



# Family and School Community Engagement

## Start Smart Stay Safe

Start Smart Stay Safe is a strengths-based educational resource utilized by police officers, teachers, and schools in building resiliency and capacity in children and their families. Using a proactive delivery model, this resource intentionally builds skills and knowledge that supports students in successfully navigating through challenging situations like bullying, cyber-safety, pressure to engage in substance abuse or any high-risk behaviour. These models are delivered through affirming messaging, engaging activities, and fostering positive relationships between police officers school communities, and families. Diverse community collaboration is an essential element of Start Smart Stay Safe, moving education and law enforcement toward a progressive, research informed model of ethical citizenship.

Start Smart Stay Safe (S4) intentionally engages children in proactive strengths-based classroom and school experiences. The foundation of the strengths-based approach to teaching is a belief that children have unique strengths, talents, skills and experiences to navigate through life's daily challenges in our changing world.

Start Smart Stay Safe (S4) themes/objectives were created to align with some of the Alberta Health and Life Skills/Social Studies Program of Studies outcomes. S4 lessons support Alberta Education by offering children opportunities to learn and develop skills as outlined in the Alberta Education Framework for Student Learning document.

The program is supported by a fully integrated parenting initiative. The family program is designed to strengthen parental (family) capacity to enhance resilience in children leading to their positive participation as citizens. This program is delivered through resilience and strengths-based approaches to education and community enhancement.

The aim of the family component is to connect with and support the children's component by engaging the families of children participating in S4 at their schools through a variety of family engagement activities, interactive tools, and sharing of resources. These activities and resources include information on child development (highlighting socio-emotional development), developmentally appropriate, strengths-based activities to support healthy development in the family with a focus on each area of the framework: Significance, Success, Self-Awareness, and Service. Parent participation enhances the experiences with Start Smart Stay Safe for their child(ren) and reinforces the pro-social skills learned in school so that they occur in all areas of their lives.

Start Smart Stay Safe understands the importance of family in a child's life and development; thus family is strongly represented. Parents/guardians are kept informed of what their child(ren) are being taught through this initiative in school and are invited to participate in activities to do with their child(ren) at home to enhance their child(ren)'s learning in school. This will help solidify the learning for the child to put into practice in their home and community.

## Framework:

Students and their families are invited to participate in activities from a variety of topics to assist them to build upon their existing skills and strategies to develop new skills to utilize when they are faced with challenges. Students and families learn how to develop skills and knowledge that will help them:

- Examine their personal strengths
- Establish a system of support



- Develop stronger critical and creative thinking skills
- Establish and maintain healthy peer relationships
- Make informed decisions
- Examine, understand and respect the strengths and diversity within groups
- Engage in peaceful conflict resolution

### Family Component:

Goal: To enhance families' existing knowledge, capacity, strengths, and skills to effectively support their children's inclusion in, and positive contribution to, society.

1. To enhance knowledge among family members about the stages of child development – including emotional, social, cognitive, and brain development, and their relationship to parenting practice.
2. To change families' perceptions of the role of police from being limited to reactive law enforcement toward a positive role in the community through proactive education and prevention.
3. To collaborate with families, building upon their existing strengths and resiliency, to inform effective parenting practices.
4. To intentionally engage school communities in enhancing support of families and children.

These skills are supported through proactive messaging and the fostering of positive relationships between police officers and our school community. This year, your child will have an opportunity to engage with a constable in your classroom. The constable will emphasize that the police are members within our community who help us to work together to keep our community safe.

This overall project aims to strengthen children, families and communities. The hope is that positive police presence in schools will help students to view the police as members of the community who act as positive role models and help to keep us safe. There is an expectation that all participants will benefit from experience with strength-based models and human development.

According to Rick Linden's article in the International Child, Youth and Family Studies (2010), "The following types of programs had an impact on delinquency: (a) programs that build school capacity to initiate and to sustain innovation; (b) programs that effectively communicate appropriate behavioural norms; and (c) programs that teach social competency skills such as problem solving, communication skills, and decision-making" (p.63).

### **References:**

Linden, R. (2010). Evidence based approach to community safety. International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies. Vol 1, No 1 Retrieved July 20, 2012 from <http://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/ijcyfs/article/view/173>