



IMPACTS2020

WRAPAROUND SUPPORTS:

Responding to Barriers to Academic Success in Alberta

What is the Issue?

Large numbers of students are not succeeding academically in Alberta. Approximately 20% of Alberta students do not graduate from high school (StatsCan, 2019). Students experiencing poverty, intergenerational trauma, addictions and mental health crises are being left behind, many of these students are First Nations, Inuit, Metis and English Language Learners.

The economic downturn, historic cuts to education and the social sector, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately hurts student populations that are already struggling.

Families feel that local agencies are siloed. Agencies typically address one specific problem, leaving families to coordinate access to other supports if they have multiple needs. Accessing these agencies often requires time away from school and work and because agencies are not centralized, travel can be a significant and even prohibitive barrier to access.

Families and students with complex needs are at risk of remaining in the cycle of inequity and exclusion without a comprehensive solution to meet their needs.

How is Wraparound a Solution?

Wraparound is a philosophy and approach that considers the complexity of social problems and integrates supports and services to overcome these challenges. Wraparound coordinates services and supports across agencies, systems, and sectors depending on the needs of the population. Instead of meeting one need among a population, the goal of wraparound is to meet the differing needs of a population for each individual.



“The wraparound approach is a philosophy of care that includes a definable planning process involving the child/student and family that results in comprehensive, coordinated supports and services to achieve improved learning outcomes and improved quality of life.

Setting the Direction, Alberta Education, June 2009

Genesis of Wraparound in Alberta

In 2009, Alberta Education commissioned the “Setting the Direction Framework” to improve the inclusivity of the educational system. The report recommended Alberta adopt a wraparound approach to address the increasing diversity and needs of Alberta’s student body. In response, Alberta Education collaborated with Edmonton Public Schools and the Community-University Partnership (CUP) in an Alberta based research project.

CUP’s Engagement in Wraparound Research

CUP collaborated in leading the [Alberta Provincial Wraparound Research Project](#) (2009-2010) which offered insights into the implementation of wraparound supports in Alberta schools. The benefits of wraparound identified in the study include:

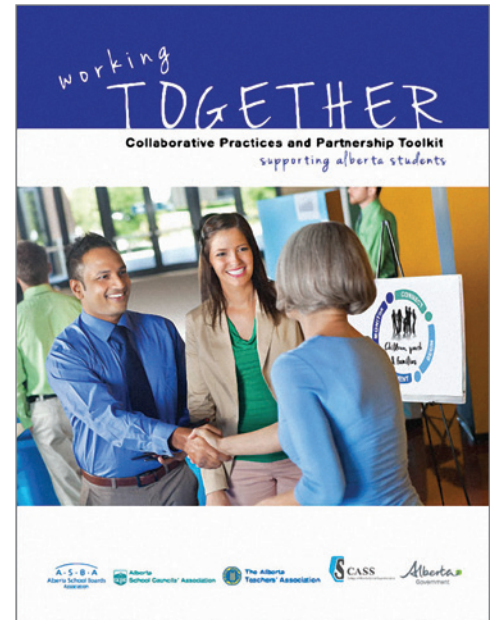
- Reduced gaps and overlap of services for students and families.
- Optimism and motivation among students.
- Increased ability for the school staff and teachers to focus on teaching.

Community Leadership

This provincial research project, along with other collaborative work sparked action for supporting wraparound in Alberta. In 2013 Alberta Education developed the “[Working Together Toolkit](#)” to provide guidelines and support for school based wraparound initiatives. While these tools may still be implemented in Alberta schools and regional collaborations exist, the leadership for implementing wraparound remains within the community.

A Model that Works

Over 20 years of evidence demonstrates that the wraparound approach works, yet the model is not universal in Alberta schools. This model stands strong as a proven approach to support students and families to overcome circumstances, make good decisions and change their lives.





“It’s all within this school building. Where a lot of our parents who already maybe feel not quite a part of things are starting to feel comfortable and they can access that service through a place where they feel a level of comfort....”

School Staff

Wraparound for High School Success

High school graduation is a critical milestone to help individuals maintain future employment, break the cycle of poverty, and avoid long term system dependence. In 2015, three programs that supported underserved Edmonton students collaborated in a common vision – to support high school graduation through a wraparound approach. The current [All in for Youth \(AIFY\)](#) partnership now includes 10 collaborating organizational partners active in five Edmonton schools. Each school offers six AIFY services to meet students and families individualized emotional, physical and educational needs. Since 2016 CUP has been engaged in capturing the student, family, and school impacts of AIFY.

AIFY Partners

- Boys & Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton and Area
- City of Edmonton-FCSS
- Edmonton Catholic Schools
- Edmonton Community Foundation
- Edmonton Public Schools
- e4c
- Mental Health Foundation
- REACH
- The Family Centre
- United Way Alberta Capital Region

AIFY Impacts

Thousands of students and families have been impacted by the staff, services, and supports in AIFY schools. In 2018/2019 school year:

- 218,414 meals were served;
- 939 success coaching engagements;
- 609 families served by family support workers;
- 1,128 families and students served by mental health therapists;
- 247 students benefited from a mentoring relationship;
- 693 students received Out of School Time services during the year.

“She’s starting to get along better with her brother. She’s been working on that with [the Mental Health Therapist]... now, like she’ll start to get into a fight with her brother and she’ll stop and take a deep breath and walk away. She couldn’t do that before. Our dynamic is different...”

Parent



Please visit the [Well Endowed podcast](#) about AIFY.

A Cost Effective Model

The estimated cost to Albertans with respect to health, social assistance, and criminal justice for a student who does not complete high school is \$29,200 per year (Hankivsky, 2008); for the rest of their lives. That is \$730,000 over 25 years for one student. Comparatively, AIFY has estimated the cost of AIFY services is \$1,250 per student, per year. It is critically important to consider the initial investment of wraparound in context to the long term cost to society. **It is expensive to fail students and families.**

Supports and services offered at AIFY schools include:

- Nutritional Support
- Success Coaching
- Roots and Wings Family Support
- Mental Health Therapy
- Mentoring
- Out of School Time



Responding to COVID-19

Alberta schools were ordered closed on March 15, 2020 and the AIFY partnership knew the lack of access to their supports would impact students and families. These underserved families face disproportionate challenges and risks as COVID-19 magnifies inequities in the system. In addition, the economic downturn and cuts to the social sector disadvantage AIFY students and families even more.

“When we work together we create a network, or web of support, which builds a stronger foundation to support people than when we try to create a stable base for them on our own.

Annette Malin, United Way

AIFY partners mobilized and took action. With strong existing relationships they could reach out to students and families, quickly understand current needs, develop innovative shifts in practice, and continue delivering strong supports. Below are ways AIFY partners responded in the first month of the pandemic:

- BGCBig reached out to over 300 families in one week to determine their needs.
- Edmonton Community Foundation, the United Way and the Muttart Foundation donated 485 laptops to meet student’s hardware needs.
- The Family Centre focused on immediate needs like food and technology access. Conversations quickly shifted to family’s mental health, relationships and coping.
- e4c delivered food support to 190 families in April.
- The United Way provided internet for students and families without access.

Opportunities for a New Normal?

The long term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have yet to be revealed, however, responsive policies developed now will help shape new social and legislative norms. This crisis has created an opportunity to consider how to develop progressive policies that support equity for those most impacted.

Sustaining What Works

With AIFY supports, youth are staying in school, building important life skills, and transitioning to post-secondary schooling or employment. Through the efforts and commitment of partners, AIFY has provided four years of supports for youth and their families. At this critical phase, the AIFY partnership needs long term funding to sustain successful wraparound outcomes. Lessons and success will also be shared to facilitate uptake in schools and communities across Alberta.

Adaptability of the **wraparound approach**, coupled with **impressive impacts** and **long term cost savings** makes it a valuable tool for **SUPPORTING YOUTH AND FAMILIES ACROSS ALBERTA.**

For more information please contact us at:



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