

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2018





MESSAGE FROM TARA SchoolsPlus Provincial Coordinator

Welcome to our newsletter, taking us through the October to December period.

We open with the theme of ‘Caring is Sharing.’ This theme is about your many efforts to create access to equitable, food, clothing and other resources. It is a chance for us to recognize that everyone has needs, and everyone has gifts to share.

As we collaborate within our school, and within our communities, stories abound, of the creation of pantries where items are borrowed and given, of knitting groups happy to make 250 pairs of mittens for students, and numerous partnerships to help create food security in partnership for students and families.

When we feel secure, leadership emerges. Youth become our leaders, engaging in outreach activities, whether it is distributing winter coats, participating in fundraisers, breakfast programs, or buddy benches. Students also work to raise awareness and reduce stigma on mental health. Students learn that caring is sharing!!!

And citizenship begins with our youngest children, and we are so proud to feature our collaboration with our early years partners, as new investments have supported exciting initiatives. From transition support on the ground, through our participation in knowledge exchange, we are excited to work with the early years sector, and be involved with children “right from the start”.

And speaking of caring and sharing, we are pleased to celebrate the animal assisted work led by Faye and a golden retriever named Bella. Read all about Faye and Bella, a certified pet therapy team, and all they have to offer us.

We had a lot of fun with this edition, and we hope you enjoy our stories and see yourself reflected back. We thank you for the work that you do as part of the SchoolsPlus model.



FEATURE STORY

Caring is Sharing

A primary objective of the SchoolsPlus Model is to help identify barriers students and families face when accessing government services, including schools. As part of this work SchoolsPlus Regional Advisory Committees (RACs) across the province have worked to collect information from children, youth, families and service providers about which needs should take priority in their local communities. This work is regularly done in the form of surveys, consultations, and conversations. Local RACs are made up of multiple government and community agencies who also inform decision making based on their unique perspectives and available data in their regions.

As a result, there have been many initiatives to help coordinate resources. Consultations with community organizations and other groups have identified the need to support children, youth and families who seek to access these resources in a way that reduces stigma and supports cooperation.

Everyone is working to be creative to help meet the needs with resources such as: Food pantries, special funds for emergency needs, pop-dress pop ups, crock pot cooking groups, breakfast programs, food clubs, etc.

See back page for more examples!



"The uptake of our pantry has been incredible. We house the items in an accessible and discreet location that allows students the autonomy to access these items."

- Linda Jensen, SchoolsPlus Facilitator, SSRCE

With access to these resources, research has identified that students are better prepared to learn and have more positive outcomes. Caring and sharing for all aspects of a child and youth's development is a focus of our SchoolsPlus teams and many partners who collaborate to collectively address these and other priority needs.



Access to equitable food, clothing, school supplies and other material resources to support meaningful participation in school and local community has been identified as a priority recommendation in our SchoolsPlus sites.





STAFF FEATURE

Innovation in Practice



SchoolsPlus Community Outreach using Animal Assisted Approach to Student Engagement

**Faye Fraser, SchoolsPlus Community Outreach Worker
Guysborough County/ Monastery, SRCE**

This fall the SchoolsPlus team welcomed Faye Fraser in the Community Outreach Worker role in Guysborough County/Monastery, SRCE. Faye brought with her a wealth of experience as well as established connections within the community. In addition to her many skills, Faye is also part of a registered dog therapy team through St. John Ambulance. Bella, a 5 year old Golden Retriever works along side Faye in her new role. School communities in her region welcomed Bella into their networks of support recognizing the many benefits that animal assisted interventions can have when supporting young people, particularly those that might encounter barriers to services. Through a consultation process, school teams, children, youth, families and community partners are engaging with Faye and Bella in their work to ensure everyone has what they need to be successful in school.



Bella has a regular schedule and has bi-weekly or monthly visits with schools to support the work that Faye and her colleagues at school and in the community are doing to wrap around students and their families. Faye consults regularly to ensure that participation is safe and engaging for all those involved.

Bella and Faye have been a certified pet therapy team for 2 years. Therapy dogs are required to pass specific evaluations to enable them to interact with individuals and more specifically children and youth. Their temperament is an important part of the evaluation as well as their ability to interact with their handler and others.



Animal assisted approaches are being utilized in Nova Scotia in municipal libraries to support reading, specialized residential care settings for children and youth, IWK health center Suspected Trauma and Abuse Response Team (S.T.A.R.T), nursing homes, court proceedings and other settings. As Faye and Bella continue their work, we look forward to learning more about this innovation within our SchoolsPlus Community

Identified Benefits for Schools:

- Alternative approach for rapport building
- Increase in positive student behaviour
- Improved engagement with learning
- Opportunities to further develop social emotional skills

Identified Benefits for Students:

- Increase in school engagement
- Enhanced peer relationships
- Increased positive affect
- Improved relationships with school staff



ANNAPOLIS VALLEY REGIONAL CENTRE FOR EDUCATION

FREEDOM TO BE FIT (BELONGING AND ENGAGING IN FITNESS, INCLUSION AND TRAINING)

Who: Female identifying students aged 8 to 12

What: Students participated in many activities including one hour of therapeutic horseback riding lessons and one hour of programming designed to educate and promote healthy lifestyle activities for girls.

When: 9:30 am to 11:30 am on Wednesdays throughout the Fall

Where: Dwight Ross Elementary, Kingston & District School and Pine Ridge Middle School

Why: The intent of this program was to raise self-esteem, support positive body image and increase knowledge about healthy active lifestyles.



Partners:
*Nova Scotia Health Authority's
Chronic Disease Innovation Fund
& Free Spirit Therapeutic Riding
Association*

CAPE BRETON-VICTORIA REGIONAL CENTRE FOR EDUCATION

HEADSTRONG SUMMIT



Who: 80 Middle School students from the CBVRCE and CSAP

What: A one-day Headstrong Summit to educate students on many aspects of mental illness and stigmas

When: November 7th, 2018

Where: Cape Breton University

Why: Students participated in many activities and discussions aiming to increase knowledge of mental health and mental illness, decrease stigma, and change the current negative attitudes present in our thinking and behaviour by empowering youth to be Champions of Change when they return to their schools.

Partners:

NSHA's Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Addiction Service

Family Services of Eastern Nova Scotia



CHIGNECTO-CENTRAL REGIONAL CENTRE FOR EDUCATION

YOUTH LED VOLUNTEERISM AND CITIZENSHIP

Who: Students involved in SchoolsPlus Programming (Amherst)

What: Opportunities for youth-led student volunteerism and citizenship within the local community. Examples: Serving community members holiday dinner, delivering winter coats to local area schools, a fundraiser for Cumberland County Hospice Palliative Care Society, and setting up for Pumpkins for Poverty.

Where: Cumberland County Schools

When: Fall 2018

Why: Student participants in SchoolsPlus identified an interest in giving back to their communities. Student volunteerism and citizenship opportunities help support students' sense of belonging and connection within the broader community. The students relied on the support of SP Community Outreach workers Marvin Hairston and Mike Hudson as they engaged in these transformative activities.



Partners: Cumberland YMCa, Empowering Beyond Barriers, Amherst Artisan Gallery

CONSEIL SCOLAIRE ACADIEN PROVINCIAL

ADOLESCENT PLUS (ADO+)



Who: Students from grade 10 to 12

What: Students meet on a weekly basis to explore ways to engage in their school and community. Some projects on the go are buddy benches and students on the Provincial RCMP Advisory Committee. They are also working with the elementary schools by helping with fluoride, breakfast and arts and crafts programs.

When: Tuesdays during lunch

Where: École Secondaire de Par-en-Bas

Why: To encourage inclusion and school spirit.



HALIFAX REGIONAL CENTRE FOR EDUCATION HUB GRAND OPENINGS



Who: Students, parents/guardians, SchoolsPlus staff and educators

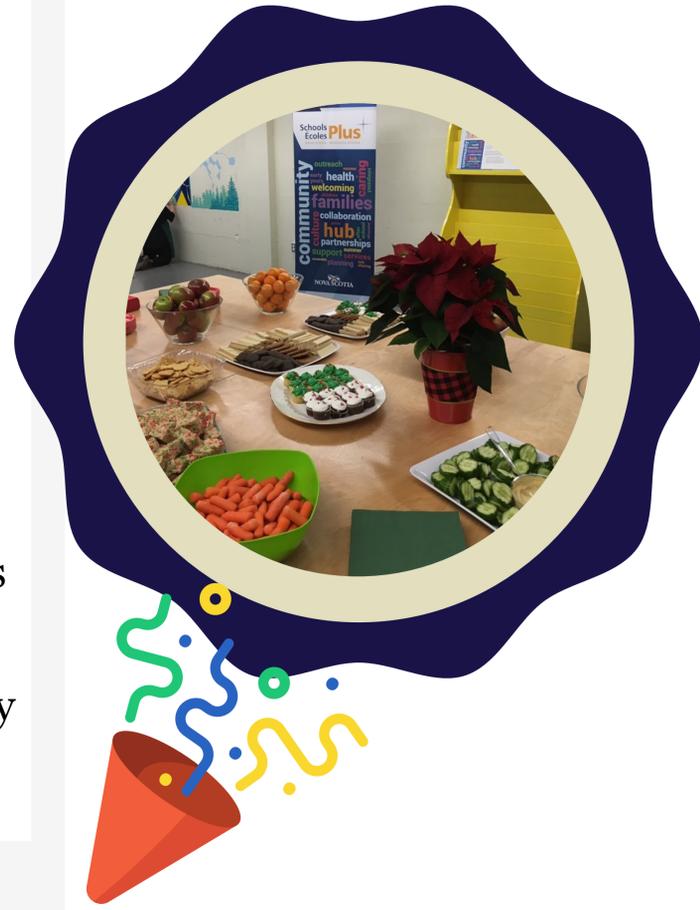
What: The grand opening of two new SchoolsPlus Hub Sites

When: Monday, November 5th, 12pm–1pm & Friday, December 14th, 12pm–1pm

Where: Musquodoboit Rural High School & Gaetz Brook Junior High

Why: SchoolsPlus has added two new Community Hub Sites to its HRCE roster. These two new hubs will help to serve communities previously unsupported by our initiative.

By all reports, the grand openings were a huge success. Students continued popping into the room all week, chatting over lunch hour, and showing a real interest in what SchoolsPlus is all about. This led to an opportunity to connect with the local family resource centre in Musquodoboit and begin efforts to co-facilitate programming in the new year.



STRAIT REGIONAL CENTRE FOR EDUCATION TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE



What can you do if your friend or family member is struggling with their mental health?

- Be supportive and listen to them
- Educate yourself about mental health
- Ask if they'd like you to help find support
- All of the above



Who: Dalbrae Academy's Headstrong Committee & participating students

What: Test Your Knowledge – multiple choice quiz

When: Tuesday, October 30th, 2018

Where: Dalbrae Academy

Why: The student-led Headstrong Committee's aim is to reduce stigma around mental illness and they chose to use the Kahoot! to provide information to students to increase their knowledge.

This initiative showed that 81% of participating students correctly identified who could direct a student to mental health supports & services, and that 100% were aware that it was possible to meet with a Mental Health and Addictions professional at school!



SOUTH SHORE REGIONAL CENTRE FOR EDUCATION PERSONAL CARE PROGRAM

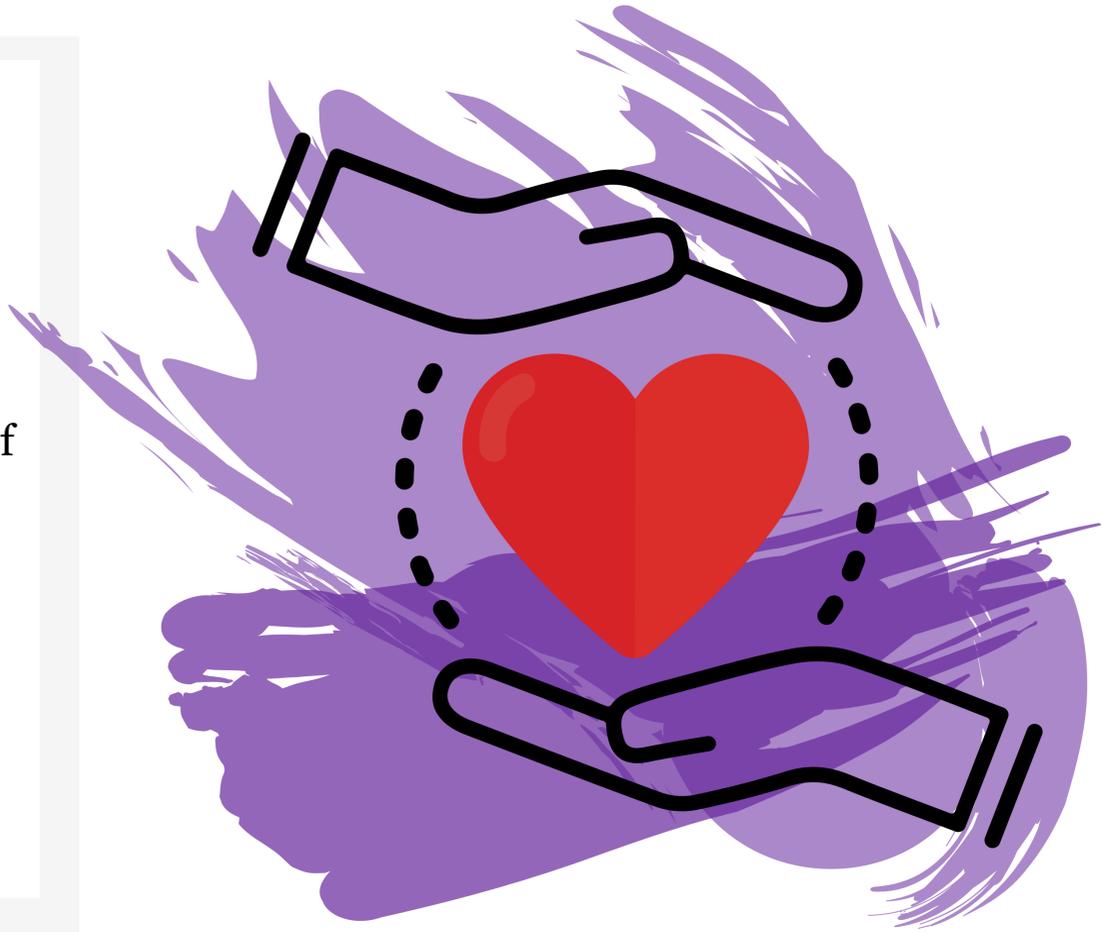
Who: SSRCE Outreach Staff

What: Personal care program for students who identify as female

When: Fall 2018

Where: Community Room at CSAP Sud Ovest

Why: Early adolescence is an exciting time, with much variety and changes. It is a time of rapid growth and changes in our body. This program is offered to provide a supportive experience for participants to learn about their development and personal care needs. Each participant received a personal care package as well as resources related to personal care/health. Support persons were identified to be available to students throughout the school year if they had questions/required further support.



Partners: SSRCE SchoolsPlus partnered with CSAP SchoolsPlus to offer this experience

TRI-COUNTY REGIONAL CENTRE FOR EDUCATION EMERGENCY FUNDRAISER CONCERT



Who: DRHS SchoolsPlus Student Advisory committee members

What: A concert to kick off the holiday season and raise funds for the Digby SchoolsPlus Emergency Fund with a night of entertainment featuring song writer and singer, Rachel MacLean.

When: November 29, 2018

Where: DRHS Theatre

Why: The Digby SchoolsPlus Emergency Funds were created to meet an identified need and gap in obtaining services to meet various medical needs of students and families, such as medication coverage, transportation costs to medical appointments, purchasing of eye glasses and, to assist with emergency dental work not covered by other sources.

Partner:



Digby and Area
Health Service
Charitable Foundation

EARLY YEARS PARTNERSHIPS



SchoolsPlus teams have been working collaboratively with a wide range of service providers and systems that support and enhance the early development of Nova Scotia's youngest citizens. In this quarter we would like to celebrate the incredible contribution of the Early Years sector and the partnerships that inform on many great initiatives.

Regional Advisory Committee Example

SchoolsPlus partners have engaged in a number of initiatives to support integrated service delivery for young children and their families. This work is made possible through the participation of staff in the Early Years sector who are members of Regional SchoolsPlus Advisory Committees, helping to examine gaps in services as well as avoid service duplication.

In 2016 Annapolis SchoolsPlus Regional Advisory Committee formed a targeted working group to focus on early development with three key focuses, including oral language based on regional data. The group examined current services and supports available to families in the early years to create and realign services and to bolster supports for families in this school community.

The resulting action plan focused on a long-term strategy to improve general knowledge and early literacy skills of children entering school in the western end of Annapolis County.

Image of the Child

Recent investments to support quality enhancement of early years services have been made in Nova Scotia. For example, the Early Learning Curriculum Framework which invites us to explore the **Image of the Child** as "Curious, competent, full of potential, and born with an intrinsic desire and capacity to learn," Early Years Branch, EECD. This model provides us with an important framework to guide our shared efforts.

- Public Health
- Healthy School Community Consultant and Public Health
- Caregiver
- Family Matters
- EECD
- Digby Area Learning Association
- AVRCE
- DCS
- Annapolis Valley Regional Library
- Valley Community Learning Association

Partners

To learn more about the image of the child and the Early Learning Curriculum Framework, as well as other initiatives visit: <https://www.ednet.ns.ca/earlyyears>

Transition Support and Early Identification

A number of SchoolsPlus Facilitators support the transition of early learners through Primary registration support. SchoolsPlus team members attend orientation/info sessions for families along with other providers. This partnership has resulted in early identification of needs and wrap-around services extended to families when required. These sessions can be a first point of contact for many families and having SchoolsPlus to help navigate and coordinate services can support families during this transition. In the CSAP Board, this model is used across the province.

Mobilizing Connections

SchoolsPlus Coordinators were able to participate in the Mobilizing Connections: To Build Early Childhood Partnerships in Nova Scotia, November 2018

This event was led by Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac, Canada Research Chair in Early Childhood: Diversity and Transitions at Mount Saint Vincent University and Director of the Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre. This event emerged as part of ongoing efforts to build research capacity to support early childhood policy and practice in Nova Scotia. One of the activities including developing a systems map to examine the complexity of supporting early childhood in NS. A listening café was also held to enhance collaboration and to explore deep listening to stories and experiences. Sessions were also held to enhance practice and policy for the early childhood sector.

<https://www.msvu.ca/site/media/msvu/Mobilizing%20Connections%20Report%20FINAL2.pdf>

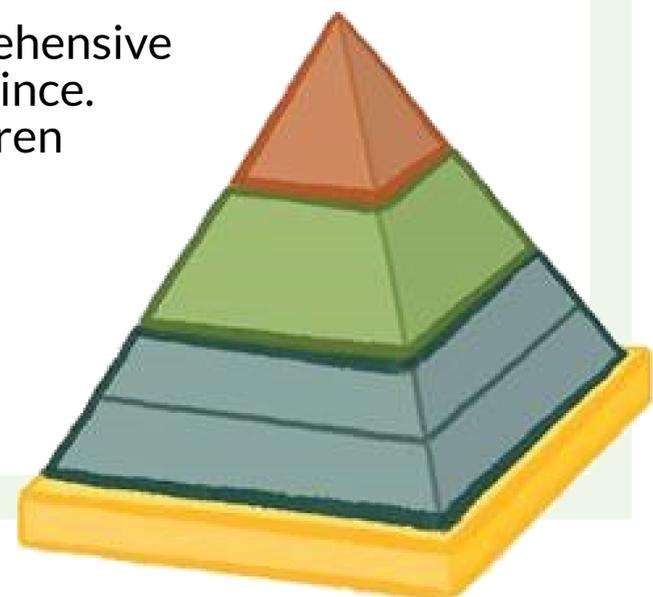


Current Partnership Initiative

The Pyramid Model is a conceptual framework of evidence-based teaching practices and intervention approaches that promote young children's healthy social and emotional development and are effective in addressing challenging behaviour. The foundation of the 'pyramid' is the promotion of nurturing and responsive relationships that are essential to healthy social development. This model is currently being implemented in Nova Scotia. It is supported by a leadership team which includes representation from SchoolsPlus at the provincial level. This exciting initiative will help provide a coordinated process for supporting early learners in their development of social and emotional skills.

Our early years partners are highly engaged in providing a comprehensive approach to supporting early development of children in our province. All communities are enriched when families and their young children are fully supported to grow and develop in a meaningful and responsive way.

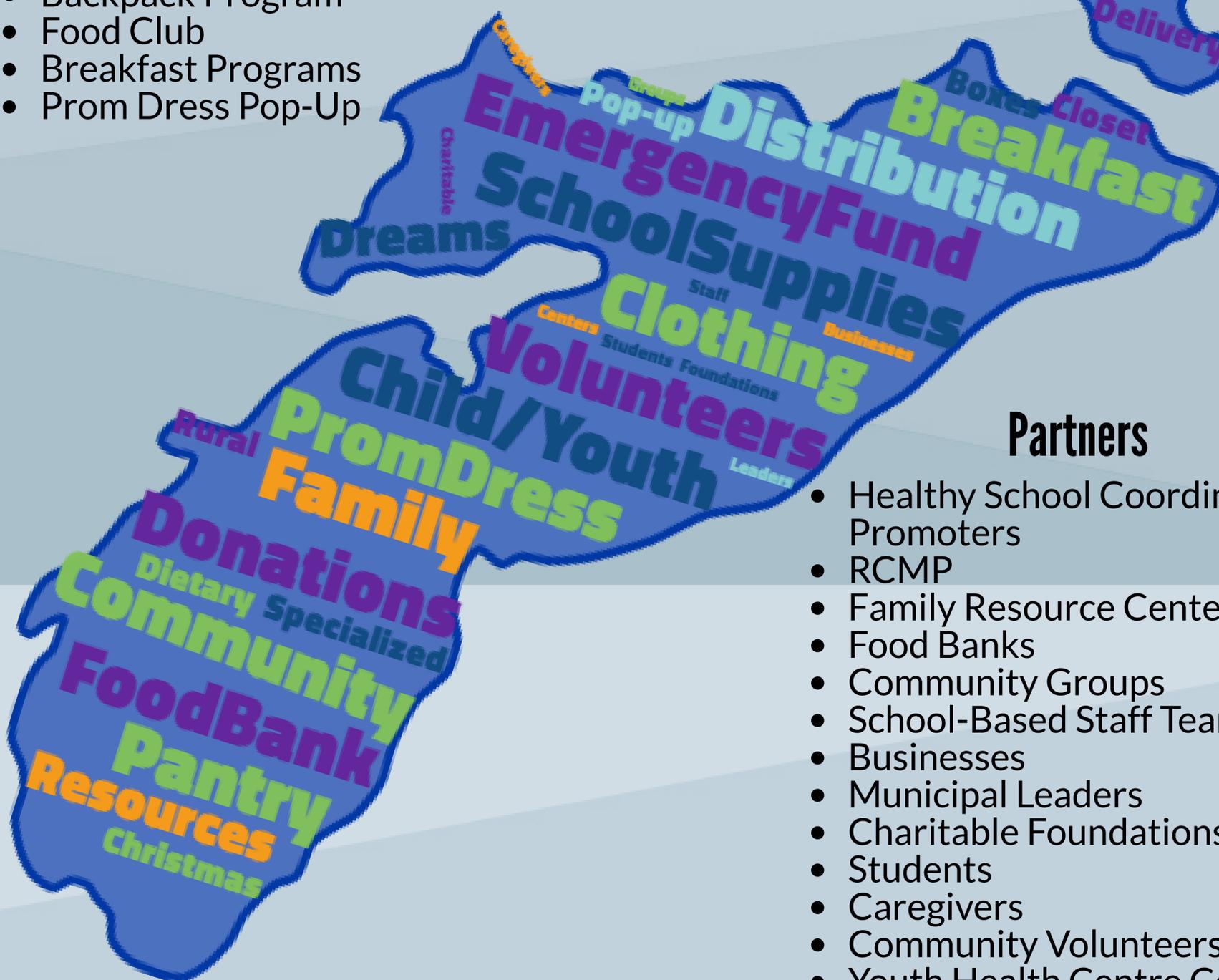
More information about the Pyramid Model may be found at:
<https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/>



QUALITATIVE DATA

Everyone agrees that all students need to have these resources to best support their learning experience. Here are just a few of the creative initiatives that support a sharing economy within schools and communities which in turn increases direct access to students and promotes a sense of belonging.

- SchoolsPlus Emergency Fund
- Slow Cooked Dreams
- School Pantry Project
- Child/Youth Cooking Programs
- Crock Pot Program
- Transportation for Access
- Clothing Bank
- Backpack Program
- Food Club
- Breakfast Programs
- Prom Dress Pop-Up
- Community Shopping Day
- Pilot of Rural Food Delivery
- Community Cupboard
- Donations of Resources for Specialized Dietary Needs
- School Supplies Distribution
- SchoolsPlus Closet
- Christmas Meal Food Boxes



Partners

- Healthy School Coordinators / Promoters
- RCMP
- Family Resource Centers
- Food Banks
- Community Groups
- School-Based Staff Teams
- Businesses
- Municipal Leaders
- Charitable Foundations
- Students
- Caregivers
- Community Volunteers
- Youth Health Centre Coordinators

SchoolsPlus teams have collaborated with local food insecurity organizations to help reduce barriers such as transportation by bringing resources into school and communities better ensuring families have access.

