

YOUTH FOCUS GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

Instructions:

These recommendations were generated from the issues discussed in the report. Each recommendation corresponds to data from a theme, noted to the left of the recommendation. To the right, the systems it applies to are identified. To only see the recommendations relevant to you, click on the arrow to the right of the 'System' header and select the options that are applicable to you. Use these recommendations to guide discussions and next steps.

Number	Theme	Recommendation	System
1	N/A	Many of these changes will require funding and support. Utilize the findings in this report as evidence in applications for funding and for gaining support.	All community members, including the systems listed
2	1	Know that your home is a safe place for youth. This is a strength that everyone should foster and something that should be protected for youth.	All community members, including the systems listed
3	1	Know that homes are a safe place for children's peers. Find ways to build on this strength. If your child brings a peer to your house, how can you make your house a safe place for them? How can you build a relationship with them? Look to the youth support characteristics in Theme 5 and reflect on how we can practice these qualities. Try to put them into action.	All community members, including the systems listed
4	1 & 2	Use the results of Theme 1 and 2 as criteria to assess the spaces you have jurisdiction over that youth interact with.	Provincial Government, City/County Government, Public Health Care, Community Agencies, Recreation Services, Parents/Caregivers, School Administrations, School Staff
5	1, 3, & 5	Build more and/or deeper relationships with youth inside and outside of schools. What are the ways that teachers can connect with students? How can you build more trust? What barriers are you putting up that prevent students from connecting with you, and how can you address them? Have you asked colleagues and students what relationship skills you can improve? Ensure that leadership/administration also participates in this. Find ways to build on what you know is already working based on research and evaluation data. The strategies you use for this should be applied consistently – a practice that centres on building relationships with youth should become the norm for all staff in schools.	School Divisions, School Administrations, School Staff

6	1 & 4	We know that youth may not access resources that are available to them and may instead turn to peers for support. We also know they feel safer around their peers. Therefore, find ways to increase the capacity of youth to support each other. This may be through education/trainings, awareness, or mentorship programs.	Community Agencies, Recreation Services, Parents/Caregivers, School Administrations, School Staff
7	1 & 5	Build more and/or deeper relationships with youth. This applies to both Council and Administration. The strategies you use for this should be applied consistently – a practice that centres building relationships with youth should become the norm for all public service staff.	City/County Government
8	1 & 5	Build more and/or deeper relationships with youth in programs and overall organization. Create opportunities for youth in your programs to create relationships with other adults in the community. Consider incorporating time into your services for adults to connect with youth in a mentorship capacity. Find ways to build on what you know is already working based on evaluation data. The strategies you use for this should be applied consistently – a practice that centres on building relationships with youth should become the norm for all staff and volunteers. Ensure that youth are consulted on organizational policies and programs.	Community Agencies, Recreation Services
9	1 & 5	Build more and/or deeper relationships with youth. Find ways to build on what is already working based on community feedback. Strategies used for this should be applied consistently – a practice that centres on building relationships with youth should become the norm for all staff. Being present in schools as school resource officers is critical to this, however, consider other creative ways to engage with youth on a consistent basis. An example of what is already working but could be expanded upon is the Positive Ticketing Program.	Protective Services

10	1 & 5	Facilitate ways for our youth to build more and/or deeper relationships with trusted adults in addition to their parents in the community. Are there programs they can attend that have a mentorship component? Do you have neighbours that your youth could build a deeper relationship with? What relationships do your youth have with your adult friends? The strategies you use for this should be applied consistently – having relationships with other adults in their lives should be something that all youth have throughout their life as they are more likely to develop resiliency and achieve success in education, work and make positive life choices. (Stacey Dakin MA)	Parents/Caregivers
11	2	Identify ways to address how some youth may feel unsafe in playgrounds after school hours. Consulting youth is recommended.	City/County Government, Protective Services, Parents/Caregivers, School Administrations, School Staff
12	2	Some youth feel unsafe when alone or in particular areas of the community, such as near John Peake Park. Engage in education and awareness so youth have strategies to stay safe when they are alone.	City/County Government, Protective Services, Parents/Caregivers
13	2	Increase the lighting in dimly lit areas. Pathways near the canal and connecting pathways between neighbourhoods in Chestermere have already been highlighted as dimly lit areas by youth, but complete an assessment to identify all areas that are lacking lighting.	City/County Government
14	2	Address the lake/canal water safety concerns so that youth feel safer in the water and have a greater desire to utilize Chestermere Lake. Perhaps better communication about water testing or water safety trainings would help. Note that this is specific to Chestermere City Council/Administration., Address the water safety concerns so that youth feel safer in the water and have a greater desire to utilize Chestermere Lake. Perhaps better communication about water testing or water safety trainings would help. Note that this is specific to Chestermere City Council/Administration.	City/County Government, Western Irrigation District

15	2	Identify and implement strategies to improve driving behaviour and safety in intersections. Particularly, the intersections at Chestermere Boulevard and East Chestermere Drive, along with the intersection at Chestermere Boulevard and Rainbow Road were identified as risky. Consulting youth on solutions is recommended.	City/County Government, Protective Services
16	2	Improve communication and/or enforcement of clearing icy/snowy sidewalks. Homeowners must engage in consistent habits of clearing sidewalks.	City/County Government, Protective Services, Parents/Caregivers
17	2	It was noted that drugs are present at skateparks, but no further details were provided. Considering the serious consequences of drugs in communities, this should be further investigated.	All community members, including the systems listed
18	2 & 4	Make it a priority to educate youth on how to stay safe online. This is most likely to be successful if taught as part of a school curriculum such as health and/or computer sciences, from elementary school through graduation, as it ensures all children are aware and reminded that they are empowered to keep themselves safe. This education must cover the topics of cyberbullying, privacy protection, responsible social media use, and online pedophilia. They also must cover safety on all online platforms, such as video games, social media, and texting. Use the findings from Theme 4, Code 4 to support the types of lessons provided.	Provincial Government, Protective Services, Community Agencies, Parents/Caregivers, School Divisions, School Administrations, School Staff
19	2	Consider ways to address the fear of kidnapping in younger youth.	All community members, including the systems listed

20	2 & 6	<p>Theme 2 told us that groups of youth roaming the community may create a feeling of reduced safety for other youth. Many of the gaps and needs identified in Theme 6 send the message that youth need more things to do, and a wider range of things to do. Therefore, review the lists of proposed activities, programs, and businesses that youth proposed and identify what changes you can make in your sphere of influence to support accessible and affordable access to diverse activities for youth. Many of these are direct actions that can be immediately investigated/taken, such as paving the road at the Field House in Langdon so youth with accessibility requirements are able to go to the Field House no matter the weather. The benefits of following these recommendations has the potential to address the concern in Theme 2 that other youth roaming make youth feel unsafe. It could also impact many areas of youth wellbeing: engagement in activities, offer opportunities to build strong relationships with peers and adults, improvement in mental health/wellbeing, increased feelings of belonging, and the creation of additional safer spaces, among many others. Parents/caregivers must advocate for these activities. Further, many of these activities require volunteerism on behalf of the parents/caregivers of the youth involved, so parents/caregivers must be willing to devote time to support the sustainability of these activities through volunteering.</p>	<p>City/County Government, Community Agencies, Recreation Services, Parents/Caregivers, School Administrations, School Staff</p>
21	3	<p>When a student comes to school staff for help, they must find a way to help. The perceived pattern of students feeling ignored when asking for help needs to end. Schools need to review their policies and procedures for this, and modify as necessary. Ensure that staff feel supported to follow the policies and procedures; provide training or education to set them up for success. Complete evaluation on the changes that are made.</p>	<p>School Divisions, School Administrations, School Staff</p>
22	3	<p>Some students expressed that heavy workload creates additional stress. Identify ways to support youth with stress management both in and outside of schools. Check-ins with youth on stress may be helpful. Strategies on how to manage multiple workloads (e.g., extracurriculars and homework) could be another approach. Reducing workloads may be another possible solution.</p>	<p>Public Health Care, Community Agencies, Recreation Services, Parents/Caregivers, School Staff, School Administrations</p>

23	3	<p>The community as a whole must address the issues of physical conflict and weapons in schools. First, ensure that you fully understand the problem. The community should work collaboratively to determine root causes. Use the details in this report as a starting place. Develop interventions that address these root causes and are not simply punitive such as restorative justice. A preventative intervention should be included in the approach to this issue, which may involve engagement with elementary schools and community services. Consultation with youth and evaluation throughout this process is key.</p>	All community members, including the systems listed
24	3	<p>Youth told us that the current consequences do not provide justice, they do not contribute to change in the individual facing these consequences, and they negatively impact youth around this individual. Schools must review and adapt their approach to consequences. Decide if individual schools will continue to apply an approach that works best for their context or if a community/division-wide standard should be developed. Either way, this will require collaboration with Councils and Protective Services due to the existence of the Anti-Bullying Bylaw. Restorative justice approaches to this consequence framework must be considered. Again, consultation with youth and evaluation is imperative, so that they can determine if consequences have become more effective.</p>	All community members, including the systems listed
25	3	<p>Engage in methods to improve the feeling of inclusivity and welcoming in schools. Review existing strategies to develop this environment and modify them as needed. Rely on evaluation data to inform how to improve this feeling for youth. If no strategies exist, develop one in consultation with youth.</p> <p>A starting place may be that youth identified they had a need for connection with peers that school was not satisfying. They asked for more opportunities to build relationships with each other, such as through school/community dances and other gatherings. How can we build on the strength of something like school dances? Are there any other approaches to building a community that have not been tried yet?</p>	Parents/Caregivers, School Divisions, School Administrations, School Staff

26	3	Elementary youth told us that they had concerns about the middle and high schools. Consider how these perceptions can be addressed. Perhaps an opportunity for mentorship and/or connection exists here. Additionally, consider how the negative perceptions that Catholic school students may have towards public schools may be addressed.	Parents/Caregivers, School Divisions, School Administrations
27	3	Address the pushing and shoving in hallways. This also contributes to culture at the school.	Provincial Government, City/County Government, School Divisions, School Administrations, Parents/Caregivers
28	3	Improve the safety at the crosswalk outside of St. Gabriel and Archangel and Prairie Waters Elementary School.	City/County Government, Protective Services, Parents/Caregivers
29	3	Ensure that field trips and other learning activities are financially accessible. Consult youth and parents when choosing these activities to ensure accessibility.	Parents/Caregivers, School Administrations, School Staff, Provincial Government
30	3	Consider how there can be more activities, clubs, and/or extracurricular activities offered in schools. Develop these with a careful eye to accessibility and need - this requires consultation with youth. Consider partnership with community services. Increase awareness of already available activities and programs.	Provincial Government, School Administrations, School Staff
31	3	Fill the gaps that the schools are unable to in terms of activities, clubs, and/or extracurricular activities. As well, increase awareness of already available activities and programs.	Community Agencies, Recreation Services, Public Health Care
32	3	Consider if breaks can be longer or have built in breaks in classes (e.g., go for a 5 minute walk).	School Administrations, School Staff
33	3	Review current practices and identify ways to make learning more fun and engaging for youth. Also, ensure that the 'why' for learning content is clearly communicated.	School Administrations, School Staff

34	3	Consider if a wider variety of options/electives can be offered. Perhaps this is an opportunity for partnership with businesses or community services. Develop these in consultation with youth.	Community Agencies, Recreation Services, School Divisions, Business Community
35	3	When discussing and implementing these changes, the capacity of the staff must be accounted for. Youth notice how their experience in schools is directly impacted by the capacity of the staff and understand that staff sometimes are struggling to keep up too.	Provincial Government, School Divisions, School Administrations
36	4	Continue education for youth about bullying - what it is, why it occurs, strategies to get help if you are experiencing bullying or have a peer who is experiencing bullying, etc. This education should address the perception that bullying or being mean to peers is normal, along with the stigma associated with "snitching."	Protective Services, Public Health Care, Community Agencies, Recreation Services, Parents/Caregivers, School Divisions, School Administrations, School Staff
37	4	<p>Develop a community-wide strategy utilizing the issues and behaviours identified in the report about bullying, teasing, and conflict in peer relationships. Both reactive and preventative approaches should be included. This strategy must respond to the insight that there is serious conflict between peer groups, which implicates tensions between different ethnicities and identities in our community. It also must take into account all forms of behaviour, from online, psychological/emotional, and physical conflict with weapons.</p> <p>From our perspective, developing skills related to empathy, respect, and relationship building is one critical aspect of addressing these behaviours. However, there may be insight from a range of disciplines about the appropriate responses to these observed behaviours, and this knowledge should be utilized when developing a strategy. Consult subject matter experts and the literature as necessary. Within families, schools, and the broader community, a culture that values these practices at all levels is also imperative. Therefore, this effort will require consistent collaboration at all levels so that there can be interventions applied in a way that surrounds youth. This strategy must also include an evaluation plan.</p>	All community members, including the systems listed

38	4	Be sensitive to the cultural diversity of the community, ensuring that the recommendations in this report and other safety measures are inclusive and respectful of different backgrounds and traditions. To do this, consult directly with members of those communities.	All community members, including the systems listed
39	5	Youth identified that there is still a wide range of attitudes and reactions they experience when discussing their mental health and wellbeing. The needle needs to be moved in a direction where all attitudes and reactions are positive and supportive. Therefore, enhance education for youth about mental health and wellbeing. Developing empathy and providing skills that youth can use to support peers struggling with mental health and wellbeing must be included in this education. This must address the further stigmatization experienced by boys and the realities of different attitudes held by different cultures/worldviews.	All community members, including the systems listed
40	5	Adults who work with, care for, or interact with youth in any way must engage in consistent education about mental health and wellbeing. This may look different for each person (e.g. formal trainings, listening to podcasts, reading books, talking to others with lived experience), but the education must include changing attitudes towards mental health and wellbeing, recognizing signs of distress, and appropriate and effective support to youth when they raise a concern with an adult. These educational experiences should align with the characteristics that youth have identified as supportive.	All community members, including all systems listed
41	5	The data from Theme 5, Code 4 (youth support characteristics) is imperative to addressing issues related to bullying, conflict between peers, mental health, and wellbeing. Adults who work with, care for, or interact with youth should utilize these characteristics for developing/choosing trainings, as a self-reflection tool, as criteria for assessing performance, and as a way to check in with youth, among many other possible application opportunities. How are you demonstrating these characteristics in your relationships with youth? What characteristics can you develop as a skill?	All community members, including the systems listed

42	5 & 6	<p>Engage in strategies, both responsive and preventative, to create an environment for youth in schools and community spaces and programs to create the following changes in response to issues about mental health and wellbeing identified by youth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth listen to peers when they share about their mental health and wellbeing. - Youth are empathetic, understanding, and concerned about the wellbeing of their peers. - Youth have an understanding of the seriousness of different mental health conditions, disorders, and illnesses. - Youth understand is not appropriate to compare their experiences to others like it is a competition. - Youth know when/how to access help for themselves and for a peer. This includes addressing the "snitching" attitude. <p>This list is not exhaustive. Use the barriers identified in Theme 5, Code 3 to develop other necessary responses.</p> <p>Again, these strategies must address the further stigmatization experienced by boys and the realities of different attitudes held by different cultures/worldviews.</p>	<p>City/County Government, Public Health Care, Community Agencies, Recreation Services, Parents/Caregivers, School Divisions, School Administrations, School Staff</p>
43	5 & 6	<p>Based on the experiences shared throughout Theme 5 and the gap in mental health services identified in Theme 6, establish accessible and stigma-free mental health support services in schools and the community. This includes counseling, stress management, and resources for students facing emotional challenges, among others.</p>	<p>Provincial Government, City/County Government, Public Health Care, Community Agencies, School Divisions</p>

Note from the research team: We are aware that the schools are limited in their capacity to respond to these recommendations. Systemic change is likely only possible with financial and policy support from the Ministry of Education. Without this support, schools may need to increase the degree to which they rely on community resources and agencies for in-school services, which in turn, results in a need for increased funding for community agencies.