. The Conference will include student presentations and explore how youth can personally make their schools and communities better places for everyone.

The Youth Action pilot projects are funded by: Alberta Education, Canadian International Development Agency and Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada.

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For more information please contact Will Simpson, Executive Director—Education, for the Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities, at (780) 447-9449 or visit the website at www.sacsc.ca.



Background

The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities

The purpose of the *Youth Action* projects is to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors among youth. The SACSC programs: enhance respect, responsibility, and trust; increase scholastic achievement and school completion; and prevent bullying and violence, through the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that promote pro-social behaviour. Involvement in this project encourages students to improve their research skills and knowledge in the area of their action plan.

The core SACSC topics that are the focus of the Youth Action projects are:

1. Building respect and responsibility
2. Building self-esteem
3. Respecting diversity and preventing prejudice
4. Managing anger and dealing with bullying
5. Resolving conflicts peacefully

In addition to core topics, some participating schools have chosen to focus research on student attitudes and opinions toward the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the student projects will focus on how Alberta students can contribute to achieving them. Another school has chosen to focus on discrimination and how to address issues of homophobia in the school and community.

Research into bullying/violence/crime prevention programming and the Society's 11 years of experience demonstrate that successful implementation of programs at the secondary school level is considerably more challenging than at the elementary level¹. This project will identify successful approaches and practices that lead to sustained implementation of violence prevention programming and positive outcomes in schools with students aged 11–18. The Society's greatest programming success with older youth resulted from involving students in leadership roles. The Youth Action approach develops leadership by empowering youth to become change agents reducing risk and increasing protective factors in their school communities.

The three SACSC Youth Action project titles are:

- **The Development of a Youth Action Process to Build a Safe, Caring and Inclusive Learning Community—A pilot project** (Funded through Alberta Education)
- **Dealing with Homophobia, Phase II: Expansion, Evaluation & Promotion of Phase I Resources** (Funded through the National Crime Prevention Centre, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada)
- **Towards Achievement of the Millennium Goals: Students Taking Action** (Funded through Canadian International Development Agency)

¹ Scheckner, S., Rollin, S.A., Kaiser-Ulery, C., & Wagner, R. (2002). School violence in children and adolescents: A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of current interventions. *Journal of School Violence*, 1(2), 5-33.