

## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

April 15, 2008

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: S.T.A.R. Program – Interagency Program at Jasper Place School

ORIGINATOR: J. Stiles, Principal

RESOURCE  
STAFF: Kim Backs, Corrie Ziegler

### INFORMATION

Jasper Place High School is located in the west end with an enrolment of 2250 students. Jasper Place offers a diversity of programming, including: Strategies, Opportunity, English as a Second Language, Career and Technology Studies, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate. Community support for programming assists in meeting the needs of all students.

In 2006, Jasper Place became part of a pilot project called the S.T.A.R. (Strength, Tolerance, Attitude and Resilience) Program initiated by Alberta Mental Health. The intent of this pilot was to look at the needs of youth at risk that may affect their success at school. Mental health issues, family circumstances and substance abuse are some of the conditions students must address before they can achieve at school, and these situations may require services offered through agencies in the community. The ultimate goal is to assist youth acquiring lifelong skills and resources to achieve both inside and outside the classroom.

The pilot project team consists of school counselors, an Aboriginal commitment coach, a mental health therapist, a public health nurse, a school resource officer, success coaches, a teacher advisor/coordinator and other staff from Jasper Place School. Pilot project partners include Alberta Mental Health Board (AMHB), Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC), Alberta Education, Capital Health, Edmonton Police Service, Edmonton Public Schools, and The Family Centre.

Teachers recommend students for participation in the S.T.A.R. Program. Teachers then provide the flexibility necessary to support the differentiated learning needs of students at risk. Students in the S.T.A.R. program have opportunity for ongoing interaction with success coaches (including an Aboriginal commitment coach) and students can freely access other health care providers including an addictions counselor, mental health therapist, and a public health nurse. Aboriginal youth have the advantage of visits from an Elder who offers advice and guidance. Students receive support to set and review realistic and attainable goals, as well as the opportunity to complete modular coursework outside of class when they are having difficulty functioning in a regular classroom environment.

With these supports in place, project team members and partners anticipate that students will be equipped with the confidence and knowledge to choose healthy behaviours, make better life choices and ultimately, promote their own mental health. They will then be more likely to improve in school. Indicators of success include increased student attendance, completion of grade level course work and fulfillment of graduation requirements.

Students involved in the S.T.A.R. Program have indicated that it has made a difference for them and many students attribute their ability to focus on learning is a result of the support received through this initiative. Jasper Place staff believe the enhanced attendance, reduced behavioural issues and the increased sense of belonging, safety and comfort these youth have with the school is a result of this strong interagency model. It is one way to support the realization of the goal of bright futures for all students.