



- MEDIA RELEASE -

THE BEST START IS FINISHING
Final Report on Kafé12 Proceedings released

July 2, 2008, Calgary – The Final Report on Proceedings from the April 10--*Kafé12* world café event has been released, and is available to the public at www.kafe12.org. The report is a compilation of the outcomes of the conversations held that day by Calgary community members passionate about finding solutions for improving Calgary high school completion rates (the current rate is 70%-within three years of students entering grade 10.) The key stakeholders included over 230 Calgarians representing education, social service, business, and government sectors, and also included students and parents. The event opened with a keynote message from technology guru and education advocate Canadian entrepreneur Dave Chalk, founder of Doppler Computer Stores, and closed with a message from Calgary student Adut Mabior, who overcame huge challenges in order to complete high school this year at the Louise Dean Centre.

The general conclusions of the participants were that high school completion is important for students and the community. Students who complete school are less likely to become involved in crime, street life/homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, require social assistance or become underage parents. These students typically have higher self-esteem, contribute more to the economy, have less healthcare issues, higher volunteer and voting rates and contribute more to the local and global community. The participants believed that there are many excellent policies, partnerships and programs already in place to improve high school completion rates, and most recommendations were to expand and improve on them. The key recommendations included involving decision and policy makers, developing a multi-sector framework, allowing students more time to complete, increasing strength and interest-based learning, continuing to focus on the fundamentals, engaging youth directly in the process, forming positive peer and adult relationships and creating a total sense of community (*see attached Executive Summary and Final Report on Proceedings for details- or visit www.kafe12.org*).

“Improving high school completion rates is important for our entire community, and with the community’s commitment and involvement, we are confident that by 2020, the completion rates will be at 90%,” said Barbara Burggraf, executive director of EducationMatters, one of the Funders for Youth.

Hosted and sponsored by the Funders for Youth*, the event took place under the Kafe12 umbrella – a public engagement initiative providing both virtual and real world opportunity to get engaged in supporting youth issues in this city. As for the high school completion issue, the community-at-large can now log onto www.kafe12.org and provide their voice to the issue in a public online conversation. Next steps to develop a community-lead strategic plan and 10-year vision are planned for the fall. *Stay tuned as this is just the beginning!*

*Funders for Youth are Anonymous Donors, Burns Memorial Fund, Calgary Stampede Foundation, Calgary and Area Child and Family Services Authority, City of Calgary FCSS, EducationMatters, Norlien Foundation, The Calgary Foundation and the United Way of Calgary and Area.

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