

IMPRES-TEAM IN CANADA

The IMPRES project plans to implement a classroom intervention to promote mental health of students and to reduce the stigma of mental illness. The intervention will be located in Bielefeld (under the name “STABIEL”) and is based on a Canadian teen mental health curriculum resource (Mental Health & High School Curriculum Guide – *TeenMentalHealth.org*, Twitter: @TMentalHealth). In order to further improve the adaptation ideas for the German version of the curriculum, we travelled to Canada to learn from the developers and experts currently working on and with the program.

At a **meeting** with Senator Dr. Stan Kutcher and Dr. Yifeng Wei (developers and experts of the program) we discussed the modifications made as an effort to assure a good fit between the curriculum and the German school system. The resulting changes were developed in cooperation with our partners from the Regional School Counselling Board, the Psychiatry Coordination Bielefeld, a support group for people with mental illness (Verein-Psychiatrie-Erfahrener e.V.), and a charitable organization (Andreas-Mohn Foundation). The received feedback was encouraging and Dr. Kutcher emphasized that although he and his team have the expertise regarding the content of the material, we are the experts for the reality of everyday school life in Germany. Therefore we are the most suitable to judge what works for the German school setting.



(Dr. Yifeng Wei, Alexandra Fretian, Dr. Stan Kutcher, Sandra Kirchhoff)

During the visit in Canada, we also took part in a **3-day training** session, organized by *TeenMentalHealth.org*. Two main themes were addressed: the teacher training and the content of the curriculum resource. The teacher training provides teachers with background knowledge on mental health and prepares them to act as ‘go-to teachers’ in everyday school life. In other words, their role is to support youth with mental health problems and to further refer them to a mental health professional, if necessary. Together with us, about 25 participants from various parts of the world (Brazil, Ireland, Wales, Kenya, Sri Lanka, USA, Canada and Germany) with different professional backgrounds (teachers, school administrators, psychologists, school social workers, researchers, NGO staff etc.) took part in the training. The diversity of the group enriched the discussions and gave valuable insights into the practical implementation process. Moreover, the training team was comprised of both, experts from the educational and the clinical field.

The commitment and engagement of the participants and organizers regarding the topic of mental health in schools was inspiring and the broad applicability of the curriculum was highlighted by their stories. While it is important to stick to the core content, the ways of implementing vary, thus making it possible to transfer it to other contexts (i.e. other countries and cultures).

Finally we attended a **conference** which was also organized by *TeenMentalHealth.org*. Nearly 140 participants listened to different lectures provided by experts in the field of mental health, focusing on children and adolescents. Different intervention programs tailored for the school setting were explicitly presented and critically discussed from an evidence-based point of view. Thus, school staff are encouraged to make informed choices about what kind of programs they should roll out in their school or district.

We would like to use this opportunity to thank Dr. Kutcher and his team!