

Chinook's Edge expands unique program to support strong parent-teen relationships

For Immediate Release, September 27, 2016: In another example that Relationships Matter in Chinook's Edge, a 10 week CONNECT Parent Group is being offered in Sylvan Lake this fall. This marks the third Chinook's Edge community offering the program to support healthy relationships between parents and their teenage children.

Chinook's Edge staff in Didsbury and Cremona have been providing this opportunity for families in their areas for the past two years, and staff leaders in both communities report highly encouraging results. The premise behind the program, which requires staff to participate in three days of training themselves in order to lead a group, is that positive relationships with parents helps teens to thrive.

"Parents in our community really bought into the 'connect' focus of the group, and made a conscious attempt to maintain a strong and positive attachment with their teenager," said Darla Korver, part of the Family Wellness team that led the program in Didsbury. "Each group takes on the focus that best meets their particular needs, and the participants really gel as a group and often continue to support one another even when the program is done. The teenage years can be tumultuous at times for most families, so these aren't parents who are necessarily facing significant challenges. They are parents who want to continue building their capacity and be as effective as they can be for their teenagers, who happen to be our students. We all want the best for them."

Chinook's Edge has been focusing on staff training and resources that support an attachment-focused approach with students based on the belief that nurturing a strong relationship will, in turn, positively impact behaviour. The CONNECT Parent Group is an opportunity to share that approach with parents.

"It's a fabulous way to empower our students, by sharing these skills with their parents," said Joanna Harvey, Principal at Cremona School who has been co-lead on the CONNECT Parent Group for the past two years. "I work alongside our Family Wellness Worker to provide this program, because I see the value so clearly. It allows our parents to take a step back and really reflect on how to truly build a closer relationship with their teen. Having watched many teenagers going through their changes as they grow up, I have finally found a program that helps parents simply see things in a different way. It provides tools to reflect, communicate and connect – and as a by-product we have also discovered that parents are connecting more closely with one another and it is building up whole families. Keeping the communication open and the relationship positive has changed some students' entire demeanor both at school and at home, and it is providing huge results for our families. It's an investment in our students and their families."

The programs involve 12-15 parents and guardians, and both Cremona and Sylvan also provide a parallel program for the teens. The plan is to ensure every school community in Chinook's Edge will have access to trained staff who can offer the CONNECT Parent Group in their area.

"I'm really excited to begin the Sylvan program, because I've seen the benefits as parents begin to live in this manner of positive interaction and understanding with their teens," said Amber Stonebridge, Clinical Team Lead of the Family School Wellness Program in Chinook's Edge. "I think our staff are magnificent people for taking the training and leading these programs, because it is certainly beyond the scope of their typical work. They really care about their students and see this as a way of building strong relationships around these kids."

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