A Strength-based Approach to Evaluating and Building Resilience through Mentoring

May 6, 2010
AMP is a partnership of government ministries, government-funded organizations, community agencies and youth representation working together to provide more mentoring opportunities for Alberta’s children and youth.

AMP’s goal is to develop and implement strategies to increase mentoring opportunities for children and youth.

AMP takes a strength-based approach to its work. Strength-based focuses on building on the potential in all children and youth through positive and caring relationships.
The implementation of the Alberta Mentoring Partnership addresses a recommended action from Alberta’s Crime Reduction and Safe Communities (SafeCom) Task Force

**SafeCom Recommendation**

Schools, communities and the provincial government should work together to expand mentoring programs for children and youth at risk.
Our Vision

Every child who needs a mentor has access to a mentor
AMP’s Objectives

Public Awareness, Recruitment and Retention

Community Capacity Building, Training and Education
The AMP Leadership Team ratified the Strategic Plan in January 2008 and continues to move ahead with implementing strategies.

The strategies will be completed by March 31, 2011.
Strategic Plan Overview

Strategy Leads

- There is a Ministry/Ministries and/or community agency responsible for leading each strategy.
- The Strategy Groups include representatives from the Leadership Team and others.
- Each Strategy Lead works collaboratively with the other Leads and reports back to the Leadership Team.
**Mentoring Defined**

**Mentoring** is the presence of a caring individual(s) who provides a young person with support, advice, friendship, reinforcement and constructive role modeling over time.
Benefits of Mentoring

Mentoring results in:

- improved educational performance;
- healthier behaviours;
- improved social and behavioural outcomes;
- strengthened relationships; and
- improved resiliency.
Without Mentors…

In a school board in Western Canada:

- 100% correlation between students dropping out of school in grade 10 and not having a caring relationship with an adult at school.
### Estimated Costs of High School Non-Completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tangible Costs</th>
<th>Estimated cost per dropout</th>
<th>Aggregated total in Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Lifetime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health (private²)</td>
<td>$8,098</td>
<td>$211,471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Assistance (public)</td>
<td>$4,230</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime (public)</td>
<td>$224</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour and Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earning loss (private)</td>
<td>$3,491</td>
<td>$104,222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax revenue loss (public)</td>
<td>$226</td>
<td>$6,882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue loss in employment insurance premium (public)</td>
<td>$68</td>
<td>$2,063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment insurance cost (public)</td>
<td>$2,767</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Canadian Council on Learning – December 2008)*
Role of Relationships in Resiliency

**Complex School Children/Youth**

- Extrinsic
- Intrinsic
- Resilient
Impoverished Profile
Profile presents with 0 to 10 developmental strengths

Vulnerable Profile
Profile presents with 11 to 20 developmental strengths

Resilient Profile
Profile presents with 21 to 31 developmental strengths
Resiliency is the capability of individuals, families, groups and communities to understand and creatively draw upon their internal and external strengths, resulting in effective coping with challenges and significant adversity in ways that promote health, wellness and an increased ability to respond constructively to future adversity.

W. Hammond, 2008
I Am. I Have. I Can.

I Am
(Internal Characteristics/Strengths)

+ 

I Have
(External Strengths/Relationships & Connections)

= 

I Can
(Resiliency, Capacity for Success)

Edith Grotberg, International Resilience Research Project (IRR)
Resilience Comes in Many Forms

3. Find x.

Here it is.
Two Expressions of Resilience

A Strength-Based Framework For Building Resilience

Youth Capacity

I HAVE + I AM = I Can

CHALLENGES and STRESSORS

External Resiliency Factors

Transactional Interaction

Internal Resiliency Factors

Constructive Coping versus Maladaptive Coping

© 2010 Resiliency Initiatives
The Relationship between Resilience & Core Competencies

A Strength-Based Framework For Building Resilience

Youth Capacity

I HAVE + I AM = I Can

Core Competencies
- Social Connectedness
- Managing Ambiguity
- Adaptability
- Agency and Responsibility
- Moral Directness
- Strength-Based Aptitude

© 2010 Resiliency Initiatives
I Am. I Have. I Can.

I Am
(Internal Characteristics/Strengths)

+ Transacting

I Have
(External Strengths/Relationships & Connections)

= Transacting

I Can
(Core Competencies, Resiliency, Capacity for Success)

Adapted from Edith Grotberg, International Resilience Research Project (IRR)
Werner and Smith’s groundbreaking study of “at-risk” youth was the first of many to substantiate the importance of internal (I am) and external (I have) strengths. They were also the first of many to demonstrate that a close relationship with at least one significant other was predictive of successful adaptation for otherwise vulnerable children and youth.
Making a Difference –
An impact study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters (1995)

Children and youth with mentors experienced:

▪ 46% less involvement in substance use
▪ 70% less substance use in African American youth
▪ 33% reduction in violent behaviour
▪ 50% reduction in school truancy
▪ significant improvement in school performance and interactions with parents
School Staff Relationships with Students

In a School Resiliency Demonstration Site project in Edmonton:
- 50% increase in presenting as resilient when students report being connected to a school staff or significant adult at school.

In a school board in Western Canada:
- 100% correlation between students dropping out of school in grade 10 to not having an established caring relationship with a school staff.
The Power of Engagement

An analysis of 40 years of clinical research found the best predictor of positive change was:

1) engagement in meaningful relationship(s)
2) engagement in meaningful activities

83% of change involves these two factors
17% is a result of technique/model of practice

Miller & Duncan, 1997
A strength-based mentoring approach has as its focus the identification, exploration, and use of strengths in children and youth to foster positive mental health outcomes at school, at home and in the community.
Traits of Strength-based Mentors

- Interpersonal Warmth
- Self and other aware
- Active listening
- Trustworthy and dependable
- Unconditional positive regard
- Respectful of values
- Good natured humour
- High expectations/not perfection

© 2010 Resiliency Initiatives
We speak only with the voices of those we can hear ourselves...

David Whyte
A Differential Response

Strategic Mentoring
Collaborative-based mentoring - intense, comprehensive and long-term focused that requires sustained help

Formal Mentoring
Purposeful one-on-one mentoring and emotional support to help mentees facing challenges and stressors

Natural Mentoring
Promotion of strength-based adult/peer interactions that lead to pro-active academic, social, & emotional programs/interactions and relationship building that promotes positive youth development for all children and youth

© 2010 Resiliency Initiatives
Using the *Resiliency - Assessing Developmental Strengths* questionnaire, we are able to evaluate:

- The impact of formal & informal mentoring on students developmental strengths and core competencies.

- The impact of engagement in mentoring relationships on developmental strengths and core competencies.
## Initial Results
(all students n= 680)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Developmental Strengths</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Cumulative Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00 - 10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 20</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 25</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 - 31</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>100.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>680</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© 2010 Resiliency Initiatives
Students with Mentors

- 83% of students reported having a caring role model in their school to whom they could turn for support, guidance, encouragement and/or advice.

- 95% of those students felt respected and valued.

- 89% of those students felt their “mentor” valued what they had to say and wanted to talk about.
### Students with Mentors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Developmental Strengths</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Cumulative Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00 - 10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 20</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 25</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 - 31</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>100.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>464</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© 2010 Resiliency Initiatives
Students without a Mentor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Developmental Strengths</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Cumulative Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00 - 10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>76.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 - 31</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© 2010 Resiliency Initiatives
Students with no Mentor and Low Family Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Developmental Strengths</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Cumulative Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00 - 10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>72.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>91.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 - 31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>100.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© 2010 Resiliency Initiatives
Core Competencies of Mentored Students

- Strength-Based Aptitude: 71.0%
- Emotional Competence: 57.0%
- Social Connectedness: 93.0%
- Moral Directedness: 93.0%
- Adaptability: 74.0%
- Managing Ambiguity: 91.0%
- Agency and Responsibility: 93.0%

© 2010 Resiliency Initiatives
Core Competencies of Un-mentored Students

- Strength-Based Aptitude: 30.0%
- Emotional Competence: 14.0%
- Social Connectedness: 57.0%
- Moral Directedness: 64.0%
- Adaptability: 47.0%
- Managing Ambiguity: 60.0%
- Agency and Responsibility: 67.0%
- **Total: 49%**

© 2010 Resiliency Initiatives
Students with Mentors

- 41% more reported Strength-Based Aptitude
- 43% more reported Emotional Competency
- 36% more reported Social Connectedness
- 29% more reported Moral Directedness
- 27% more reported Adaptability
- 31% more reported Managing Ambiguity
- 26% more reported Agency and Responsibility

...as strengths!
### Students with a Formal Mentor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Developmental Strengths</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Cumulative Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00 - 10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 - 31</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© 2010 Resiliency Initiatives
Students with an Informal Mentor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Developmental Strengths</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Cumulative Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00 - 10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 25</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 - 31</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>257</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.9</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© 2010 Resiliency Initiatives
55% of students reported that adults in the school talked with them more about their strengths than their challenges.
Preliminary Interpretations

- Significant relationship between being mentored and resilience as indicated by number of developmental strengths and core competencies.
- No significant difference in resilience (as measured by number of developmental strengths) of students who have a formal mentor versus an informal mentor.
- A pre- and post-evaluation of the impact of formal and informal mentoring in schools is required.
17% of students did not report a caring positive role model in the school and these students represent a greater proportion of children and youth vulnerable to experience:

- Academic challenges;
- Truancy;
- School non-completion;
- Violence;
- Drug use.
Next Steps

- Compile the questionnaire data from all of the sites and complete focus group conversations with participating students to better contextualize the data.

- Interpret and report results to AMP, School Resiliency Demonstration Sites and community partners.

- Apply insights and learning with High Prairie School Division site project in the fall of 2010.

- Finalize strength-based mentoring resources for educators, mentoring organizations and mentors.
It is not enough to institute best-practice strategies. Their success depends on the quality of the relationships surrounding them, invitations offered through them and ongoing opportunities for participation.

Wayne Hammond
What we want to achieve in our work with those at risk is to find and strengthen the positive and healthy elements, no matter how deeply they are hidden.

We enthusiastically believe in the existence of those elements even in the seemingly worst of our adolescents.

Karl Wilker
Communities, families and government must ensure that children and youth are properly cared for in society, have positive adult mentors (formal or informal) in their lives, and are raised in safe, nurturing families.

www.albertamentors.ca
You don’t need to be superhuman to be a mentor... just human.

www.albertamentors.ca