



RISE Program Review

RISE (Respect In Schools Everywhere) is an intensive, youth-engagement program that addresses some of the most prevalent issues facing youth in schools today: cyber/bullying, harassment and dating aggression. It works to shift school culture so all students and staff have elevated awareness of violence, feel more equipped to address and prevent violence and mobilize youth to stand up for others and themselves. The program was developed in 2004 through funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the National Crime Prevention Strategy and since that time, has grown considerably within the Toronto District School Board and now the Toronto Catholic District School Board. RISE has also developed a fee-for-service capacity which now allows us to provide the program to schools and communities throughout the province.

www.riseaboveviolence.com

Program Successes

This past year has been one of many successes, particularly in light of the recent program growth from one family of schools to three. Thus, two new staff were hired by East Metro Youth Services (EMYS) as RISE coordinators and four new placement students mobilized to facilitate the three internal RISE programs. In total we currently have ten Toronto District School Board schools and two Toronto Catholic District School Board schools that have the RISE programming. Three of these programs are coordinated directly by East Metro Youth Services, one program is coordinated by Central Toronto Youth Services, and one is operated fully by the Toronto District School Board with EMYS support.

Our RISE Cedarbrae Program, completing its third year, has experienced some noteworthy successes this year. There were a large number of youth signed up and engaged in program activities, many events were held at school and in the community, and numerous youth and service providers were reached. Ultimately, these successes helped increasing the profile of the RISE program and paved the way for some media opportunities.

Some successes include:

- 95 youth participants in the program
- Started a soccer team with predominantly young Afghan students who needed additional engagement in light of recent violence in the community
- Collaborated with school administration to deal with bullying, relational and violence issues within the school
- Held the first Annual RISE Awards Show with many parents, school personnel and community members present
- Set up a proposal and budget for the Advocacy research project, and developed a new partnership with the Provincial Advocacy Office.
- Hired RISE Reps for summer positions with support from partner organizations
- Completed and premiered 'Voices Over Violence' documentary, a completely youth-led project. The documentary was screened at Scarborough Town Centre for approximately 300 youth and service providers from across the city. As well a special edition DVD was completed in March. This DVD will be shared with school boards and community agencies as a tool to discuss and address youth violence.

The RISE Program at Birchmount Collegiate began in September 2008. Since then, the staff from East Metro Youth Services and Birchmount Collegiate have been very committed to developing the new program. The program is also a selected research site through a CHEO (Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario) research grant. To date, the program has had many successes including:

- Established a RISE space in the school that has become a safe hub for many youth
- Recruited and trained 24 RISE Reps to conduct violence prevention workshops and 15 RISE Event Volunteers
- Conducted several school-wide initiatives including Black Out Bullying Day, UMOVE Assembly, RISE Debate, Freestyle Fridays, etc.
- Established a RISE Steering Committee comprised of all key stakeholders
- Mobilized a team of "RISERS" at two middle schools
- Organized workshops and events at two middle schools (Samuel Hearn and John A. Leslie)
- Facilitated Bullying/Cyber-bullying workshops for all grade 7 – 10 students
- Presented at local conferences and events

The RISE Program at Archbishop Romero Catholic Secondary School was successfully launched and is fully underway. Since September 2008 the program has:

- Established a RISE space in the school frequented by students of all ages.
- Created a working partnership with the school that includes shared staffing of the program with TCDSB staff.
- Successfully recruited 24 students as RISE Reps and over 15 students as event volunteers

- Established a RISE Steering Committee with all key stakeholders
- Completed 16 modules of training for RISE Reps that will count toward their 40 hours of community involvement required to graduate.
- Conducted several school-wide events including: Bullying Awareness events, presentation at Remembrance Day Assembly, Violence Against Women Campaign, Peace, Love and Unity Dance
- Mobilized a group of youth volunteers at Our Lady of Victory who are organizing school-wide events and initiatives.
- Facilitated Bullying workshops for students in grades 7 - 10

Students have communicated that, as a result of school efforts including RISE, they have witnessed positive changes in other students, students have been more open and welcoming with others, and they have identified positive changes in their own perspectives and attitudes. Many RISE reps and volunteers have identified that they feel more connected to their school, that they feel a great deal of pride in providing violence prevention information to other students, and that RISE has made a significant and positive impact in their lives.

All RISE Programs are currently conducting significant evaluation that will formally capture these changes as well as more school-wide changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. These findings will be shared with our school and community partners.

In the past year, the RISE program had various opportunities to profile the program. Presentations were conducted at the following:

- Toronto Community Development Conference
- CMHO "Made in Ontario" Conference
- PREVNet Conference
- CMHO/OACAS Joint Conference
- OISE Safe Schools for All Conference
- BC Injury Prevention conference – poster session
- Safeguards training in Toronto, London
- ISAP Conference for Agencies serving Newcomers, Niagara Falls
- Joint Youth Engagement Training with CMHO
- Canadian Safe Schools Network Conference
- Safe Schools Forum
- "Breaking it Down" national Youth Gang Conference

RISE was also profiled and highlighted in some rather significant ways including:

- The Ontario Trillium Foundation Press Conference announcing RISE funding
- Global News coverage of RISE Program and Voices over Violence (VOV) Documentary
- Scarborough Mirror article on VOV documentary

- RISE cited as a recommended youth-led program in the Ministry of Education Safe Schools Task Force report “Shaping a Culture of Respect in Our Schools”, December 2008
- RISE program highlighted in “Aggression in Adolescent Dating Relationships” article in Prevention Researcher Journal
- RISE added to Ministry registry of programs focusing on gender-based violence. (OPHEA)
- RISE Program will also be highlighted in a chapter of the PREVNet book “Preventing Adolescent Dating Aggression” in 2009

RISE Statistics

SCHOOL	NO. OF RISE REPS/ VOLUNTEERS	NO. OF WORKSHOPS & PRESENTATIONS	NO. OF PARTICIPANTS
Cedarbrae CI	95	92	3,787
Birchmount CI	34	20	3,209
Archbishop Romero CSS	37	29	3,528
TOTALS	166	141	10,524

Future Directions

Individualized plans will be put in place at each school given the different program goals and timelines. For Cedarbrae, the main task will be the successful completion and transition of the program to the staff at Cedarbrae. Further initiatives with regards to film projects will also be explored given the success of the Voices Over Violence documentary. Birchmount will also focus on transition planning in a particularly intensive manner given that this was only funded as a one year program.

Communicating messages of violence prevention through spoken word and song will also be a focus, as the Reps are very engaged in this regard. Finally, for Archbishop Romero, the goals for the next year include balancing the ideal ratio of pro-social and ‘alternative’ leaders in the program, increasing its profile in the school and community, continuing the investment with school staff in order to prepare for long-term program sustainability, increasing amount of volunteer participants, increasing the scope of RISE Steering Committee and increasing the connection with larger EMYS programming, particularly in VIP.