



Kitchener

Host agency: Mosaic Counselling and Family Services
400 Queen St. South, Kitchener, ON N2G 1W7
Tel.: 519-743-6333

Program director: Megan Conway

Boundaries: The Chandler-Mowat and Vanier neighbourhoods.

Area dropout rate: Equivalent to 45% (Waterloo Region District School Board).

First cohort size: Eligible are 113 students currently in grade 9 (Public and Catholic boards).

Participation rate: 88% are currently registered and outreach continues.

Brief description

There are two neighbourhoods in Kitchener that have opened their doors to the Pathways to Education Program. Both communities are in the south-central core of Kitchener and are diverse with a wealth of languages and cultures. The two neighbourhoods have a high percentage of families living in public housing and new Canadians settling in the areas. Most importantly, with two of the highest dropout rates in Kitchener, the families in these neighbourhoods are eager to see the program succeed in their communities.

The initiative to develop a Pathways program is being led by the Mosaic Counselling and Family Services, a non-denominational professional counselling agency that has been helping children, individuals and families since 1952. Its mission is to help people find the strengths, skills and confidence to deal with life's challenges and opportunities.

Why Kitchener has a Pathways program

The two neighbourhoods in Kitchener implementing the Pathways experience problems of gang violence, isolation, high rates of dependence on social assistance as the primary source of income, recent immigration to the country and poverty.

Approximately 285 parents, youth and service providers participated in focus groups, interviews and community discussions in the spring about the program coming to these neighbourhoods. Parents expressed that the program would really make a difference for their children and give them a reason to go and stay in school. Youth articulated their desire for the specific supports that are offered through the Pathways program.

Feelings of lack of safety and isolation serve to make the school experience an intimidating one for many. This is made worse by a lack of resources for lunch money and public transit. “Many students want to be ‘good’ but don’t know how to get there.” Parents struggle with being unable to communicate with the school system, and not being able to assist their children with school work because of language barriers and challenging curricula. For some it is because of their limited formal education.

Parents and youth (including many in the first cohort) from the two neighbourhoods joined local advisory bodies to participate in adapting the program to local needs and to provide input to the Steering Committee at Mosaic. Both Catholic and public school boards, principals and other school personnel have expressed keen interest in supporting the program. Mosaic has set up a range of partnerships with key service providers in the community and the program director has been working closely with them to bring the program to the community in a form appropriate to local circumstances. Connections have been made with the two local universities and colleges in the area to arrange for the recruitment of volunteer mentors and tutors.

For more information about the community and the Kitchener Pathways to Education Program, please contact:

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