



“In the three years I have been in SACY, I have learned a lot and become more aware of things around me. SACY has helped me learn more about the world and myself and has helped me grow as a person. SACY has helped me develop my leadership skills and has educated me more about drugs and alcohol.”

-SACY-involved youth

## An Evaluation of the “School-Aged Children and Youth Substance Use Prevention Initiative” (SACY)

2008-2009 School Year

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### Prepared for:

Vancouver Board of Education (VBE)

Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH)

The National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC)



#### Prepared by:

Denise Buote, PhD

[www.arboreducational.com](http://www.arboreducational.com)

**SEPTEMBER 2009**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Schools are in a position to play a critical role in supporting youth in a meaningful and growth promoting way around issues related to alcohol and other drug (AOD) use. Traditionally, services and supports have focused primarily on looking at how the ‘problem’ of AOD use can be resolved for any given individual. While this is arguably an important goal, it often sacrifices honouring and bringing out an individual’s strengths to overcome challenges and instead leaves an individual with the sense that he or she is the problem. This deficit model can lead youth to isolate and prevent them from reaching out to caring relationships that could be healing. It can also lead them to view themselves as someone to be dealt with rather than someone with the capacity to grow and become an active member of society. Youth come into contact with adults in many contexts, and provide us with a rich opportunity to help them gain appreciation for the strengths they have internally (e.g.,



### The Continuum of Prevention

**Primary:** prevention of a problem before it starts.

**Secondary:** prevention of recurrences of a problem.

**Tertiary:** reduction in the amount of the disability caused by a problem.

optimism, empathy, sense of humour) as well as externally (e.g., relationships with family, vibrant community, encouragement from others). This way, we can reframe AOD use and understand that challenges with AOD use represent the outward behaviour of internal struggles stemming from both internal and external risk factors. By bolstering the strengths of the individual, we tip the scales away from risk factors and allow youth the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity that each one of us brings to life. The most powerful tool we can offer youth is that of a caring relationship through which youth can come to see themselves as complex individuals with strengths, struggles, and most importantly, potential.

### ‘School-Aged Child and Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Initiative’ (SACY)

This strength-based lens was applied to the development of the “School-Aged Child and Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Initiative” (SACY) in 2006. SACY is a multi-dimensional, integrated prevention initiative which views youth development through a strengths-based approach embedded in an ecological framework. Having just completed the third year of implementation, SACY recognizes that prevention work operates on a continuum from primary to tertiary efforts where developed services,

supports and partnerships are able to meet youth in relation to their support needs. The overall goal of SACY is to:

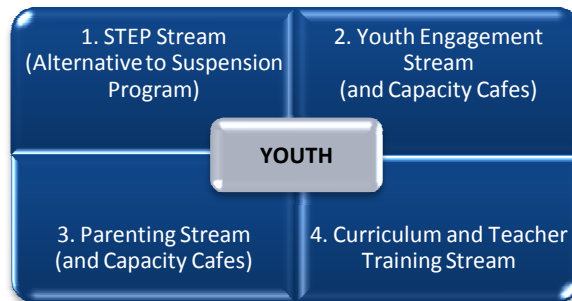
*Enhance the prevention and early intervention infrastructure for children and youth within the Vancouver Board of Education that will aid in preventing and delaying substance use and preventing substance use problems.*

This goal is worked toward through focusing on the following four objectives:

- ✓ *To enhance schools' capacity to prevent and reduce the problems associated with alcohol and other drug use;*
- ✓ *To strengthen parents', teachers', and youths' awareness, knowledge and skills regarding alcohol and other drugs and related problems;*
- ✓ *To develop and enhance 'social connectedness' among students, teachers, parents and the wider school community;*
- ✓ *To prevent and delay substance use and prevent substance use problems within the school-aged youth community.*

### **SACY: A Comprehensive and Integrated Model**

As mentioned, SACY is a comprehensive and integrated model that works in several contexts in which youth experience their lives. There are four streams that comprise SACY. Each stream creates and implements specific activities for their stream. At the same time, streams work together to integrate overlapping activities to increase the level of wrap-around support for youth.



The *STEP Stream* is a three day program for youth who incur problems with school performance due to AOD issues, including but not limited to, students who have been suspended from their school for AOD issues (e.g., using AOD on school grounds, coming to school under the influence) or students who have been impacted by AOD in their lives (e.g. dealing with a family member who has AOD issues). STEP is therefore open to youth in cases where the school feels that the youth would greatly benefit from exploring important issues in their lives related to AOD use.

The *Youth Engagement Stream* consists of youth engagement workers who offer supports and services in secondary schools. Activities are designed to bring out the strengths in youth and provide them with proper information around AOD use in order that they can make choices in their lives that will lead them

toward their goals. Activities include AOD workshops, AOD classroom presentations, SACY meetings, community service learning activities and one-on-one support to youth. Youth engagement workers also work with youth who participate in the STEP stream to assist their transition back to their home school. Efforts are made to engage these youth over the long-run to help them realise their strengths.

The *Capacity Cafes* are a joint effort among all streams. These cafes aim to bring together youth, parents and other adults (e.g., community members, school staff) and engage them in a dialogue about youth AOD use. Adults are given the opportunity to hear youth perspectives around AOD use, the stressors youth they have in their lives and the needs youth have for family support. At the same time, youth are able to hear parents' concerns and fears for youth. This dialogue allows a greater sense of mutual understanding and compassion to emerge.

The *Parenting Stream* recognizes that parenting youth can be a challenge and that the relationship among youth and parents (and other caregivers) is critical. They offer workshops to parents that focus on helping them enhance their relationship with youth through an understanding of adolescent development and positive communication skills. The parent engagement workers also reach out to parents of youth who participate in the STEP program to offer support or referrals to community services.

The *Curriculum and Teacher Training Stream* conducts its efforts in schools in order to offer school staff the opportunity to learn more about youth AOD use and effective strategies for supporting youth who struggle with AOD issues. Further to this, through professional development and teacher curriculum, the aim is to shift the school climate to one in which youth strengths and social-emotional needs are at the forefront of consideration, in order to delay the onset of AOD use and to decrease the rates of AOD use. With key education around AOD use, school personnel are in a better position to examine their current response to AOD use and determine how to better support youth so that they stay connected to school and experience success.

## **Evaluation Design**

Feedback was gathered on an ongoing basis for numerous activities during the three years in which SACY has been implemented in the VBE. During the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school year<sup>1</sup>, parents, youth, SACY supporters and school personnel provided feedback via one or more means: paper-based surveys, on-line surveys and/or telephone interviews. SACY staff were also asked to provide their feedback by either an online survey or in-person interview at the end of the school year. Feedback occurred directly after specific events to gain insight into participant experiences. Follow-up feedback was also gathered from parents, youth and school staff in order to examine impact over time.

---

<sup>1</sup> During the 2006-2007 school year, SACY was piloted in 2 schools. The evaluation of 2006-2007 was conducted by a different evaluator and feedback was limited because SACY was newly implemented. The last two years included data from a greater number of stakeholders.

## Findings

Key findings are presented in seven sections: five sections are related to SACY activities and two sections are related to perceptions and experiences of school personnel, SACY supporters and SACY staff.

### STEP Stream

The STEP stream began offering the three day program in January 2008 to a limited number of schools. In the 2008-2009 school year, STEP was open to all secondary schools in the VBE. Since the beginning of STEP, 227 youth have completed the program. To gather feedback, youth were asked to complete an entry and exit survey during their three day experience. In the current year, youth engagement workers followed up with STEP youth at 6 weeks and 3 months post program to determine if there were lasting positive impacts. In June 2009, youth and parents of youth who participated in STEP were asked to provide their feedback through an online survey.

STEP has filled a critical gap in the VBE. Youth suspended from schools as a result of AOD issues have an opportunity to learn, reflect and grow as a result of their participation in STEP. What is rather alarming and underlies the need to support for these youth, are the high levels of learning disabilities, internalizing problems (e.g., depression, anxiety) and school disengagement that these youth experience. These are youth who are not experiencing success in one or more areas of their lives, which puts them at increased risk for turning to AOD to self-medicate and escape their distress.

Findings since the beginning of the program are extremely consistent in that youth rate the experience of STEP and its' benefits very highly. At the beginning of the STEP program, the majority of youth reported that they believe the program will be a negative experience and something that they have to endure. At the end of the program however, almost all youth identify the program as extremely helpful and they reported to feel understood and empowered to make positive changes in their lives.

The driving force of the STEP program is the open and non-judgmental connection made between facilitators and youth. Youth appear to embrace this connection and are able to integrate the

### Who are the youth coming into STEP?

- ✓ Upon entering the STEP program, 36% of males and 63% of females report using alcohol as a way to deal with their feelings while 50% of males and 92% of females report using drugs as a way to deal with their feelings.
- ✓ Those youth who reported drinking more to help deal with feelings also reported feeling less happy with their home life.
- ✓ Those youth who reported higher levels of participation in school or community groups also gave higher ratings to the following statements 'I have a lot to be proud of.'; 'I do lots of important things.'; 'What my parents think of me is important.'

### What did youth think about STEP?

- ✓ 96% of youth reported benefits from their participation.
- ✓ 100% of youth reported that they experienced the group leaders as helpful and understanding.

### Key Findings from STEP Follow-Up

- ✓ 6 weeks post-STEP, 80% of the goals that were set by youth were being worked toward and 19% had been successfully achieved.
- ✓ 90% of youth reported that things went well when they returned to school.
- ✓ 17% of youth reported that their parents were supportive of them.
- ✓ 80% of youth would recommend the program to others who have AOD issues.
- ✓ 100% of youth who completed a year-end survey reported that they had benefited from STEP.

information in order to examine their own life, both in terms of their present situation and their future hopes and goals.

During the past year, following up with youth was undertaken in order to uncover whether their overwhelmingly positive feedback immediately after STEP translated into positive gains for them at 6 weeks and 3 months post program. Findings were overall positive in that youth were continuing to work toward goals in the areas of commitment to learning, reducing or quitting AOD use and improving relationships in their lives. Just over half (55%) of youth reported adequate levels of support from the school upon their return, which points to an area in need of improvement.

Among parents who provided their feedback about their youth who had completed STEP, all reported that STEP had been helpful. Most (67%) parents saw noticeable positive changes in their son or daughter since the completion of the STEP program.

Overall, it does appear that a substantial number of youth are able to use the three day program as a springboard for positive change in their life. Parents report positive experiences interacting with the STEP staff and expressed an appreciation for having their child participate in the program. Key recommendations for the STEP program focus on increasing the follow-up for youth and parents who may benefit from ongoing and specialized supports.

### **Youth Engagement Stream**

The Youth Engagement Stream began in 2 schools in 2006-2007 and by the end of 2009, the stream worked in 10 schools. With the goal of actively engaging a wide cross-section of youth, the Youth Engagement Stream has developed a variety of activities, some focused on universal prevention, such as AOD presentations to classrooms, and some focused on a targeted group of individuals, as in the case with the workshops. In addition, this stream engages students in community service learning activities, SACY group meetings and Capacity Cafés. Schools are offered a menu of these choices from which they can choose the activities to best fit the needs of their population. In order to obtain feedback during the 2008-2009 school year<sup>2</sup>, youth were asked to complete surveys after the AOD presentations and workshops. Additionally, youth were invited to complete an online survey at the end of the year. A total of 893 youth provided feedback about their experience of the AOD workshops; 114 youth provided their feedback about the workshops and 9 SACY-involved youth reflected on their experience of being involved with SACY.

The AOD presentation provided youth with basic information about AOD. Youth reported high levels of enjoyment and learning as a result of participating in the presentation. Youth reported that the top three things that they learned during the presentation were: information on specific drugs (e.g., effects), the value in avoiding AOD use and the risks associated with AOD use. Many (41%) youth indicated that they intended to stay away from AOD use as a result of the presentation.

---

<sup>2</sup> Note that results for the 2007-2008 are very similar to the current year in relation to the workshops. The AOD classroom presentations and year-end survey are 2008-2009 evaluation activities.

The workshops were designed to engage youth who were identified as being at risk for school disengagement. These half-day or full-day workshops sought to provide these youth with an environment in which they could gain information but also reflect on their own lives in relation to their goals and values. Youth who participated in these workshops reported high levels of school disengagement. For example, 88% had skipped a class during the year and 65% were skipping class on a weekly basis. They also reported overall low levels of school and activity involvement. Once again, as with the STEP youth, these youth reported concerning levels of AOD use to deal with difficult emotions and life stress.

These same youth, based on their post-workshop feedback, reported high levels of desire to make changes in their lives by setting goals, examining their AOD use and strengthening their relationships. Although many found it hard to open up (41%), they clearly used the opportunity to think about their lives and how they could improve their overall well-being. In the end, 62% of youth rated the workshop as “very good” or “excellent” while 23% rated it as “quite good.”

At the end of year, SACY-involved youth were asked to give their feedback about their overall experience. These youth reported extremely high levels of enjoyment that they derived from participating in the activities and being with the staff. They noted the connectedness felt through their involvement and the meaning they found giving back to the community via the community service learning activities. For these youth, SACY was a way not only to learn about AOD but a way to develop their strengths and come to see themselves as a resource to society.

Overall, youth who are involved in SACY on an ongoing basis report higher levels of resiliency compared to youth who struggle on their own with AOD issues. With SACY’s strengths-focused approach, youth can build up their confidence and learn more positive ways to deal with stress and difficult emotions. By seeing that they have the capacity to effectively deal with various aspects of life, their overall levels of well-being are positively impacted.

Recommendations for the youth stream focus primarily on examining ways to raise its profile in schools in order to engage more youth who would greatly benefit from the streams’ support and activities. By attracting an increasing number of youth who are involved

#### **Key Findings from AOD Classroom Presentations**

- ✓ 93% of youth would highly recommend the presentation.
- ✓ Among youth who participated (note that presentations were universal and thus many youth had no involvement with AOD), 24% indicated they intended to make changes in their life related to AOD issues.

#### **Key Findings from the Workshops**

- ✓ Youth reported the main reasons that youth use AOD are: form of escape from daily problems (21%), stress relief (19%), to feel accepted (15%) and to assist with coping with feelings (18%).
- ✓ 22% of youth reported that they would like to be more successful in school.
- ✓ 83% of youth intended to make changes in their life as a result of the workshop. Key changes were: better choices around AOD use, setting personal goals and behaving more empathically toward others.

#### **Key Findings from Year-End Feedback from Youth**

- ✓ The majority of youth felt that SACY was not well known in the schools.
- ✓ 89% of youth who completed the year-end survey felt that SACY had made a difference.
- ✓ Volunteering in the homeless shelter, participating in the Capacity Cafes and attending Kat Kamp were the favourite activities noted by youth.

with AOD or are at-risk for AOD use, SACY has a greater potential to interrupt youths' pathway toward AOD use.

### **Parent Stream**

The Parent Stream was in its development phase during the 2006-2007 year. During the past two school years, this stream has been active in offering parent workshops that focus on understanding adolescent development and enhancing communication with teens ("Building Bridges"). With this workshop as the cornerstone, the parent stream has partnered with multicultural and settlement workers in order to expand these workshops to various ethnic communities. The parenting stream is also actively involved in supporting parents in the Youth Engagement and STEP Streams.

In order to gather parents' perspectives, three data gathering approaches were used, including: feedback at the end of each workshop, two week follow-up telephone interviews with selected parents, and a year-end feedback survey. In total 168 parents gave their feedback about the "Building Bridges" workshop; 12 parents participated in a post-workshop interview and 17 parents completed a year-end online survey. Based on the past two years of findings, parents reported overwhelmingly high benefit from their participation in parent workshops with 100% of parents indicating they feel that they benefited in some way and 80% of parents reporting "quite a bit" or "a lot" of benefit.

For parents who participated in the workshops the key learning that was reported was learning how to effectively communicate with their teen in order to build their relationship with them. Based on workshop participation, parents reported several areas in which they intended to make changes. These included: utilizing positive communication skills, changing behaviours that act as barriers to communication, avoiding the tendency to overreact with their youth and allowing more space for their youth to exert their independence, even it meant that they could make mistakes.

Parents were contacted 2-3 weeks after the workshops to examine whether the workshops had an impact on how they parented. Almost all (92%) parents noted key pieces of information that had stayed with them since the workshop and that as a result, they were doing things differently in their role as a parent. Specifically, they were working at reacting less, listening more, and considering the role of adolescent development. These efforts were felt to have positively impacted the parent-child relationship in several cases.

#### **Key Findings from "Building Bridges" Workshop**

- ✓ Parent comments about workshop key learnings focused on communication techniques (59%); positive parenting behaviours (22%); and adolescent development information (7%).
- ✓ When asked how the workshop could be improved, 34% of responses related to the wish to have a longer workshop.

#### **Key Findings from Workshop Follow-Up Telephone Interviews**

- ✓ 92% of parents noted doing things differently as a result of the workshop.
- ✓ 42% of parents felt that even in the course of two weeks of changes, their relationship with their child had improved due to their effort in making changes.

#### **Key Findings from Year-End Survey**

- ✓ 33% of parents indicated that keeping the lines of communication open with their teen was their biggest concern.
- ✓ 100% of parents indicated that there were aspects of the parenting workshops that they continued to use in their parenting.
- ✓ 80% of parents gave SACY a rating of "excellent" or "very good" while 20% gave SACY a rating of "good."



The year-end survey sought to better understand the concerns and needs of parents and their experience with SACY. The key concerns identified by parents were keeping the lines of communication open with their teen and using consequences effectively. Parents continued to use several learning's from the workshops such as communication techniques, appreciating their youth as individuals and other positive parenting behaviours (e.g., remaining calm, creating a warm and open family environment and enjoying time with their teen).

Since the implementation of the parenting stream, parents have reported great benefit and learning. These results hold true for the past two years. Key recommendations for the parenting stream focus on expanding their services in order to meet the demand for workshops for parents, including offering workshops in various ethnic communities.

### **Capacity Cafes**

The Capacity Cafes have been active in SACY for the past two years. These cafes aim to bring together youth and adults to dialogue about issues related to AOD use. Youth share their perspectives and experiences with adults, such as reasons for AOD use, the stress that they experience in their lives and what they needs from parents and other adults. Adults have a chance to hear these messages and share their worries for youth. The end goal is to increase cross-generational understanding and compassion.

To date, SACY has conducted Capacity Cafes for the general population as well as an Aboriginal Capacity Cafes (in partnership with other organizations). In total, 10 Capacity Cafes have been held throughout Vancouver. Feedback from both youth and adults during the past two years has highlighted the powerful impact that bringing together different generations can enhance peoples' development of understanding and compassion. Adults report walking away from the experience deeply moved while youth report high levels of empowerment in having their voice heard.

In total, 80 adults and 35 youth gave their feedback about the general Capacity Cafes while 34 adults and 39 youth gave their feedback about the Aboriginal Capacity Cafe during the 2008-2009 school year. Adults reported finding it extremely helpful hearing youth perspectives. Specifically, they noted that hearing the following from youth were key to having an impact: that they desire respect from their parents, that they need their parents, that they feel a great deal of stress and that they want to have the trust of their parents.

As a result of attending the Capacity Cafes, over 50% of parents reported that they intended to change their communication style with their teen in order that they listen more, talk more openly and engage in conversation more often. Further to this, they noted that they wanted to be more supportive, caring and understanding. They reported a substantial gain in confidence in their role as a parent, a stronger desire to connect with their youth at a deeper level, and increased motivation to openly discuss AOD issues with their youth.

Just as adults gained a great deal from their participation in the Capacity Cafe, youth were motivated to participate and openly share their experiences for several reasons, including: to help parents better understand youth, to share their experiences in general and learn about parental perspectives. They reported that the best part of participating was having a chance to share their thoughts and opinions, gain knowledge and experience, and share their life experience. All (100%) youth who participated in a Cafe reported a high level of satisfaction about their participation and that as a result of the Cafe, parents and youth better understood one another.

The Aboriginal Capacity Cafes were conducted in partnership with other community organizations. The findings from these Cafes also indicate an extremely high level of perceived benefit both from the perspective of Aboriginal youth and adults. This coming together in dialogue was viewed as a way to strengthen families and communities. Of particular note is the 100% agreement that it is important to have Capacity Cafes that are specific to Aboriginal people.

Recommendations for future Capacity Cafes focus on refining a small number of logistical areas such as achieving the ideal balance of youth and adults and maximizing the dialogue time. These events are very well received and the format which SACY has developed has been extremely powerful at forging intergenerational connections.

### **Curriculum and Teacher Training**

The Curriculum and Teacher Training Stream focuses on building capacity in schools so that they are better able to support youth with AOD issues, implement curriculum related to AOD use and cultivate a school climate that focuses on building up the strengths of youth. In the 2007-2008 year, this stream worked to train teachers in the iMinds curriculum, a grade 6 curriculum which aims to help children learn about healthy behaviours and mental wellness. In 2008-2009, additional iMinds training for teachers was conducted. After pilot testing the curriculum in the school setting, it became evident that the iMinds curriculum was not the best fit with the SACY approach and thus a great deal of time was spent in the latter half of the 2008-2009 school year exploring other AOD curricula that would be appropriate for SACY. While more

#### **Key Findings from the General Capacity Cafes: Adult Perspectives**

- ✓ Parent comments about what they intended to change in their parenting as a result of the Capacity Cafe included: more positive communication style (55%); increase support and care (16%), increased understanding (8%); increased respect for youth opinions (8%) and increased patience (8%).
- ✓ 92% of parents reported high agreement that they had a better understanding of youth AOD issues as a result of attending the Capacity Cafe.
- ✓ 81% of parents reported high agreement that they intended to spend more time talking with their teen about day-to-day things.
- ✓ 100% of parents reported high agreement that hearing the voices of youth was powerful.

#### **Key Findings from the General Capacity Cafes: Youth Perspectives**

- ✓ 100% of youth reported that they received a high level of support from SACY staff during the Capacity Cafe.
- ✓ 100% felt that parents really wanted to hear what they had to say about the youth experience.
- ✓ 95% of youth reported high levels of pride as a result of their participation the cafe.
- ✓ 97% indicated high agreement that they would participate in another Capacity Cafe.

#### **Key Finding from the Aboriginal Capacity Cafes**

- ✓ 100% of youth and adults reported feeling that it was important for Aboriginal people to have their own Capacity Cafe.

appropriate AOD curricula was being developed, teacher training sessions were held. In 2008-2009, three teacher training workshops were conducted and one of these was formally evaluated.

In total, 41 staff members gave their input about their experience of the SACY professional development workshop. Almost all (95%) of school staff reported that the workshop met or exceeded their expectations. The most beneficial aspect of the workshop was reported to be the Capacity Cafe (75%) and 41% indicated that they would like even more time to engage in dialogue with youth. School staff reported several key learnings from the day, including: an understanding of the reasons for youth AOD use, the importance of connecting with youth, and the need for positive teacher-student relationships at the school level as a way to support youth development. School staff noted several steps that would be important for schools to undertake in improving the response to AOD issues in their school.

Recommendations for the Curriculum and Teacher Training Stream focus on carefully evaluating future AOD classroom curriculum modules from the perspective of teachers and youth and continue to evaluate the professional development workshops for teachers.

### **Feedback from Schools and SACY supporters**

Over the course of the three years in which SACY has been operating in schools, school staff have been invited to give their feedback about SACY. This feedback has assisted in learning about the perceptions of school staff in relation to their level of knowledge about SACY, areas of success and issues that would benefit from further examination. In the current year, feedback was sought from three different groups: school administrators, school staff and SACY supporters (e.g., prevention specialists, mental health workers and others who partner with SACY to support youth and families).

School administrators note that the STEP program has been a valuable service for youth and they have seen the benefits of the program when youth return to the school. For schools that have access to the other SACY streams, most administrators report high benefit from the activities undertaken by SACY. Administrators suggested that they would like to see increased funding in order to expand SACY to all schools and have ongoing training for school staff in the area of youth AOD use.

School staff feedback from 35 individuals indicated that the SACY professional development workshop and the AOD classroom presentations were the activities that most respondents to the survey had attended. Overall, most staff reported that they gained useful knowledge from the professional development workshop. AOD classroom presentations were seen as highly valuable for youth. For the small number of respondents who had attended the other activities, they reported that they found them of benefit.

#### **Teacher Feedback on Next Steps for Schools Working Toward Addressing AOD issues**

- ✓ Discussing school policies
- ✓ More training for teachers
- ✓ More opportunity for adult-youth dialogue
- ✓ Incorporate more understanding and compassion into the teaching style.
- ✓ Examine ways to reduce youth stress.

School staff were also asked to report on any experiences with youth who had participated in the STEP program. Almost half of school staff who gave feedback had experience with a youth who had gone through STEP and 67% saw positive changes in the youth when the youth returned to school.

Most staff reported being very satisfied or quite satisfied with the way in which their school currently handled AOD issues. At the same time, they did report varying levels of knowledge of youth AOD issues and a need for more education and training. As a group they favoured prevention efforts such as SACY in addressing AOD issues among youth. Those school staff members who were well acquainted with SACY noted various benefits that they saw as result of the work being done by SACY in the schools.

For the most part, SACY supporters reported that overall their work with the various streams went well. They saw the streams as becoming increasingly integrated and saw the expansion of SACY as a key success of the 2008-2009 school year. With this expansion, they noted the growing number of people being served and supported through the four streams. Supporters did suggest that it would be helpful to work toward achieving a greater level of clarity of the roles with regards to how they can best support the work of SACY. The majority of supporters planned on continuing their work with SACY in the coming year.

### **SACY Staff Feedback**

When asked to reflect on their work within SACY, staff reported many successes that have been realised since the beginning of SACY. With some challenges along the way (e.g., hiring staff after the beginning of school year due to uncertainty of funding, meeting the demands for services in a larger school district, working within school schedules and establishing clear roles among SACY and partners), SACY has moved ahead in each of the streams and has seen an increasing level of integration among the four streams. Staff view the school-based multi-component model embedded in a strengths-based approach as critical to the success of SACY. With the many activities that SACY undertakes stems the opportunity to meet the diverse needs of youth and all those who support youth. SACY staff recognize this wrap around approach as the way to best support youth. In the coming year, staff noted that they would like to work to expand their services in a strategic manner in order to reach more individuals. This would include the

### **KEY SACY SUCCESSES**

#### **SACY Support, Recognition and Dissemination**

- ✓ Increased profile of the work that SACY does in Vancouver schools which has in turn resulted in an increase in the level of trust that schools have for SACY.
- ✓ Increased dialogue with school administrators.
- ✓ Changing attitudes that are emerging among school staff toward a greater understanding of youth AOD use.
- ✓ Greater support from parent advisory committees.
- ✓ Involvement in conferences which highlighted the work that has been done by SACY.
- ✓ Increased interest from other school districts in SACY.

#### **SACY structure**

- ✓ Increased integration of the streams in working with youth, families and schools.
- ✓ A more diverse staff that work within SACY.
- ✓ Securing four VBE permanent positions for SACY.

#### **Partnerships**

- ✓ Establishing ongoing partnerships in order to better co-host the Aboriginal Capacity Cafes.
- ✓ Strengthening partnerships with UNYA, BC Yukon Society of Transition Houses, VBE's gang prevention initiative, VBE's mental health initiative, VPD's School Liaison Officers, VBE's multicultural and settlement workers, VCH's mental health workers, Youth Addiction Counselors, FACES program, and Prevention Specialists

consideration of incorporating new support services and structures needed in order to accomplish this expansion (e.g., workshop for parents of youth in STEP, regular meetings with schools to gain feedback, establishing a permanent space for parent meeting). As staff reflect on the many individuals who have been involved in receiving supports and services, they have no doubt about the value of the work that they are doing in the VBE.

### **Final Thoughts**

At the end of three years, SACY has witnessed rapid growth of an integrated model of supports and services designed to promote the healthy development of youth. Through a continuum of prevention efforts, a wide diversity of youth and adults are able to have the opportunity to learn about underlying causes of AOD use and how individuals can best be supported so that they can experience success in life. With a committed team that closely works together, SACY has positively impacted the lives of many individuals within the Vancouver area. With the ongoing work ahead, SACY will continue to touch the lives of many, both youth who yearn to be understood and adults who have the opportunity to provide that understanding.