

**Banff International Conferences on Behavioral Science  
School Mental Health: Challenges and Emerging Opportunities**



***Creating a national research, policy, and practice agenda in school mental health:  
Collective learnings, collaborative possibilities***

# School Mental Health is a Little Like Banff

A PhotoStory

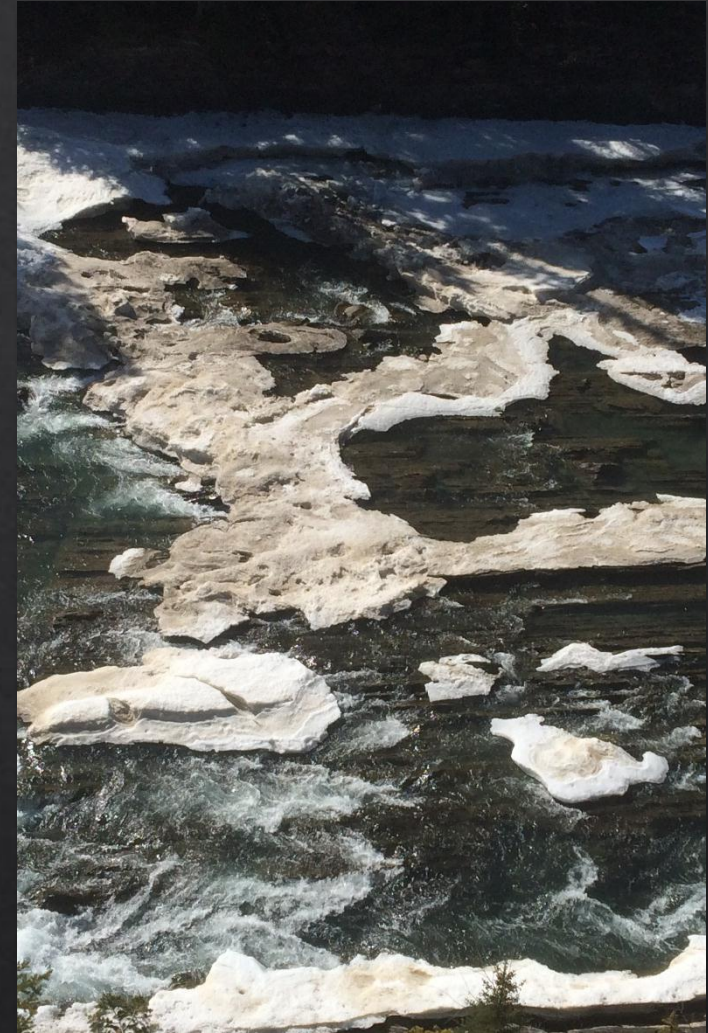
School Mental Health is  
FABULOUS!





Except when it's not.

The waters can be rough





Sometimes the path  
is clearly marked



But steep





And you have to move fast

To take advantage of the windows of opportunity



Other times it is hard to notice  
the signposts





And the way is uncharted





And full of obstacles





And surprises



Often we have to go slow...  
to go fast

This can be quiet, patient, and lonely work





And sometimes, we need to shift  
gears, or even stop



Like when programming in place  
is outdated

And no longer meets the needs





Or if the timing is off



Or silos/programs  
are too closely guarded





Or bound by so many restrictions  
that the promise is never realized



Or things are just weird





Or there are concerns with  
...quality



But amidst the obstacles,  
there is hope





And collaboration

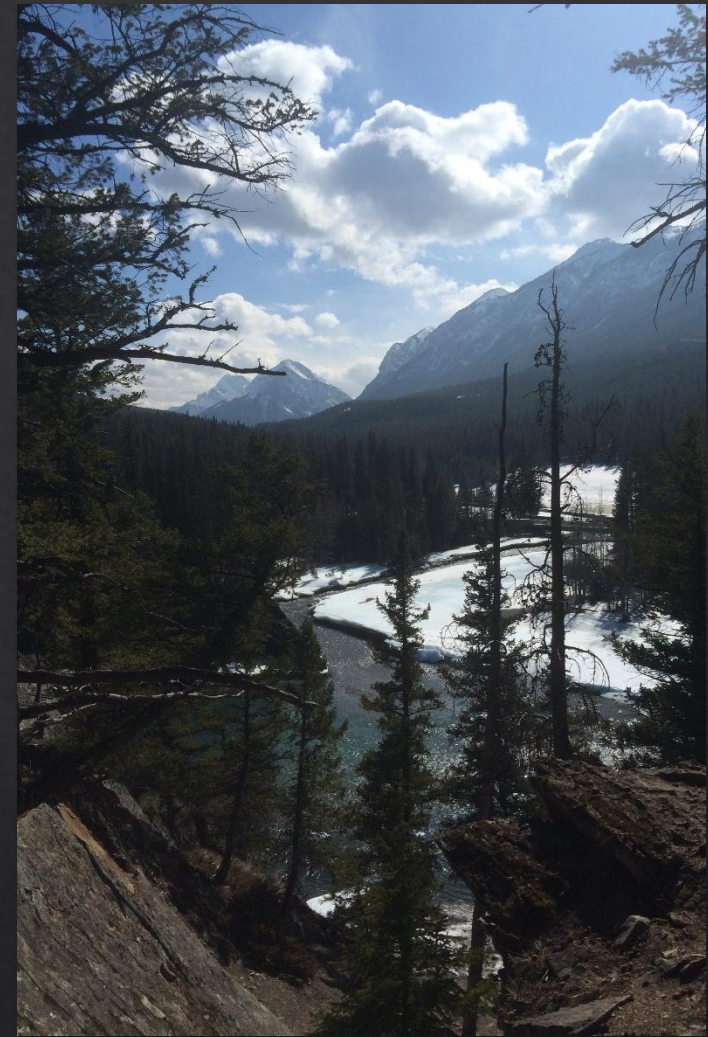




And friendship



And true beauty



# BROAD THEMES



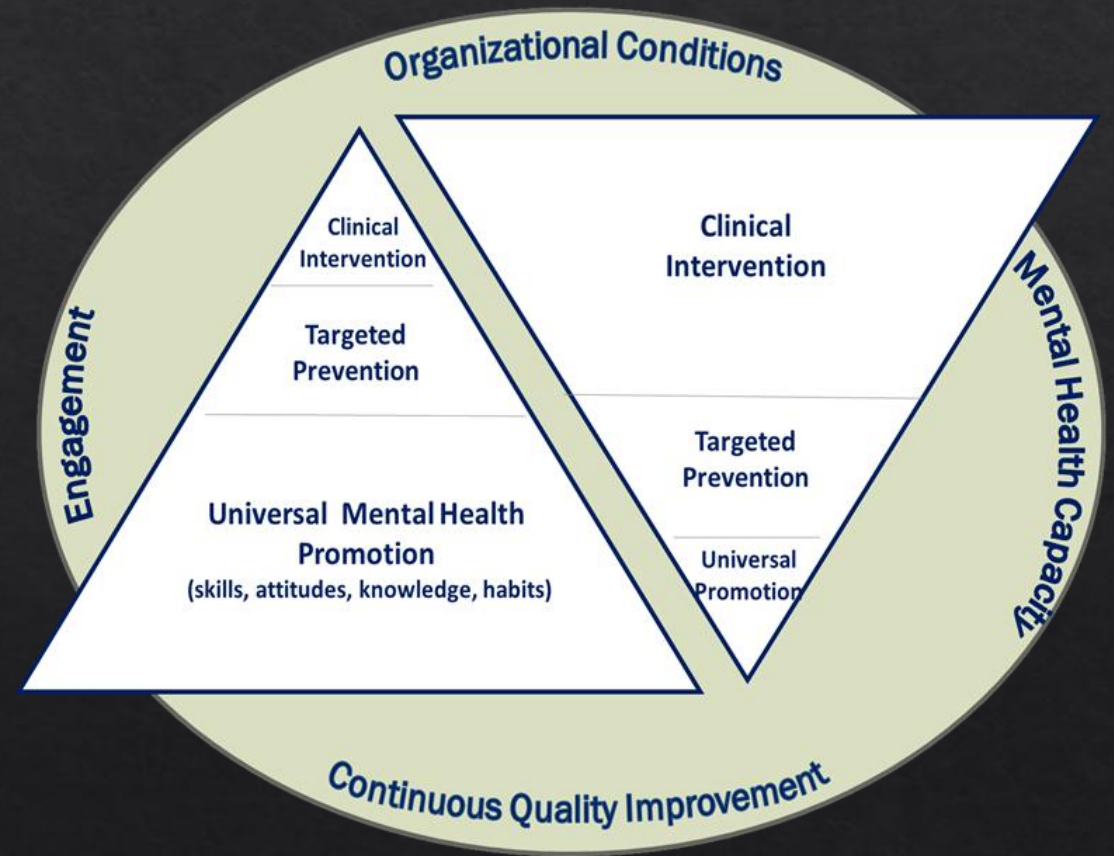
And Our Way Forward...





# Triangles Rock!

- ◆ Multi-Tiered Systems of Support help us:
  - ◆ To organize our work in school mental health
  - ◆ To situate our individual efforts
  - ◆ To communicate our part in the system of care, within and across sectors



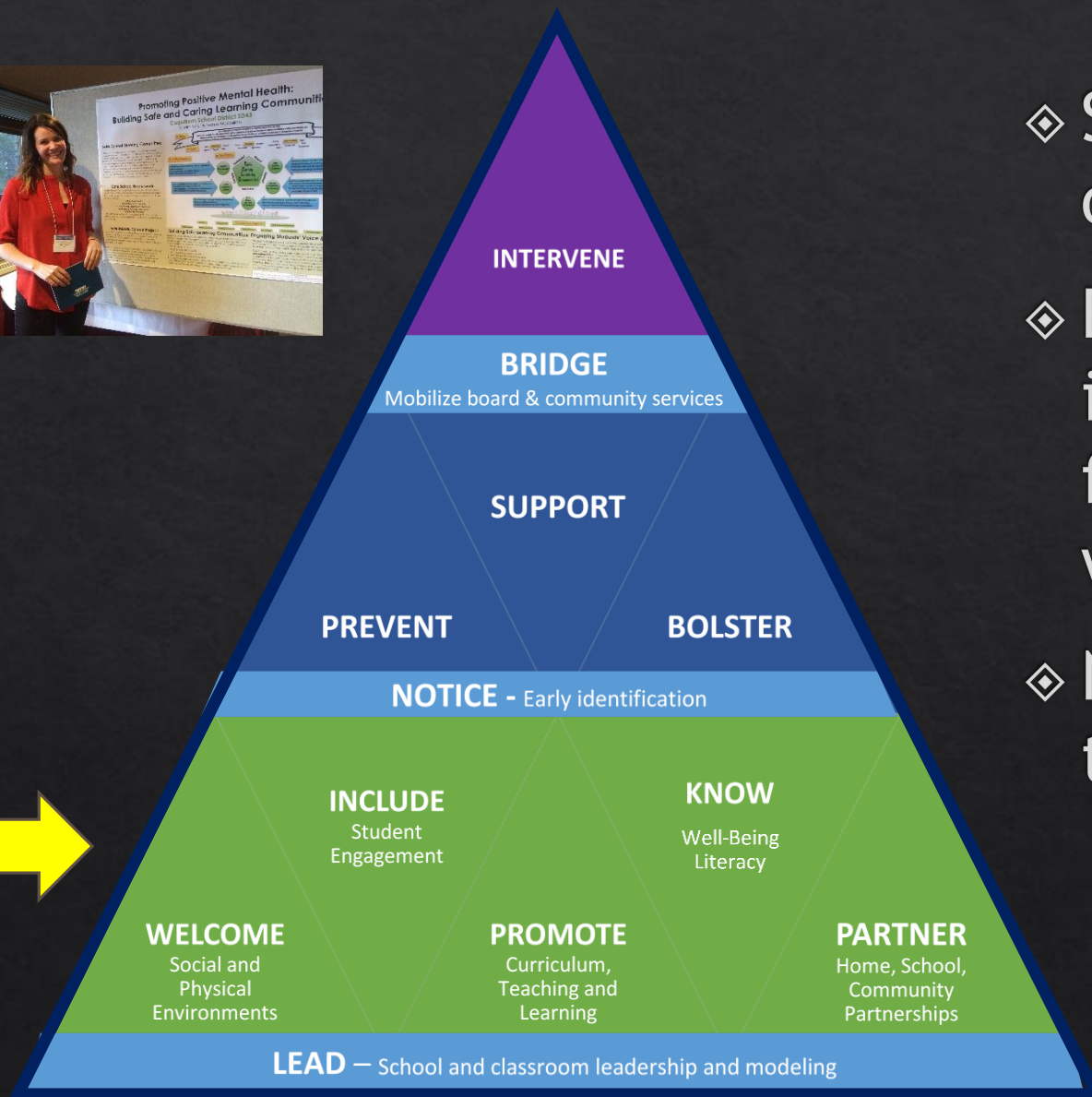
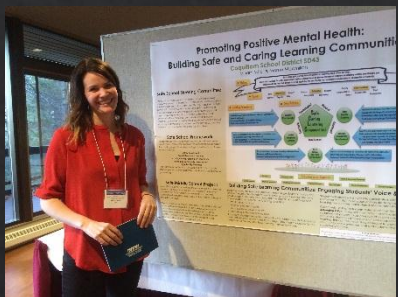
# Like a Fine Wine...

- ◆ Evidence-Based Practice is maturing
- ◆ Not just WHAT, but HOW
  - ◆ Evidence-Based Implementation-Sensitive
- ◆ Increased flexibility
  - ◆ Consideration of strategic blending, core elements
- ◆ Attention to uptake, scale-up, and sustainability
  - ◆ Foundational structures and conditions, training and coaching, ease of delivery, enhancing relative advantage





# Good for All, Essential for Some

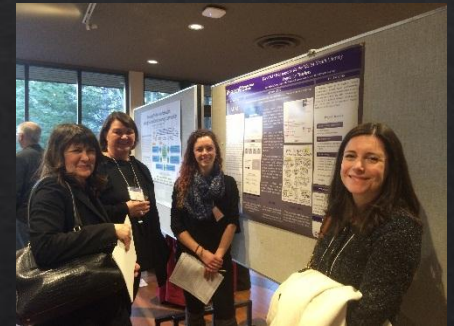


- ◆ Schools are well-positioned for tier one work
- ◆ Efforts to create safe, welcoming, inclusive schools have been underway for some time - the link to mental well-being for students is new
- ◆ Need to be more explicit, and fill in the gaps



# The Learning Stance

- ◆ This is not an area of comfort and confidence for most educators
- ◆ Need for preparation and support (pre-service and practising)
  - ◆ To lead, to notice, to support, and to provide instruction
- ◆ Growing set of resources for professional learning
- ◆ Not just WHAT, but HOW
  - ◆ to engage in ways that encourage uptake, fit with role of educator, build confidence
- ◆ Supporting staff well-being is part of the work
- ◆ We are all learners in this work





# Raising the Bar for our Most Vulnerable

- ◆ Schools are very well-positioned to deliver services to students that need a higher dose of skill development or support
- ◆ Evidence-based programming can help with standardization and quality of services offered at tier 2 and 3 for our most vulnerable youth
- ◆ Great examples of school-based interventions
  - ◆ Challenging Horizons, Healthy Relationships Plus, CBITS, Mindfulness
- ◆ Decision support is important as schools think about their needs, priorities, costs, commitment, etc.
- ◆ Open question about the value of core elements vs program approach - probably requires flexibility

# Honouring and Using Voice

- ◆ Important to listen to and honour diverse voices
- ◆ Consider social determinants of health, “cultural” connectedness
- ◆ Avoid assumptions - Ask!
- ◆ Some groups have unique needs - something different (more)
  - ◆ programming may need to be differentiated, adapted
- ◆ Engage youth and families meaningfully...and early
  
- ◆ Also need to find our voice and tell our SMH story
- ◆ There is a role for advocacy and marketing





# So, How are We Doing?

- ◆ Proximal, process - Have we addressed core challenges?
  - ◆ Systemic - conditions in place, coordinated systems of care
  - ◆ Knowledge - mental health literacy for educators and SMH professionals
  - ◆ Implementation - selection and uptake of appropriate evidence-based programming across the tiers with fidelity, differentiated programming for specific populations
- ◆ Proximal, outcome - Are we seeing changes in schools and systems?
  - ◆ system and school leadership, school climate, youth and family engagement...
- ◆ Distal, outcome - Are we making a difference in the lives of students?
  - ◆ Enhanced overall well-being, skill acquisition, sense of belonging, reductions in mental illness prevalence...

**Thank you for playing right!!**

**Research**

**Practice**

**Policy**

**Knowledge  
Exchange**



# Why Create a National Agenda in SMH?

- ◇ Diverse and knowledgeable national gathering
- ◇ Research, policy, practice represented
- ◇ Many provinces and territories, and international critical friends

- ◇ We can optimize our co-learning!
  - ◇ Summarize and circulate recommendations -
    - ◇ research, policy, practice, KTE
  - ◇ Perhaps create a consensus statement
  - ◇ Perhaps can inform the work of national groups



# Recommendations for Research

- ◇ Raise the bar
- ◇ We want more
- ◇ Educator involvement
- ◇ Measures





# Recommendations for Practice

- ◆ Honour and share effective practices
- ◆ Voice
- ◆ Become Upstreamists
- ◆ Specific populations
- ◆ Build capacity



# Recommendations for Policy

- ◆ Federal role
- ◆ Dedicated funding
- ◆ National strategy for school mental health
- ◆ Integration across sectors
- ◆ Policy-related resources





# Recommendations for Knowledge Translation and Exchange

- ◆ Ensure voice
- ◆ Knowledge table
- ◆ School / university partnership
- ◆ Technology as support



# What are the Next Steps?

- ◆ What might be useful to achieve the vision we are collectively imagining...
- ◆ Head, Heart, Hand..





# THANK YOU!

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