



## Director's Message



When I reflect on the exciting and productive year that has just ended, I am struck by the importance of our many partnerships. Schools provide an incredible opportunity for promoting positive mental health and well-being. They are also the front lines for supporting children and youth who are struggling, but the job is bigger than any one stakeholder or organization can handle alone. Over the past year we have worked with international partners, particularly the Center for School Mental Health in the U.S. and more recently, the newer Carnegie Centre of Excellence for School Mental Health in Schools at Leeds Beckett University in the UK. Nationally, we have continued to support the scale-up of Fourth R from coast to coast. Provincially, Dr. Kathy Short and her School Mental Health ASSIST team provide comprehensive supports for frontline educators and mental health staff in schools across Ontario, and we have begun to work together to ensure that their innovative work is documented for a broader audience.

Locally, we continue to work closely with our two boards and have launched a research partnership with M.I. Understanding. All of these partnerships create leverage and impact, while providing incredible learning opportunities for all of us.

This edition of our newsletter is dedicated to our many inspirational partners who work so hard to support the well-being of all children and youth – together we are formidable!

Dr. Claire Crooks, Director and Principal Investigator



# CELEBRATING SUCCESS



## Dr. Deinera Exner-Cortens awarded Early Career Award

Dr. Deinera Exner-Cortens, affiliated researcher and school mental health professional for CSMH, Western was recently presented the PolicyWise Addiction and Mental Health Strategic Clinical Network Early Career Award Winner for her work in "Healthy relationships as a foundation for school-based mental health: Evaluation, implementation and sustainability."

## Western announces recipients of Leadership in Wellness Award of Recognition

The Centre for School Mental Health (CSMH), Western congratulates the success of Dr. Claire Crooks and Dr. Karen Bax following the recent announcement of the inaugural Western Leadership in Wellness Award of Recognition.

Dr. Melanie-Anne Atkins of Western's Wellness Education Centre presents Crooks and Bax with their awards.

*Read the full article [here](#).*



## Student Scholarships

### David Wolfe Scholarship in Research on Violence Prevention



#### 2018 Recipient: **Amanda Kerry**

Amanda Kerry is currently in year three of her PhD studies in School & Applied Child Psychology at the Faculty of Education under the supervision of Dr. Claire Crooks. Prior to her PhD, Amanda studied and worked with individuals who perpetrated or experienced domestic violence. Amanda is now examining the feasibility and fit of an adapted universal, dating violence prevention program in youth justice settings.

*Awarded annually to a graduate student in the Faculty of Education based on academic achievement and research on violence prevention and student well-being in schools.*

### Ray Hughes Scholarship on Innovative Practices in Violence Prevention



#### 2018 Recipient: **Steven Budafalvi**

Steven Budafalvi is a second year Bachelor of Education candidate at the Faculty of Education. Through previous work, B.Ed practicums, and current work, Steven is dedicated to creating safe, inclusive, and empowering classrooms which foster mutual respect among all. By doing so, these practices lay the groundwork whereby both students and Budafalvi can focus on what matters most - cultivating well-being and healthy relationships in the classroom.

*Awarded annually to a pre-service teacher in the Faculty of Education who has demonstrated innovative practices in violence prevention curriculum or programming in schools.*

*For award and award recipient details, click [here](#).*



# GLOBAL CONNECTIONS



## The Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Schools *Leeds Beckett University, United Kingdom*

The Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Schools exists to strengthen the mental health of the next generation by supporting schools to make a positive change at all levels of the UK's education system, thereby improving outcomes and life chances. This initiative, being led by Carnegie School of Education and Minds Ahead CIC, is focused on evidence-based solutions which address the needs of schools, pupils and parents/caregivers; the development of a professional community of school mental health experts; and leading innovation within the area. The Centre works with schools, organizations and professionals committed to ensuring that mental health difficulties do not limit success at school and beyond. Partnerships and collaborations are key in driving forward this agenda.

The Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Schools work focuses on:

- Professional development for everyone working in schools
- Collaboration with strategic partners
- Practitioners network
- Providing support and guidance for schools
- School Mental Health Quality Mark
- Research

## Center for School Mental Health

*University of Maryland School of Medicine, United States*



The mission of the Center for School Mental Health (CSMH), Maryland is to strengthen policies and programs in school mental health to improve learning and promote success for America's youth. From its inception in 1995, the Center's leadership and interdisciplinary staff has promoted the importance of providing mental health services to children, adolescents, and families directly in schools and communities.

CSMH continues to advance evidence-based care in schools (from preschool to college; P-16) and collaborate at local, state, national, and international levels to advance research, training, policy, and practice in school mental health. CSMH is committed to promoting success for all students through a shared family -- school -- community agenda and co-facilitates the National Community of Practice on Collaborative School Behavioral Health.

Collaborating with a wide range of stakeholders...

- Youth and families
- Researchers
- Child serving agency staff
- Community partners
- Advocates, Administrators and policymakers
- Educators, health, and mental health providers

*"Schools are an essential part of the system of mental health supports and services for youth, and probably the most critical venue for mental health promotion and early identification and intervention for mental health challenges."*

Sharon Hoover, PhD  
Co-Director, Center for School Mental Health





# PROVINCIAL CONNECTIONS

## School Mental Health ASSIST

School Mental Health ASSIST (SMH ASSIST) is a provincial implementation support team, working alongside the Ministry of Education, that is designed to help Ontario school boards promote student mental well-being, and to enhance support for students who struggle with mental health and addictions problems, through a focus on leadership, capacity-building, and implementation support.



SMH ASSIST is part of Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, and focuses on five strategic priorities that serve to enhance quality and coherence in school mental health practice across the province's 72 school boards:

1. Building strong foundations through consolidation of organizational conditions at the district and school level.
2. Enhancing mental health awareness, literacy, and expertise amongst education stakeholders.
3. Supporting the uptake and use of evidence-based, implementation-sensitive mental health promotion and prevention programming.
4. Differentiating resources and supports to meet the unique needs of specific populations.
5. Collaborating across sectors to build a strong system of care for children, youth, and families.

SMH ASSIST Strategic Directions, 2017-2020, Taking Flight, introduces an additional strategic pillar, "mobilizing student voice and leadership" to further catalyze provincial efforts.

SMH ASSIST uses implementation science principles to ensure supports are:

- **Responsive to the needs of Ontario school boards**
- **Evidence-based**
- **Implementation-sensitive**
- **Aligned with ministry initiatives, within education and across sectors**
- **Co-created with stakeholders**
- **Attentive to issues of scale up and sustainability**
- **Sensitive to student and family voice**
- **Relevant across regions, official languages and specific populations**

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*"We are in a unique and important time with respect to school mental health in Ontario. For many years, even decades, groups and individuals have been quietly working on building foundations that have led us to this moment of opportunity and promise. Getting this right for current and future students will take all of us, working closely in collaboration. SMH ASSIST is delighted to be partnering with the Centre for School Mental Health to better optimize this hopeful moment."*

Kathy Short, Ph.D., C.Psych  
Director, School Mental Health ASSIST

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# COLLABORATION

## STRONG Program

The welcoming of large numbers of Syrian refugees over the past few years is a point of national pride for most Canadians. As most of us are aware, the majority of these families experienced significant trauma prior to coming to Canada. Thousands of children in these families are now in Canadian schools, and many continue to struggle with symptoms of distress and trauma. The Centre for School Mental Health (CSMH),

Western is partnering on a new initiative led by School Mental Health ASSIST to bring appropriate school-based services to these children and youth.



The STRONG program (Supporting Transition Resilience of Newcomer Groups) is a 10-week school-based intervention that was developed by experts from the Center for School Mental Health in Maryland and their colleagues at the Center for

Childhood Resilience in Chicago. The program is being piloted this spring in four schools in the Peel District School Board and four in the Toronto Catholic District School Board. Dr. Claire Crooks and her team are undertaking an evaluation focusing on feasibility, implementation, and preliminary student impact. We are excited to be at the forefront of this important work with our wonderful partners!

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*"Collaboration is key to the successful implementation of mental health and addiction strategies for school boards across the province of Ontario. We are grateful for all of the partners who have come together to support the implementation of the feasibility pilot for STRONG. The work is complex, multi-layered and at times messy. When we have many sets of eyes on the work we have a better chance of getting it right."*

Maureen Mackay, Co-ordinator of Student Well-Being, Peel District School Board

*"TCDSB is thrilled to have partnered with the STRONG team in the development and pilot of such an innovative school counselling model. STRONG responds to a crucial need in supporting student newcomer mental health, and will help ensure a good start for newcomer students in Ontario"*

Patricia Marra-Stapleton, Mental Health Leader, Toronto Catholic District School Board

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Western

Centre for School  
Mental Health



SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH-ASSIST  
ÉQUIPE D'APPUI POUR LA SANTÉ  
MENTALE DANS LES ÉCOLES



Center for  
Childhood  
Resilience

Resilient Kids. Stronger Communities. Brighter Futures.





# LOCAL CONNECTIONS



*"The Fourth R 'Uniting Our Nations' program has served as a true 'game changer' for igniting engagement, leadership and success opportunities for Indigenous youth in the Thames Valley District School Board. Indeed, this relationship has been integral to our larger strategic priorities in service to our Indigenous Students and Communities."*

Paul McKenzie, Superintendent of Student Achievement (FNMI), TVDSB

Developed in partnership with Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB), The Fourth R Uniting Our Nations programs are designed specifically for elementary and secondary school Indigenous youth. The programs are delivered within culturally-relevant contexts to address healthy relationship building, with an emphasis on mentoring and peer mentoring.

**What's New?** Dr. Claire Crooks, Mike Cywink (Student Mentor/Program Liaison) and Paul McKenzie recently presented at the 2018 Ontario Education Research Symposium in Toronto. Their workshop outlined the Uniting Our Nations programs with specific focus on program development, research methodology/findings, experiential learning for participants, and how the TVDSB-Fourth R partnership has supported the board's strategic direction. Crooks and Cywink also delivered a similar presentation at the 2018 Banff International Conference on Behavioural Science in March.

To learn more about the Uniting Our Nations programs, click [here](#).



*"The universal approach used in the delivery of this program, along with increased sensitivity of teachers and ECE's to the impact of trauma and stress on the lives of young children is a positive approach to addressing the needs of our most vulnerable students in the development self-regulation skills that will support their academic success and well-being."*

Sandra Savage, Mental Health Lead & Social Work Supervisor, LDCSB

CSMH is partnered with London District School Board (LDCSB) to integrate a mindfulness-informed, evidence-based social and emotional learning intervention in early years classrooms. The program seeks to improve academic

performance, attendance and self-regulation in children. Dr. Claire Cooks, CSMH and Dr. Karen Bax, Managing Director of Mary J. Wright Research and Education Centre at Merrymount, are the lead researchers in evaluating the program in classrooms board-wide. There is also a community-based component of the project with a local organization, Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre.

**What's New?** Following a successful 2016-17 pilot year, LDCSB has received \$428,100 to expand the MindUP program, with CSMH evaluating the impacts. The new grant is supporting scaled-up research efforts, expansion of the programming into more classrooms, and kindergarten students that were involved in the first year will be followed to grade 3. The grant is part of a \$1.3 million investment by Ontario to help people break the cycle of poverty, find good jobs, and end homelessness in Ontario.

To learn more about the MindUP for Young Children Project, click [here](#).



*"We know that students do best when there is good collaboration between school and home, and the P.I.P.E. program aims to support parents to navigate the IEP process in a collaborative way."*

Paula Jesty, Managing Director, M.I. Understanding

M.I. Understanding is a communication tool created by Paula Jesty to increase awareness, understanding and early intervention around childhood mental health. Paula has created a range of educational materials to create a community of support for families struggling to support their child's mental health. One of M.I. Understanding's programs is P.I.P.E. (Parents in Partnership with Educators), an individualized communication intervention to prepare and support families who are navigating the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process with a child who has mental health challenges. Centre for School Mental Health graduate student Courtney Cadieux is working with Paula to develop a preliminary evaluation of the P.I.P.E. program. Courtney and her supervisor (Dr. Claire Crooks) obtained internal funding from the Faculty of Education at Western to conduct this work. Courtney will be interviewing parents who have already been through the P.I.P.E. program and following new families through the entire process. The results of the study will help Paula expand her program and fill a gap in the literature.





# WHAT'S NEW AT CSMH?

## Be Extraordinary. The Campaign for Western

### April 2018: Breaking the Uncomfortable Silence

Centre for School Mental Health Director, Claire Crooks was included in Western University's domestic violence awareness campaign as one of the champions working on violence prevention strategies with youth. Learning positive relationship development skills at a younger age can provide benefits later in life and as Crooks says in the campaign, "having healthy relationship education is important at every stage and age of development. This emerged from what we call 'social competence' and recognizing when children develop social and emotional competencies, they are set up for success in every area of life - in school in the workplace and in relationships."

*Read the full story, [here](#).*

## Same Website. New Look.

### Now easier to find the resources you need

We have made it much easier to find The Fourth R resources you need based on country, province/state, language (English, French, Spanish), grade level and curriculum (Public, Catholic, Indigenous), along with the supporting research and materials right at your finger tips.

Explore our updated website to see what's available or contact the Centre for School Mental Health directly:

**Website:** [www.youthrelationships.org](http://www.youthrelationships.org)

**Telephone:** 519-854-5154

**Email:** [thefourthr@uwo.ca](mailto:thefourthr@uwo.ca)



## The Screen Challenge: Youth, Social Media and Safety

**NEW** 60 minute live presentation for parents to help address current issues associated with youth engaged in social media. Presentation can be customized to include any of these related topics:

- Cyber Bullying
- Sleep
- Sexting
- Addiction
- Self Esteem
- Mental Health



In addition, general safety tips related to technology use and staying safe online are provided to help parents and/or educators start conversations with youth around social media use as well as signs to look for that indicate there might be a problem.

This engaging presentation includes up-to-date statistics and current popular social media apps.

We all have the same goal in mind – the health, well-being and safety of our children. Connect with your local school and/or community youth groups to arrange a live presentation in your area.

*For more information, click [here](#).*



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STAY CONNECTED:

[www.csmh.uwo.ca](http://www.csmh.uwo.ca) • [www.youthrelationships.org](http://www.youthrelationships.org)



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