

Truro junior to receive funding for support outside the classroom



Truro Junior High School students Haley Matthews, front, and Lauren Doane, listen to Truro/Bible Hill MLA Lenore Zann as she made an announced \$125,000 in funding Tuesday as the school will become a hub for a program called SchoolsPlus designed to help...

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Students benefit from SchoolsPlus initiative, say officials

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TRURO - Colchester County students needing help with issues outside the classroom are going to get it thanks to an announcement Tuesday by the provincial government.

SchoolsPlus is a \$2.5-million provincial initiative designed to help students in need of additional support and services not available in classrooms, such as mental health, addictions services and easier access to community organizations.

Truro/Bible Hill MLA Lenore Zann announced at Truro Junior High School the Chignecto Central Regional School Board will receive \$125,000 in funding to develop the school into a hub site for Colchester County.

"It means a lot in terms of organizing services for our students," said Truro junior high vice-principal Shelley MacLean. "We have tried in the past to get these things organized by ourselves but this plan will help us serve our students and their families better."

The announcement was made in conjunction with others in Halifax and Liverpool as the province looks to expand the program from its initial sites in each board.

Although the program will be run out of the school, all students and their families can access its services.

"I think it will make a great impact," said Grade 7 student Alijah Lyngo. "It will help the students but it will help the community in the long run because when students are doing good it has a positive impact on the community."

The program will take effect at the start of the next school year and will give students and their families access to anger management, parenting support, arts and sports programs, mentoring, employment support and hobby clubs among others in collaboration with community groups.

MacLean said many issues can affect a student's learning and SchoolsPlus will address them.

"It gives the parents more support and the students more support so the learning can happen," she said.

Zann presented a study that showed at SchoolsPlus locations, the number of students who said they enjoyed school and believed it was helping them climbed from 28 per cent to 49 per cent in just one year.

"So that's a very good sign, I think, that it works," Zann said.

Kim Wood has seen it happen. As the SchoolsPlus facilitator in Amherst, one of several sites across the province where the program is already implemented, Wood said the program has helped struggling students in that area greatly. She said a student who has been a disruption in class has been less so after joining the program and teachers quickly saw another student attend class faithfully after being told it was a requirement to come to the program's activities.

"It really makes a difference for sure," she said. "It's working for our students and families."

Zann said she was pleased to make the announcement and show a commitment to schools in light of the recent backlash to educational cuts.

"Obviously we're trying to work with the school board to try and smooth out everything and make sure the cuts don't affect the classroom and don't affect students and at this point we seem to be working much better together which is what we need to do in order to try and find places where savings can be found."