

Summer 2017

Leaders & Learners

The official magazine of the Canadian Association of School System Administrators

Association canadienne des gestionnaires de commissions scolaires

Healthy Students, Healthy Schools, Healthy Futures *Part 2*

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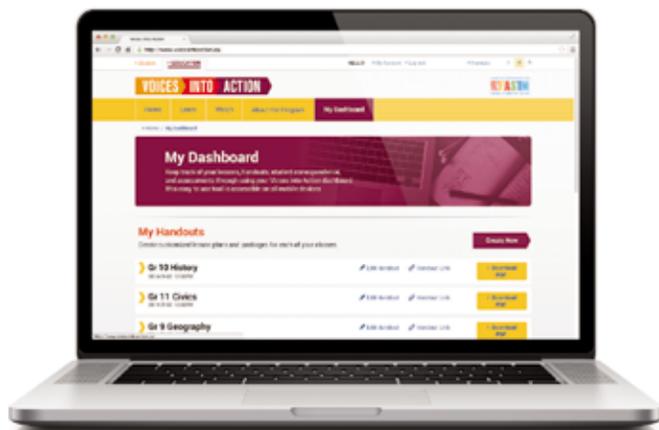


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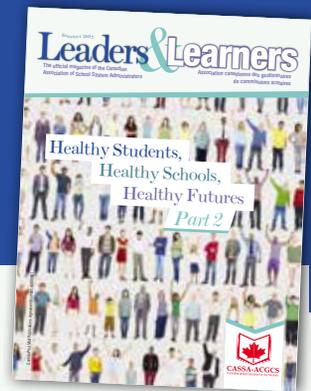
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We are warming up for the Summer 2017 CASSA Conference with a focus on “Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities, Healthy Futures.” This is a topic central to well-being and student achievement in our school communities, and we look forward to sharing a diverse platform of speakers, topics and workshops in Halifax, Nova Scotia, July 5-7.

In order for our students to be well, it is equally important that our educators and leaders feel well. The reality is that each year, about one in every five Canadians will experience a diagnosable mental health problem, and educators are not immune. A 2014 national survey conducted by the Canadian Teachers’ Federation confirmed that teachers are experiencing more demands and feeling higher levels of stress. The good news is that most educators remain highly committed to excellence in education and the compassionate care of students. With that in mind, imagine what can be achieved with an improved sense of overall well-being and decrease in stress levels.

There are many campaigns dedicated to workplace mental health, including the Elephant in the Room Anti-Stigma Campaign (Mood Disorders Society of Canada), Not Myself Today, and Managing Mental Health Matters (Great West Life), to name a few. While these campaigns can be helpful in increasing mental health literacy, reducing stigma and helping leaders learn how to effectively recognize and manage mental health related issues in the workplace, there are also many things that we as leaders can do to support one another and our staff, to increase our own sense of personal resiliency.

We are told that self-care is a necessary habit of mind for those working in helping professions, such as education. Carving out time to participate in activities that we enjoy can help us feel restored. I am confident that by coming together as like-minded professionals for the upcoming CASSA conference, we will leave feeling inspired, refreshed and rejuvenated, ready to implement new mental health and well-being strategies in our school systems.

While this is a great professional development opportunity, the conference also

sets the stage for well-being with guided tours that are sure to nourish our need to relax and experience some wonderful east coast attractions among colleagues as we build positive and supportive relationships.

Creating caring school communities where we feel supported by our colleagues, where we can talk openly about mental health and seek support when needed is something we should all continue to strive for and it starts with us as leaders and advocates for employee wellness.

With a focus on staff and student well-being, we can create healthy students, healthy learning communities and a healthy future for all. Join me at the 2017 Summer Conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia as we hear from reputable keynote speakers, including Dr. Stan Kutcher, internationally-renowned expert in adolescent mental health and an international leader in mental health research, advocacy, training, policy and services innovation; and Dr. Kathryn Short, Clinical Child Psychologist whose research and practice interests are focused on school mental health promotion, knowledge mobilization, and implementation science. Both Dr. Kutcher and Dr. Short have contributed to advancing support for student mental health and well-being in school boards.

Other talented professionals from the world of mental health and education will be sharing research and insights on a number of important topics, some of which include:

- Developing protocols for non-suicidal self-injuries and suicide in schools;
- Embedding wellness into your strategic plans;
- Promoting healthy relationships in the school setting;
- Suicide prevention, intervention and postvention;
- System wide approach to student well-being;
- Building personal resiliency;
- The unified classroom;
- Using a Mobile Safety Assistant for safe schools;
- Promoting well-being through the lens of equity;



Anne O'Brien
CASSA/ACGCS President

The good news is that most educators remain highly committed to excellence in education and the compassionate care of students. With that in mind, imagine what can be achieved with an improved sense of overall well-being and decrease in stress levels.

- Educating the whole child—mind, body and soul; and
- Many other informative sessions.

For a sneak preview of these and other great presentations, and to register for the Summer 2017 CASSA Conference, visit the conference website at www.conference.cassa-acgcs.ca. I look forward to seeing returning leaders and welcoming new faces as we work towards building school systems that promote the well-being of students, staff and leaders.

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“Students’ mental health is an important factor in their success in school and we look forward to Many Rivers working with these schools and their communities on mental wellness.”

– Yukon Minister of Education, Doug Graham

“Lifelong participation in physical activity has many benefits and is an essential part of a healthy lifestyle.”

– Core Competencies, Big Idea, BC’s New Curriculum

“Working together, Prince Edward Island can be a province where all people have the opportunity to thrive, enjoy good mental health and well-being throughout their lifetime—and where people with mental health or addictions can recover and participate in welcoming, supportive environments.”

– Ministers Henderson, MacLauchlan, Currie and Mundy in PEI’s Moving Forward Together Strategy



Ken Bain

CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

address student and employee wellness to the commitment to engaging community partners in Waterloo Catholic District School Board to the “Safe, Caring Schools Committee” in Chinook’s Edge School Division to the healthy nutrition and lifestyle brain-based approach to learning at the Galileo Adult Centre in Montreal...there are many exemplary efforts by schools and communities to ensure that our future is healthy!

I want to thank the contributors for making the time to submit their stories for publication, but more importantly, thank them for their daily efforts to ensure we graduate healthy citizens that will result in a healthy future for us all!

Intentionally selected quotes from across Canada to reinforce that student health and well-being is an integrally important aspect of the work being undertaken in schools and communities from sea to sea to sea.

CASSA has made student health and wellbeing a core aspect of its work over the past two years. Student mental health and wellbeing is one very important lens through which CASSA has viewed

healthy students...schools...communities...and our future.

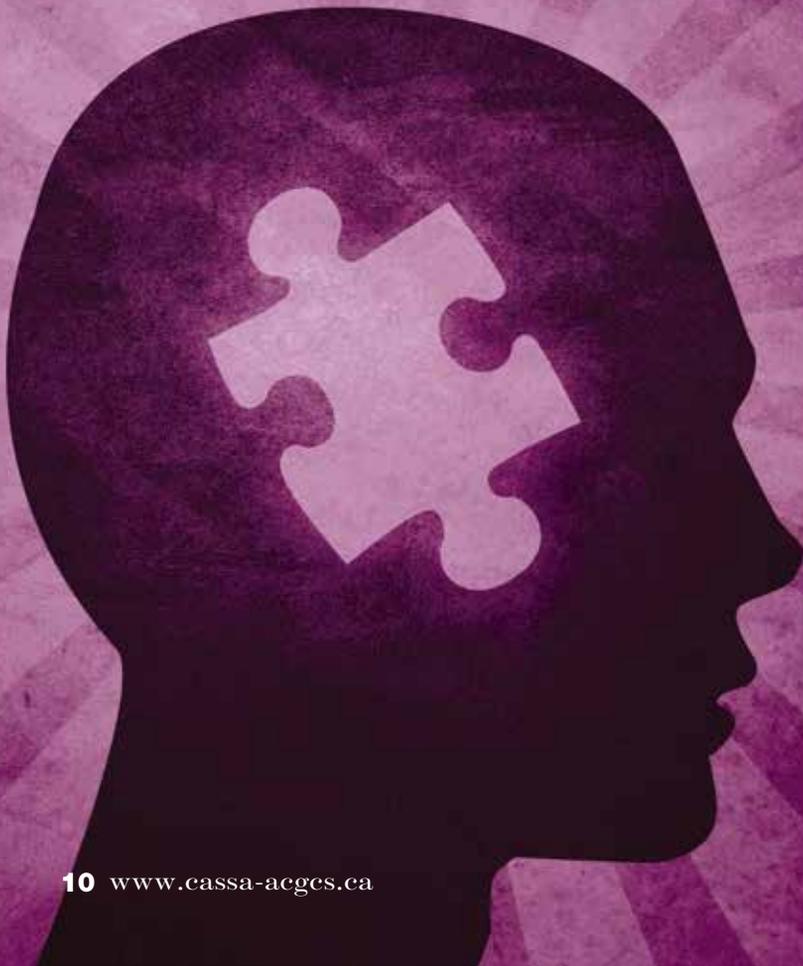
The Winter 2016-2017 issue of *Leaders & Learners* kicked off our review of promising practices across Canada. This issue, Summer 2017, continues with a number of articles that highlight a commitment to ensuring that students’ health and well-being cannot be accomplished in isolation from community agencies and resources.

From the holistic, comprehensive approach being implemented in Calgary Catholic to

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School-based Health Centers: A Simple Solution to a Complex Challenge

By Dr. Stan Kutcher, ONS, MD, FRCPC, FCAHS,
IWK Health Center and Dalhousie University



Michael woke up early. It was Wednesday and he was off to track practice. Today was his chance to be able to strut his stuff, make the team, be the man. A quick down of protein shake (his own recipe—kefir, banana, cottage cheese, two raw eggs and a splash of vanilla—stirred, not shaken), then he was off. “Don’t wait for me tonight mom, off for dinner with Samantha at her uncle’s place and then we are going to study for the history test. Back by nine thirty.”

Jana had a headache. That blasted alarm clock. Not a friend of throbbing temples. Groan, and a history quiz today. Wish I had studied instead of goofing off at the mall. Oh well, who cares about dead people. I care about getting a job and getting out of this house. Yesterday dad had come home drunk again. Took it out on mom. Wish she would leave and take me with her. These damn headaches always worse when dad has been drinking, and today I have to write that test.

Tanya had been up for most of the night. It was another bad night. One more in a string of so many that it was no longer possible to count. And she was so tired. Dragging out of bed to go to school? Why bother. It’s a total waste of time anyway. Life is a total waste of time anyway. Who cares. Better not tell mom that I took most of her pills last night. Nothing. Didn’t even make me feel tired. I thought they would end it. Too bad. May as well go to school. I think there is a test today.

Terry had bad stomach pains. No breakfast for him. And, now he was going to be late. “Maybe it was something that I ate last night dad, or maybe I have the flu.”

“Or maybe you have a test or exam Terry?”

“Maybe dad. See you later.”

“Hold on fellow, what exam?”

“History, bye.”

Ralph liked cereal. Granola to be exact. With lots of milk and honey. Today even more honey. Damn cold. Damn sore throat. Honey can help. Wonder if I have a fever? If it weren’t for that history test I wouldn’t bother going.

Melissa woke up with the alarm. Actually, it was a few minutes before the alarm. That was her usual way. Today was

no different, but it was. Every day was different. That is what made it so much fun. And no day could be predicted. That also was so much fun. Wonder what will happen when I walk through that door?

Ralph was feeling like the Soviet army had cobble sole boot walked through his throat. Strange, because there is no Soviet army now. Russian maybe. Or maybe it was a thousand cowboys from Alberta. With their spurs still attached. And his skin was on fire. But he was cold. Fire and ice together. What next? And that test. What a mess he had made of that. Hard to focus when your throat is burning.

So, off now, down the hall. Ralph slides into the place for relief (as he calls it). Some poking and prodding and looking and swabbing later he clutches a health note in hand and drifts into the vice-principal's office. "Get to go home. Sick. Could be strep throat." Sucking on a lozenge he heads off. Bed, here I come.

Terry had already been there. Before Ralph. To be precise, he had arrived about a half hour before the history test. "Too sick to write the test. Need to go home."

"Maybe there is another possibility. Worry getting the best of you today? Let's go over some of the thinking exercises that your psychologist and you have been working on. OK?"

Twenty minutes go by like two. Bell rings meaning the test will start soon. "Good luck Terry. You can do it. Let me know how it goes."

Tanya slumped in. Same place. "Don't know why I came here but that silly video about the depressed girl on an elevator going down was on my mind. Think I need to talk. I can't keep going on like this anymore. Last night I took enough pills to die but no luck. Maybe that was a sign or something. What do you think?"

Now that took some time. Could not hurry that. This had to be dealt with, respectfully and thoughtfully. I had to make some calls. Good thing Tanya's parents are so understanding. Both mom and dad came. That is not what happens for everyone. And the nurse in the ER is a person that I have linked with before. We have a good relationship and she is a very caring person. Tanya is in good hands. Got to make sure I keep in touch with the principal and the teaching staff about what is going on. Good thing we have those consent forms handy. Makes it

Data from school-based health center studies demonstrates substantial significant positive impacts on both physical and mental health outcomes for young people.

so much easier to talk with the health care people. We can work together to make a plan so that when Tanya comes back we can support her together with the team that will be helping her from the clinic. That worked well.

Why not go in, Jana thought. Maybe some meds will take this headache away. Had to miss that stupid test.

"My head feels as if it's going to explode. And I couldn't write my history test. So, likely I will fail. And my dad will kill me. Can you help?"

Sometimes I think that kids don't deserve the parents that they have. Jana, such a nice kid, is going through so much. It's not fair. What a tough situation. I sure would have had a difficult time handling that when I was her age. Actually, at any age. Even now that would be tough. Good thing Ross has some time available to spend with her. After Jana and I talked she and Ross met up. He is so good with the kids. After he took his counseling degree and joined our team, what a difference. First a teacher, then a counselor. Always on the ball.

Michael was carried in. Well, not really. Mostly was shouldered in. Hanging on the back of two of his teammates. "Crap, I think I broke it. Whatever got into me, kicking that wall. Got mad when I thought the test was tomorrow—it was today! Now I will miss the track meet. My life will be ruined!"

This required a bit of prodding and moving too. Some Michael groans as well. Swelling fast and some nice colours emerging. Seems to be an inversion injury. Anterior talofibular ligament. Typical. Likely not broken but would not hurt to get an x-ray.

"I will wrap it for you. Take the wrapping off and elevate your foot when you get home. Ice packs to keep the swelling down. We will do the ice packs here now for about a half an hour just because the injury is fresh. You will need to be on crutches for a while. I can call the orthopedic clinic and set a time for you tomorrow. Shall I call someone to come and get you?"

Well, who would have guessed what today was going to be like. All of this, plus a number of check ins with some of the kids who are taking those complicated medications. Julia had a seizure in class. Dealt with that. We all did. Her teacher is so good with that. Kids in her class too. Supportive. Had talks with two parents concerned about their kids. Will loop back to their teachers tomorrow. Got the health club orientation book done. Vaccination clinic next week; need to start promoting that more. New posters about safe sex coming in later this week. And have to give a talk at the parent night. Will get to that this evening after dinner. Wonder what I should call it.

Got it: "Your school health center, health for all just down the hall."

The school-based health center is an approach that just makes so much sense. Education has solved the access problem. Health has not. Integration of education and health system resources is necessary to better support the growth and development of young people. Additionally, the current silo-based approaches to health promotion and intervention are not helpful for the holistic integration needed to effectively address the health and mental health needs of young people. The most parsimonious way to do that is to bring



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Mohammed to the mountain—place the health delivery mechanism into the school, especially for youth in Grades 8 to 12.

The benefits of this approach are well known and well documented. Data from school-based health center studies demonstrates substantial significant positive impacts on both physical and mental health outcomes for young people. These are often more pronounced for rural, vulnerable or marginalized populations and include but are not limited to 1) **increased:** access for health services (for example, 10 times or greater likelihood of receiving mental health care); user satisfaction with health services; contraceptive use, vaccinations, class attendance, GPA scores; 2) **decreased:** health care related stigma; self-injury, drug use, suicidality, teen pregnancy; hospital visits for such diseases as asthma and other chronic health conditions; school absences, school drop-out rates. And, available data from the United States suggests that this approach saves money!

The rather uncomfortable million dollar questions are the following: why have education and health systems not collaborated to implement this approach; why are health systems building stand-alone youth centers in the community; why are education systems spending large amounts of money on health and mental health interventions that have not demonstrated real world impact?

So, it's not that we don't know what to do, it's that we are not doing what we know. How can that be changed? ○

Dr. Stan Kutcher is the Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health and the Director World Health Organization Collaborating Centre in Mental Health Policy and Training at Dalhousie University and IWK Health Centre in Canada. He is a renowned expert in adolescent mental health and leader in mental health research, advocacy, training, and policy and has been involved in mental health work in over 20 countries.

For Additional Reading:

Soleimanpour S., et al. American Journal of Public Health. 2010; 100: 1597-1603.

Kornblum C, et al. Pediatric and Child Health. 2013; 18: 235-236.

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Implementing a Well-Being and Mental Health Strategic Plan

By Lisa Millar, John Bowyer, Allison Potts, and Alex Toulis, Durham District School Board

The Durham District School Board (DDSB) has focused on supporting student achievement and well-being using evidence-based, whole school approaches. Well-being is considered an essential component of sustaining safe, healthy, inclusive schools. In addition, well-being is recognized as being foundational for student achievement.

Ontario's Well-being Strategy for Education, Discussion Document defines well-being as: "...a positive sense of self, spirit and belonging that we feel when our cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs are being met. It is supported through equity and respect for our diverse identities and strengths. Well-being in early years and school settings is about helping children and students become resilient, so that they can make positive and healthy choices to support learning and achievement both now and in the future," (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016).

Promoting well-being is one of the four interconnected goals of Achieving Excellence, Ontario's renewed vision for education. This goal is based on the principle that our education system needs to help students build the knowledge and skills associated with positive well-being so that they can become healthy, active and engaged citizens (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016).

There is increasing evidence and recognition that well-being is fundamental to overall student success. The recent Discussion Document from the Ministry of Education, Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education, highlights the importance of this work by emphasizing that: "Students cannot achieve



Grade 4 student Shaumya takes a break on a Spark Bike.



academically if they don't feel safe or welcomed at school, if their mental health is at risk and if they don't have the tools or motivation to adopt a healthy active lifestyle, both inside and outside of school," (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016).

The main goal of the DDSB's well-being strategy is developing the "conditions for learning"—what needs to be done at the school and classroom levels to ensure that students feel that they are part of a safe, inclusive and trusting learning environment in which positive relationships are developed and sustained.

A significant challenge when implementing effective well-being initiatives is that well-being is a very complex concept. As a result, it is difficult to determine which individual factors will have an impact on the well-being of a student or staff member. In the DDSB, we use evidence-informed practices to ensure that the initiatives implemented are considered "best practices" and are based on research. We have partnered with researchers in Ontario universities to assist with this process. For example, in partnership with researchers from Trent University, the DDSB is piloting a project on how to successfully gather student data in the area of self-regulation. Self-regulation involves helping students become aware of what stresses them and how these stressors impact them. After that, students choose and use strategies to manage their stressors allowing them to be calm, alert and willing to learn. Self-regulation is foundational to student achievement and well-being.

The Durham District School Board began a pilot project with the distribution of "Spark" bikes to schools. The schools that received the bikes are collecting data using a self-regulation tracking sheet to determine how often the bikes are used, and whether or not the bike helps students to self-regulate. Students are encouraged to use the bike at their own pace and intensity for the purpose of either "burning off" excess energy or raising their energy level. The purpose is for a student to ride the Spark bike until he or she feels calm, and ready to focus on learning.

Metrics have been developed and data gathered based on a Spark Bike pilot project. From this pilot, the DDSB will gain a better understanding of effective data gathering in the area of well-being, and then transfer what was learned to other well-being initiatives.

In order to support the effective implementation of well-being and positive mental health, the DDSB formed a Mental Health

and Well-Being Steering Committee. This committee is a "working" committee that coordinates and focuses the work being done to support the objectives and vision of the DDSB Mental Health and Addictions Strategic Plan. The mandate of this committee includes the development of targeted workgroups that report to the Mental Health and Well-Being Steering Committee, and coordinating the work of related DDSB Committees including: the Safe Schools Steering Committee; Self-Regulation Steering Committee, and Staff Wellness Steering Committee.

In addition to learning from the Spark Bike pilot, the Mental Health and Well-Being Steering Committee will utilize the Results Based Accountability (RBA) model to drive outcome-based decisions (Friedman, 2005).

"Results-Based Accountability" (RBA) is a structured way of planning and taking action that is used to improve the implementation of initiatives. The process starts with the determination of desired "ends" based on identified priorities and then works backwards, step by step, to explore the means by which the outcome can be achieved and measured. RBA also uses a series of questions to help identify if a desired result is present within a defined area of focus. RBA allows for collaboration and reflection at all stages of the process; planning, taking action and assessing success. RBA relies on a shared understanding to produce measurable improvements.

The reason why the Mental Health and Well-Being Steering Committee is using RBA when implementing initiatives is because it is flexible and adaptable to most conditions of well-being. The process involves two main approaches.

One, planning based on thought-provoking questions:

- What is the result? *Identify/describe what it is you want to achieve.*
- Who is this going to help? *Identify the "population" that will be affected, for example, students and staff.*
- How will they be better off? *Identify the benefits, solutions, gains made etc.*
- What is the impact? *Measure any movement between "baseline" data and follow-up data—the pre- and post-conditions.*
- How will we know if the result has been achieved? *Identify the indicators that will be used to assess whether or not the desired result has been achieved.*
- What is the "story" behind the data? *Identify and explain the data trends, and what the likely forecast will be if no action is taken.*

- What is the "story" behind the trend? *Identify potential supports or challenges that might influence the direction of the data trend.*
- What have others done in similar situations? *Examine the research.*
- What action will we take? *Who will do it? When will it occur? When will information be collected to determine progress?*

Two, evaluation of the impact of the initiative—the change that the implementation of the initiative produced, the benefits and who benefited from the implementation of the initiative, and the success of the strategies used. The following three questions will help to evaluate the impact of the initiative:

1. How much did we do? *Describe the actions taken and the strategies used.*
2. How well did we do it? *Assess the actions, findings, strategies used etc.*
3. Is anyone better off? *Evaluate and document any benefits and who benefited by the actions.*

To get a better understanding of how to use RBA with an initiative in the area of well-being and mental health, the Mental Health and Well-Being Steering Committee examined the DDSB Spark Bike pilot. This was a good place to start because the use of Spark Bikes is supported by "brain" research, and as a result we know that it is an evidence-informed initiative (Ratey, 2008). In addition, the DDSB has partnered with Trent University to better understand the impact of our Spark Bike initiative. The following represents how we used the Spark Bike pilot to better understand how to use RBA:

Planning:

- What is the result? *Students will be able to use the Spark Bike to self-regulate, and as a result be ready to learn.*
- Who is this going to help? *The initiative will help the students who have access to a Spark Bike in their class or school.*
- How will they be better off? *When a student is experiencing a stressor that impacts his or her ability to learn, then he or she will use the Spark Bike as a way to self-regulate.*
- What is the impact? *The baseline data for the Spark Bik" pilot" is classroom disruptions. Success will be determined if there are fewer disruptions by students during class. This data will be gathered by examining office referral, and by conducting "focus" group interviews with teachers and*

students. Schools will monitor “Marker Students” in order to measure success.

- How will we know if the result has been achieved? The schools that have a Spark Bike received training on how to use a tracking sheet to determine a student’s “readiness to learn” before and after using the bike.
- What is the “story” behind the data? Disruptions to the class by “Marker Students” will be used as the data. The trend and forecast will be based on what occurred prior to the implementation of Spark Bikes pilot.
- What is the “story” behind the trend? The schools that received a Spark Bike already were committed to using self-regulation to support student well-being and academic success. The supports in place included the established self-regulation initiatives and interventions. A major challenge included the difficulty in determining if self-regulation, including the use of a Spark Bike, are directly responsible for improving a student’s “readiness to learn.”
- What have others done in similar situations? The DDSB worked with Dr. Stuart Shanker from York University to

implement the use of self-regulation based on his research. The use of Spark Bikes as a self-regulation strategy is based on the “brain” research of Dr. John Ratey from Harvard University, and the understanding of the results of the DDSB pilot is supported by researchers at Trent University.

- What action will we take? Teachers who use the Spark Bikes will collect data using a tracking sheet based on the research in self-regulation. The data from these tracking sheets will be collected and collated at the board level.

In regards to step two, evaluating the impact of the initiative, schools are currently engaged in the collection of data around the use of the Spark Bike using a tracking sheet based on the elements of self-regulation. Students who use the bike are asked:

- To identify how they are feeling before they ride the Spark Bike (pre-state);
- To record the length of time they spend on the Spark Bike; and
- To identify how they feel after they ride the Spark Bike (Post-State).

The initial information collected and collated at the board level indicated that the “Marker Students” who used the Spark

Bike found it helped them to self-regulate, and as a result they were better able to learn. Although a fulsome analysis is pending the collection of more data, an initial review of data indicates that time spent on the Spark Bike helps most riders (53 per cent) successfully move into a “ready to learn” state after spending an average of 4:49 minutes on the Spark Bike. Anecdotal interviews with the teachers indicated that the use of the Spark Bike reduced the number of class disruptions, and subsequent referrals to the office.

A number of DDSB schools have incorporated self-regulation initiatives and interventions as a means to establish positive classroom environments that supports student well-being and achievement. When a student is able to understand his or her stressors, and then choose an appropriate intervention to address the stressor, then he or she is less likely to disrupt the learning environment. Schools are collecting formal data, including data from school climate surveys, attendance, report cards and office referrals, while teachers are gathering anecdotal classroom data, such as student engagement and on-task behaviour, to better understand the impact of self-regulation on the learning environment.

Preliminary data indicates that that self-regulation initiatives and interventions positively impact both student well-being and academic achievement. That being said, the DDSB is committed to better understanding the impact of initiatives in the area of well-being and positive mental health on the well-being and achievement of students. By being systematic and reflective in our planning and implementation, schools will be able to create learning environments that are healthy, safe and caring. ○

Lisa Millar is Director of Education; John Bowyer is Superintendent; Allison Potts is Mental Health Lead; and Alex Toulis is Education Officer, all with the Durham District School Board.

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A Healthy Future for All: A Comprehensive Approach to Employee Wellness

By Andrea Urquhart, Andrea Dwyer, and Kelly Dunsmore, Calgary Catholic School District

The workplace plays a critical role in supporting the mental and physical well-being of its employees. For the Calgary Catholic School District (CCSD), designing, implementing and supporting a comprehensive employee health and wellness strategy has become a focus in order to meet the ever-changing needs of its employees.

Gary Strother, Chief Superintendent, recognizes the importance of wellness in the workplace, saying: “Employee wellness is a priority for our school jurisdiction. Staff who are healthy, motivated and well supported can be champions for the children and families that we serve. We want all our staff to be role models of good physical, mental and spiritual wellness.” According to *The Wellness Dividend*, a report by workplace expert Dr. Graham Lowe (2014), “employee wellness and engagement are closely linked” (p. 10). CCSD has recently focused on re-vamping its health and wellness offerings to better meet the needs of current employees. Under the leadership of Dr. Andrea Dwyer, director of the Employee and Family Assistance Program, and Kelly Dunsmore, manager of employee wellness and safety, a comprehensive approach to employee wellness has been created. CCSD began the process of looking at what needed to be improved through an employee wellness initiative survey that was sent to all employees. The survey focused on gathering information about enhancing or maintaining overall health and well-being. CCSD gathered over 1,900 responses and was able to determine the top four areas of importance for staff:

1. Having more time/opportunities to exercise or participate in healthy activities during the day (walking, biking, yoga, meditation, etc.).
2. Support for fitness programs or gym membership costs.
3. Eating healthier and/or more nutritious foods.
4. Learning better stress management techniques or overall coping skills.

As a result of the survey, several new



When employees expressed the desire to have time for yoga and meditation, many schools within Calgary Catholic School District organized yoga classes.

district-wide initiatives have been launched. In June 2016, the Calgary Catholic School District entered into a corporate partnership with GoodLife Fitness. The partnership offers all active CCSD employees significantly discounted membership rates to GoodLife gyms across Canada. Within only a few months of this partnership’s inception, more than 400 employees had signed up and the numbers are continuing to grow. In October 2016, a partnership with Kids & Company was also cultivated to help support backup child care services to employees, as child care was an identified stressor in CCSD’s survey results. Additional initiatives are currently being explored to further support the four areas of identified importance for staff. According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, approximately 4.2 million working Canadians have a mental illness (*The Footprint of Mental Health Conditions: Healthy Brains at Work*, 2015, p. 25). Statistics such as these have brought to the forefront the need to identify additional actions that can be taken by the Calgary Catholic School District to address mental health wellness for employees. Dr. Andrea Dwyer and her team are the driving force behind the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP). This program provides individual, couple and family counselling to

employees and their family members. The EFAP team also responds to critical incidents and offers crisis counselling at any CCSD school or office.

More recently, the EFAP team began offering counselling at various off-site office locations throughout Calgary in order to be more responsive and available to employees and their family members. This change has increased access to services, has improved efficiencies and has reduced the wait time for booking initial appointments. Employees have provided positive feedback about the option of alternate office sites, as this allows them to better maintain their anonymity when attending counselling and also reduces their travel time. In turn, employees are not absent from work for as long and are able to return home from appointments faster.

In addition, the EFAP team also recently began developing mental health prevention initiatives in order to reach a larger audience and to help prevent mental health issues from developing in the first place. For instance, regular workshops have been provided to increase awareness about mental health issues and to review the services that the EFAP team can offer to help employees and their family members with concerns.

Workshops regarding how to “embrace stress” and change perceptions about taking on challenges, as well as how to better cope with

stress, have also been introduced. On the horizon is the development of a relaxation group for employees that will teach basic coping strategies for everyday life. The group's focus will be to provide participants with the knowledge of the effects that healthy relaxation and coping strategies can have on the body and mind, while also focusing on practicing new skills learned.

CCSD recognizes the importance of mental health and wellness education for students and embraces this education for its employees as well. Raising mental health awareness and overall wellness amongst employees serves to improve the health and wellness of the entire organization. CCSD understands the importance of adapting to the ever-changing needs of employees and their families and knows that in order to be a successful organization, it must continue to explore new and innovative approaches to supporting a comprehensive employee health and wellness strategy. ○

Andrea Urquhart, B.Comm, B. Ed., M. Ed., HRMC, is the Director of Human Resources for Calgary Catholic School District. Andrea has worked with the district for 25 years as a teacher, Vice Principal, Principal, Supervisor and Director. She can be contacted at andrea.urquhart@cssd.ab.ca.

Andrea Dwyer, Ph.D., R.Psych. is the Director of the Employee and Family Assistance Program at the Calgary Catholic School District. She is a Registered Psychologist and has worked in many settings, including private practice, counselling agencies, Correctional Service of Canada, and Department of National Defense.

Kelly Dunsmore, BGS, has worked for the Calgary Catholic School District for over 10 years. She is currently the Manager of Employee Wellness & Safety, and is the chair of the Health & Safety Steering Committee.

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What Participants are Saying

"This is fantastic! I wish we had this when my kids were little!" (An elementary teacher on the Kids & Company partnership).

"I just wanted to say thank you for arranging the special pricing for GoodLife Fitness for us!"

"I went yesterday and did the tour and I liked it. I signed up... Thanks again for arranging things like this for us. It's another reason why working with this district is so great! (From a school-based office assistant).

"I have always felt that a gym membership would be an excellent way to support wellness for our staff." (From an anonymous survey respondent).

"I truly appreciate having EFAP available and have accessed it frequently due to family medical issues... Thank you for providing support to us. It has enabled me to continue to work and not take any leaves or absences." (From an anonymous survey respondent).

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Our House: A Healthy Community and School Partnering up for a Better Future

By Bonnie Mitchell, New Frontiers School Board

The Carpentry Certification Program at the Chateaugay Valley Career Education Centre of the New Frontiers School Board in Ormstown, Quebec, offers a 1,350-hour certification for young men and women who want to become carpenters in the field of construction. Students work through 19 competencies that prepare them for the construction industry and their future careers as journeymen and women.

Every year, the Centre teachers work with roughly 160 students, seeing, on average, 150 graduate successfully. Although this graduation rate is excellent, the teacher team wanted to do more. They set out on a journey to increase the graduation rate and help their community at the same time. Their quest started in 2011 with the Our House project. Little did they know when this all began, that they would also change the landscape in their community and influence the future in this quaint town south of Montreal.

The Our House initiative is a real-life construction project. The teachers worked with partners to design and build two semi-detached homes which would not only become a project with Habitat for Humanity, but would also meet the requirements for LEED (Leading Environmental and Ecological Design) Certification. The Town of Ormstown, Habitat for Humanity-Quebec Chapter, the Ecohabitation Quebec branch of LEED Canada, and three school boards started this journey together and are now seeing it come to life. The New Frontiers, Lester B Pearson, and English Montreal School Boards collaborated with all these partners to brainstorm and learn together about environmentally responsible homes. With land from the Town of Ormstown, prospective families chosen, and a modular design, the



ABOVE: Students work on soffits and roofing finishes, outside in -10°C!



RIGHT: Carpentry students with their teacher, Alex (who is wearing the white hard hat).

group has worked through four separate school years to bring this project to reality.

Now, in 2017, they are proud to look down a country road in their town and see two beautiful, environmentally-responsible, and healthy homes that will change the lives of two families in their community. What is so outstanding about this project is that it involves both a school board and a municipality working on a partnership-based community project. This has never been done in Quebec and it is leading vocational training to a new plain where the community is at the heart.

In the spring of 2016, and once Michel Beaulieu, the building engineer, had finished the conceptual design of the modular houses, the teachers worked with the Residential & Commercial Drafting students to create the

specification drawings for the house. In August 2016, the build began in a workshop at the Chateaugay Valley Career Education Centre. Although this had never been done before and there were daily challenges to solve, everyone rallied together. Carpentry students were brought into the experience from their first day in the program, even though some had never held a hammer before! They were now in the middle of building giant frames for real houses. The dedication and enthusiasm could be felt immediately upon entering the building.

The community held fundraisers to help with the project. There was a concert with Nanette Workman, community barbecues, donations from ice cream parlour sales, and even a Grade 6 girl from the 4H Club who gave all her birthday money to the project.

The community spirit was incredible, with everyone wanting to help the Centre complete the build, actualize the story and give two families a chance at a better life. Habitat for Humanity formed a local committee and the search for the families began. Choosing people without the means to purchase their own home, and giving them the opportunity to transform their lives, took hold in Ormstown and the surrounding areas.

The families have now moved in and this rural community welcomed them into their fold. Not only will lives will be transformed but this building has transformed the look and “consumption” of the regular home in Ormstown. We believe an ecologically superior building evokes change in a community, sensitizing people to the effects of construction and consumption on the earth, and teaching the future carpenters about the need for change.

It is this aspect of the project that will likely have the most influence on the future of this Centre and vocational training. The teachers gave of their own time to become certified in LEED Design & Training. Three teachers are now able to teach LEED concepts and this is being incorporated into the curriculum of the Carpentry Certification Program. Students enrolled in the program experience the LEED approach, which we think will have positive and far-reaching effects within the construction industry.

The main components of the homes we built were created in a modular fashion by a team of teachers and students from New Frontiers; these were moved on-site in February 2017. Other teams from the Lester B. Pearson School Board took on the plumbing and electrical aspects; while teams from the English Montreal School Board built all the kitchen cabinetry. New Frontiers is again on-site doing all the landscaping work. Volunteers have put in many hours of work, with this component

of the project being coordinated by Habitat for Humanity. Over \$20,000 was raised with the Habitat for Humanity “Women Build” program, where teams of women worked on the inside finishings.

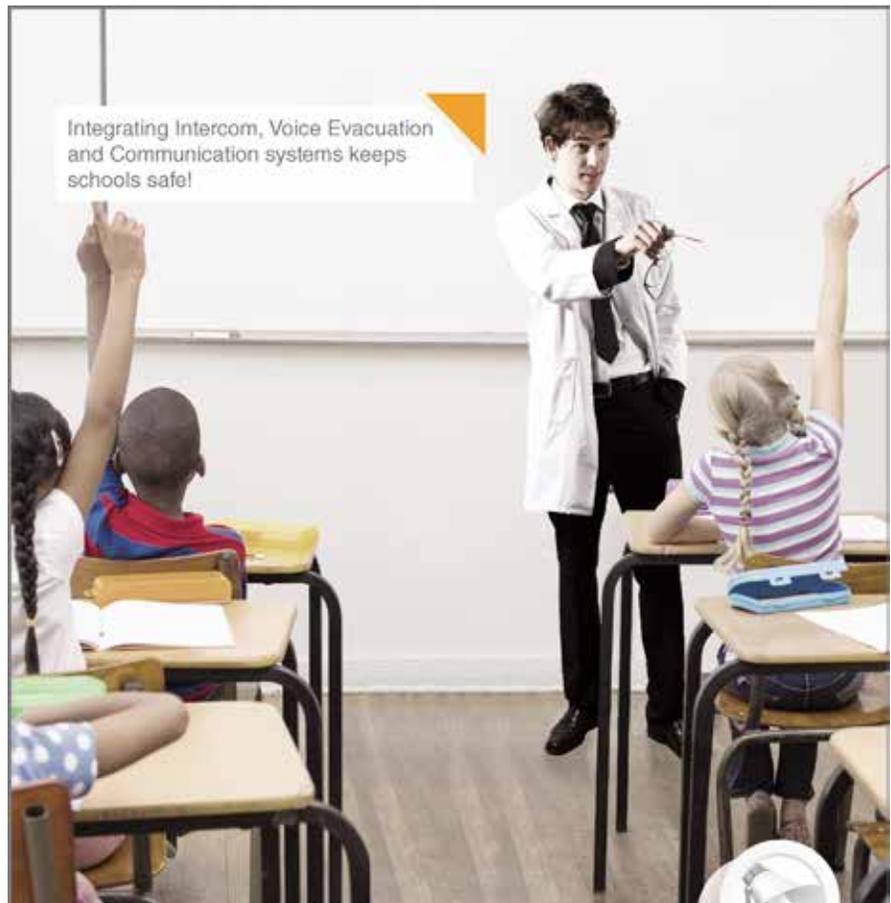
Volunteers came and went daily and now, as the journey comes to an end, they can stand back and conclude that this was a tremendously meaningful learning experience. The initial goal to increase student retention proved itself: 100 per cent of their students graduated this year in all programs of study.

Helping others and contributing to projects that are real and that improve

the health of our communities, all while changing the future, is a journey that education must consider as it promotes the connectivity we need.

I am proud to have been a part of this journey with the team at the Chateaugay Valley Career Education Centre. They exemplify the outstanding qualities needed in our education system and have taught me about deep learning; the kind that truly makes change happen. ○

Bonnie Mitchell is the Director of Continuing Education, New Frontiers School Board.



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Everyone Matters!

By Sandy Bexon, Chinook's Edge School Division



In Chinook's Edge, we know that meaningful relationships and trust are fundamental for moving our students toward success. As we worked to establish the structures and processes that ensure our students feel safe and cared for, we quickly broadened our language and our approach to also reach staff and families with the clear message: Everyone Matters in Chinook's Edge!

Chinook's Edge was already highly regarded for its efforts to enhance the safe and caring culture in our schools, and continually receives "top grades" in student, parent and staff surveys for fostering a safe and caring culture. To take this priority further, a new Safe and Caring Schools Committee was formed in Spring 2014 to launch a series of initiatives to address the priorities identified by students, parents and school staff. Comprised of reps from schools across the large rural school division, the Safe and Caring Schools Committee quickly identified project streams to push the safe and caring priority further—and the resulting efforts have received high acclaim.

One of the committee's earliest projects stemmed from the voices of Chinook's Edge students, whose responses to a division-wide survey led the committee to define a comprehensive approach to providing a safe and caring culture in all 43 schools. This resulted in two distinct board-sanctioned Administrative Procedures: "Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, Safe and Inclusive Schools" and "Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity."

The first procedure clearly defines the expectations that we have of all people in our schools and facilities, and the second expands on these priorities further by specifically supporting sexual and gender minority students and staff in our schools. The Safe and Caring Schools Committee worked to ensure a series of communiques moved both of these procedures from a philosophy to a practice in our schools, including the production of a 20-page document that shares personal stories and the impact that strong supportive practices in schools can make on individual lives. The "Proud to be me in C.E.S.D." document was produced through a Healthy Schools Wellness Grant, and the Alberta Healthy

Schools Community Wellness Fund has provided funding to also support other aspects of this work.

This wasn't the first time a Safe and Caring Schools Committee project received outside resources to support its work. In the early days of the committee, an intensive consultative process was conducted with students, teachers, school staff and parents to determine their priorities. Three distinct themes were identified and an awareness campaign was launched to share information and best practices, access classroom tools and resources, along with the design and development of a poster campaign that would serve as visible reminders of the themes that had been identified as priorities.

These themes or slogans—Choose Kindness, Play Outside the Box, and Restore Relationships—became what is known as the Relationships Matter movement to encourage healthy and positive interactions in schools. As the Safe and Caring Schools Committee worked to put into action these priorities that were identified by all stakeholder groups in the division, the efforts quickly began earning praise from the community. Soon the committee was successful in receiving a Seeds of Kindness grant from an area radio station, which funded the printing of the triple-poster series for each school in Chinook's Edge.

The important goal of ensuring every child in our school division feels they belong sometimes feels like never-ending work. The complexities in the classroom are growing and changing in schools across our division—and across our country. The current efforts underway through the Safe and Caring Schools Committee is focused on enhancing the positive mental health development of our students.

A detailed framework that encompasses the emotional and social development of children and youth is being created. This framework identifies key indicators as students progress through the grades. The framework outlines



a continuum of typical emotional and social growth in children and youth, and addresses individual areas of need where necessary. It provides a common language between staff, families and students themselves. Focusing on these indicators and identifying supports, such as resources, strategies and professional development, employs a collaborative team approach, including all school staff and caring adults involved in the positive development of students in our school communities (family, community members, etc).

The framework's specific outcomes provide a roadmap for student growth as they mature from self-awareness and self-management to social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. Building on the foundation of strong safe, caring and positive relationships that are the bedrock of every classroom in Chinook's Edge, the school can be a place where emotional and social growth can emerge naturally and successfully.

Alongside this vital work for students is an equally compelling focus on the health and wellness of staff who support student growth each day. Chinook's Edge is embarking on a staff wellness initiative to discuss, develop and implement strategies that support the mental,

physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual well-being of staff.

The Safe and Caring Schools Committee is completing its third year of fostering a sense of belonging among every individual in our school community, and there are no signs of

slowing down! It stems from a belief that honouring and nurturing one another catapults us all towards success. ○

Sandy Bexon is the Communications Officer for Chinook's Edge School Division.

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The Energy Club Énergie

By Marie-Josée Paquette, Marie-Josée Messier, Geneviève D-Leduc, and Sylvie Monette,
Forest Hill Senior Campus, Lester B. Pearson School Board



Students play Ogosport in the hallway.



Students build on a Lego wall!



Reading and writing can be done on stationary bikes.

Forest Hill Senior Campus elementary school (FHSr) welcomes its 417 students with the strong desire to help each individual feel good while fostering their sense of belonging. FHSr is located in Saint-Lazare, Quebec, a municipality of 19,295 people situated west of the island of Montreal. Its fast-growing population includes many young families who chose to live in the area to enjoy the vast green spaces and beautiful trees.

The profile of children at FHSr is wide-ranging and includes students with specific needs (ADHD, anxiety, autism, etc.), as well as those who spend long hours at school every day (up to 11 hours for children using the daycare service). This is where the story of the “Energy Club Énergie” came to life. After reading an article in the magazine *L’Actualité*, (Éducation : *la Finlande première de classe!*, avril 2014, www.lactualite.com/societe/education-la-finlande-premiere-de-classe/), two Forest Hill Senior Cycle 3 teachers were inspired to develop a project that fit perfectly with the mission of the school. In September 2014, with the unconditional support of their principal, other collaborators and the school team: “Energy Club Énergie” was born!

What is the “Energy Club Énergie”?

Every day, the Energy Club Énergie provides “active” opportunities to positively influence the wellbeing and educational success of its students. Throughout the school day children can benefit from “energy breaks” by visiting 10 activity stations in the hallways of the school (e.g. stationary bikes where they can read while exercising, play soccer, mini-hockey, Ogosport, badminton, jumping rope and many more!).

The Energy Club Énergie aims at promoting well-being and concentration by offering children opportunities to release / renew their energy, or just to let off some steam. In fact, these energy/brain breaks allow children to move before their level of frustration / anxiety increases to the point of disrupting the class. It is worth mentioning that visits to the principal’s office (related to classroom discipline) have significantly decreased since the beginning of Energy Club Énergie.

In addition, this initiative allows children to develop their independence. Children can take the initiative to ask their teacher to go stretch their legs if they feel the need, and they are responsible for their stopwatch (they are the timekeeper for their activity break). Marie-Josée Paquette, a Grade 5 French teacher, says, “By allowing students to move, both in the classrooms and at the stations, we show them that we respect and understand their needs and that we trust them. Our interactions with all children, and especially those with ADHD, are positive. We truly address their need for movement and they feel respected and valued.”

The Energy Club Énergie is a fun and dynamic way to integrate new students and develop a sense of belonging to the school while creating links with new friends.

A future ready school

Over the past three years, FHSr has continued to build on its success by implementing a string of innovations to meet the needs of its students (for example, a Universal Design for Learning environment in classrooms as well as in common areas). Furthermore, FHSr celebrates healthy lifestyles and student autonomy through small, yet powerful changes!

A child's need forms an opportunity to make small, meaningful changes that make a world of difference. It can start by changing the classroom furniture around to allow your children to work standing up, or by an inspiration to transform an existing space into a studio.

Some of the changes include “Free Flow” in the school and flexible furniture that offers a variety of comfortable positions for children to work, thus promoting their educational success. As well, the library and computer room have been transformed into a bright and spacious studio (multimedia room / creation workshop / library, new concept).

Let the numbers talk

Since the introduction of the Energy Club Énergie in September 2014, there has been a significant decrease reported in the level of anxiety among boys (“Tell Them From Me” survey, Learning Bar Inc.).

Furthermore, 90 per cent of the students at FHSr are interested and motivated in their learning, compared to the Canadian norm of 71 per cent. Building positive and healthy relationships is an aspect that the school tries to encourage by organizing clubs (eg. Walking / jogging, knitting, arts). These activities help create bonds as well as socializing opportunities that foster a sense of belonging. Students (89 per cent) stated that they have friends they can trust, who encourage them to make positive choices, compared to the Canadian norm of 80 per cent (Report on Student Outcomes and School Climate, The Learning Bar Inc., 2017).

The “butterfly effect”

These small initiatives have caused a positive “butterfly effect” within the school community.

Working together to discover new ideas to help children reach their full potential is stimulating and so rewarding. This translates into a positive effect on the school atmosphere and helps create a sense of belonging.

Everyone at the school is a key to achieving Forest Hill Senior Campus’ mission. A child’s need forms an opportunity to make small, meaningful changes that make a world of difference. It can start by changing the classroom furniture around to allow your children to work standing up, or by an inspiration to transform an existing space into a studio.

Building bridges with families is an important factor in helping children to blossom. Rather than a parent receiving a call from school to report their child made bad choices that day, an invitation might be made to take part in a community outing, or an art

project might be sent home. Positive interactions between the school and parents of FHSr help tremendously to build relationships. This benefits children’s wellness.

The last word to Forest Hill Senior Campus students

“The Club Énergie helps me calm down. I don’t worry anymore.”

“My school makes me feel at home.”

One star at a time, the sky of Forest Hill Senior’s Campus is lit up with endless possibilities. ○

This article was written by the Forest Hill Senior Campus Team, Marie-Josée Paquette, Marie-Josée Messier, Geneviève D-Leduc, and Sylvie Monette, Principal.

The advertisement for Community Safety Net features several award logos at the top: a gold 'MOM'S CHOICE AWARD' for 'WORKING EXCELLENCE', the 'COMMUNITY Safety Net' logo with a smiley face, and a purple 'SUMMIT INTERNATIONAL CREATIVE AWARDS WINNER' for 'BEST EDUCATIONAL VIDEO'. Below these is a blue banner with the text 'Award-Winning Safety Materials for Children & Families... Starting as Low as \$7.99 per Student!'. The main text states: 'Community Safety Net is an award-winning provider of educational safety materials for children – great for sharing with the whole family! Giving kids the facts empowers them to make Smart choices for LIFE.' Below this are four spiral-bound booklets: 'DRUG SAFETY' (112 PAGES), 'FIRE SAFETY' (112 PAGES), 'PERSONAL SAFETY' (112 PAGES), and 'RURAL SAFETY' (112 PAGES). A list of other available materials includes Junior Fire Safety, Family Health & Safety, ATV, Babysitting, Bicycle/Skateboarding, Bullying, Internet, Lawnmower, Railway, Seniors, Snowmobile and Water Safety Guides. Contact information is provided: 'Contact Us Today To Order YOUR Award-Winning Safety Materials... orders@communitysafetynet.com 1.800.665.6167'. At the bottom, it says 'Since 1989, Community Safety Net has been helping educators like you... Protect kids for LIFE!' and includes the website 'www.communitysafetynet.com', social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, the hashtag '#HelpKidsNow', and a 'MADE IN CANADA' logo with a maple leaf.

Inclusion is

~~IMPOSSIBLE~~

for Tier 3 Students

By Joyleen Podgursky, Prairie South School Division

In the beginning....

“I believe in inclusive practices, but how do I have Joseph in my room when he can’t keep his hands off the other students and he is destroying my room?” questioned the Grade 9 teacher at Sunnydale High School. This was becoming a common conversation between the teachers and support staff. Most educators have training in assessment and instruction, but not many have the necessary background to work with the five per cent of students who have Tier 3 behavioural challenges. With inclusion at stake, it was crucial to respond to the needs of the teachers and their students.

Addressing the needs

The counselors and student support consultants at Prairie South Schools worked collaboratively to address this issue. They demystified behaviour analysis and instruction in a process that parallels the ever-familiar Learning Cycle. The Behaviour Learning Cycle (BLC) is a data-driven, personalized approach to behaviour improvement that stems from Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA), Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) and Positive Behaviour Support (PBS).

The key outcomes of the BLC are:

- Understand and embrace function-based thinking;
- Use data to identify function and missing skills;
- Identify variables that influence behaviour to create behaviour support plans; and

- Employ non-aversive instruction to teach missing skills.

The BLC focuses on a shift from form-based interventions to function-based, from subjective data gathering practices to objective, from punitive and/or reactive practices to function-based positive behaviour support, and from highly adaptive practices to teaching missing skills. Teachers needed a systematic and collaborative approach to working with these students. Some teachers found the sessions challenged their current approaches and philosophical beliefs.

Teaching behaviour parallels the instruction of other skills that teachers are more familiar with, such as reading skills. Table 1 compares

teaching the skills of reading alongside the BLC process.

Implementation

Teacher teams chose to attend four-day sessions spread out throughout the school year to work through the BLC process for one of their priority Tier 3 students that needed an individualized, Positive Behaviour Support Plan based on indirect and direct assessment data. Each team had regular, on-the-job coaching between the sessions. This allowed for the necessary dialogue and reflection for enhanced learning and implementation fidelity. Teacher feedback guided each upcoming session. For example, participants requested some type of “GPS” to help them maneuver throughout the process. They received the list found in Table 2 with the caution that it was not to be used in a lock-step fashion.

Each team received feedback on their completed Behaviour Support Plan (BSP). All comprehensive plans had data-based individualized Positive Behaviour Supports that were tailored-made for their individual student. The plans focused on the preventative nature of PBS, working on the adaptive skills in the physical, programmatic and interpersonal environment; and equipping skills including replacement, related, functional and coping and tolerance skills. Choice instructional methods of behavioural shaping including conditioning, chaining, reinforcement systems and prompt reduction were connected to the missing skills.

Demystification of the behaviour intervention process has been highly successful for both staff and students. Prairie South is committed to supporting the teachers and students, like Joseph

Table 1

Reading	BLC
Gather triangulated assessment information on student who is struggling with reading at grade level.	Gather indirect and direct assessment information.
Analyze the information to pinpoint the missing reading skills.	Analyze the triangulated data to pinpoint the operational definition, function and missing skills.
Develop a plan that has a comprehensive approach, including phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and/or comprehension instruction.	Create Behaviour Support Plan that includes a crisis plan, environmental adaptations, necessary related, replacement, coping and tolerance skills, and life skills needed.
Employ effective practices to teach the missing skills in an intervention setting.	Employ shaping methods to teach missing skills in an intervention setting.
Plan to transition effective reading skills into a classroom setting.	Plan to transition effective behavioural skills into a classroom setting.
Continue assessment maintenance practices. If there are still missing skills, follow the above process again.	Continue collecting data to ensure effective intervention and transitioning practices. If there are still missing skills, follow the above process again.
Follow-up to ensure fidelity to individualized plan.	Follow-up to ensure fidelity of BSP implementation.

from Sunnydale High. When requests for support are made, teachers are given the tools that provide results of which are resilient students and schools, inclusive classrooms, and safer communities. ○

Joyleen Podgursky is the Learning Support Team Coordinator for Prairie South School Division, which is located in Southern Saskatchewan.

BLC Gets Results!

Prairie South Parent: "It has saved my son's and my relationship. I understand many of his triggers and he understands that he can grow from situations. I'm proud of my son and the growth that we have made."

Prairie South Principal: "I feel that I listen to students and try to understand what the triggers are that set the students into crisis. Instead of the traditional thought that we need to punish students...the BLC allows us to work together and use these opportunities as teaching moments where the student can apply their new set of skills in a safe environment."

Table 2

BLC Activities	Notes
1. File review	
2. Staff interviews	
3. Parent/student interviews	
4. Behaviour rating scales	
5. Baseline observations	
6. Create operational definitions	
7. Design tailor-made data tools	Is the behaviour ... <i>High rate? Discrete? Episodic? By opportunity?</i>
8. Observe and recording behavior with data tools	Tools that match the behaviour: <i>ABC (episodic); Interval samples; Ratio or % (by opportunity)</i>
9. Gather data	
10. Summarize raw data	*Reliable data is triangulated
11. Hypothesize behavioral function	The behaviour is maintained by one or more of the following: GAINING: <i>Tangible; Communication; Sensory benefits</i> REMOVING: <i>Escape; Sensory relief</i>
12. Identify replacement behaviors	<i>Replacement skills; Related skills; Functional skills; Coping skills</i> "If the student could _____, then the student wouldn't have to (target behaviour.)"
13. Design a Behaviour Support Plan (BSP)	
14. Staff training on procedures including data procedures	
15. Implementation	
16. Progress monitoring	
17. Evaluation	

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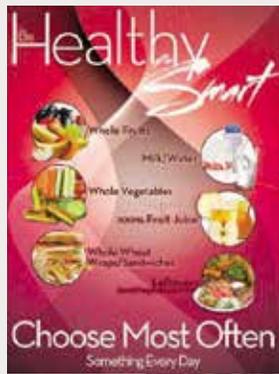
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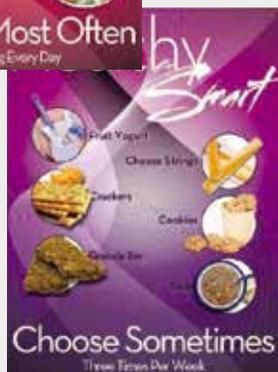
Canada

Edmonton Catholic Schools Continuum of Support

By Cheryl Shinkaruk, Edmonton Catholic School Division



ECSD nutrition posters.



Student strategies for managing stress.

Edmonton Catholic School Division (ECSD) launched their Mental Health Strategic Plan in the 2016-2017 school year. Its goal is to provide a continuum of support for all students. Through a *Comprehensive School Health Framework* that involves a whole school approach, four inter-related pillars—Social and Physical Environment; Teaching and Learning; Healthy School Policy; and Partnerships and Services—provide a common framework for schools to address student mental health. Edmonton Catholic Schools Mental Health Strategic Plan aligns with the *Alberta Mental Health Review Committee: Valuing Mental Health* by supporting the vision and guiding principles, where individuals are seen in a holistic way and prevention is a priority.

The ECSD plan includes two layers. The first layer includes strategies and resources

that are being implemented district wide and will become foundational components in all our schools. The second layer includes the personalized profiles of schools, where schools have flexibility and support to utilize their data, so that data-driven plans can be developed at each site that are reflective of their unique needs and school growth plans. District monitoring has created a data collection template, so schools can receive direct feedback of their results in the *Tell Them From Me* (student voice) and the *Joint Consortium for School Health* survey (staff voice).

Through the lens of health promotion, we are focusing on physical literacy, nutrition, social emotional learning, mental health literacy, safe and caring schools and student leadership. Students who are physically literate move with competence and confidence in a wide variety of physical activities in multiple environments that benefit the healthy development of the whole person. These skills enable individuals to make healthy, active choices that are both beneficial to and respectful of their self, others and their environment.

The benefits of physical literacy aren't just limited to physical health though; it

improves academic performance, cognitive skills, mental health, psychological wellness, social skills and healthy lifestyle habits. We were privileged to host Dr. Dean Kriellaars, from the University of Manitoba, who spoke about the importance of physical literacy supporting mental health in children and youth to administration and teachers in the school district. He shared the research that correlates children's happiness and satisfaction in life to their engagement in physical activity. He challenged our thinking by asking us to support children's opportunities to participate in free play and develop their movement skills, which are the building blocks of movement creativity.

By reaching out and working in collaboration with our many partners, ECSD is committed to providing school environments that promote healthy eating choices. Foods and beverages sold or served at school will support healthy eating choices. Foods will be from the "Choose Most Often" or "Choose Sometimes" categories, as outlined in the Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for children and Youth. ECSD created healthy messaging with posters that were distributed to all schools to educate children and youth about making healthy choices.

As well, in collaboration with Breakfast for Learning, E4C Edmonton, Breakfast Club of Canada, Alberta Education Nutrition Pilot, Edmonton Foodbank and many other local businesses, we can ensure that students receive nutritious food choices that will allow them to be ready to learn in the classroom. With the support of Alberta Health Services dieticians, we collaborated to support teachers in delivering outcomes to enhance student learning about making healthy choices. Student leaders within the schools led their Parent Council through a hands-on learning session, which shared the important role parents have in supporting healthy eating. This home/school connection is a critical component of working together to create a healthy community.

The Mental Health Literacy program, designed by Dr. Stan Kutcher, helps staff and students learn how to distinguish between mental health problems, distress and disorders, how to support positive mental health and how to access support and resources. By training all staff as Go-To-Educators, we want to increase knowledge and build awareness in mental health. As staff develop relationships with their students, we hope to provide an environment that supports mental health within the school environment.

As part of the educational support with students, Junior High teachers are implementing the Mental Health Curriculum Guide, which we have aligned to the Health and Life Skills Program of Studies. By addressing topics such as positive mental health, understanding mental health/mental illnesses, stigma and seeking help, we want to lead students to a greater understanding of their own mental health. Parents also had the opportunity to attend a Mental Health Awareness evening, which provided information on how to support their child's mental health. This approach has proven to be one step towards supporting the whole child within a healthy school community.

Student voice can contribute positively to the culture within the school. It allows students to share who they are and what they believe in with their peers, parents, teachers and their entire school. Through Student Leadership Symposia, students are given the opportunity to ignite their ideas with others with strategies and ideas on how to support student mental health and wellness within their school. Students gather together to learn about physical literacy, nutrition, positive

mental health, social justice and creating safe and caring environments. They create School Action Plans, in collaboration with their peers and their teacher, which they take back to their school and put into action.

By empowering students to be passionate about their vision, it allows them to take ownership for being agents of change. Students develop attitudes and skills that support their social emotional learning and allow them to be part of supporting the culture of a healthy community for now and the future!

Healthy school communities can change the culture of our society in the years to

come. Schools are the hub of the community and by bringing together our parents, students, partners and school staff to support the mental health and wellbeing, we want to be responsive to the needs through a comprehensive, collaborative approach. By addressing the physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual wellness of our students, we aim to support the whole child within their school, community and in their future! ○

Cheryl Shinkaruk is Manager, Programs & Projects, for Edmonton Catholic Schools.

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A BRIGHT IDEA FROM GROUPE MÉDIA TFO



SBCSS began the 2014 National AVIVA Community Fund Competition with a school-wide spelling, in human lettering, of AVIVA, captured here with drone technology.

Nurturing the Community

By Sally Reis-Power and Dan Witt, St. Benedict Catholic Secondary School

For a number of years, St. Benedict Catholic Secondary School (SBCSS) has remained steadfast in providing a holistic approach to education in Cambridge, Ontario. The commitment to high academic standards, as well as physical, spiritual, social and emotional well-being, extends not only to the students of St. Benedict but to the greater community. SBCSS continually seeks to foster a modern school experience that constantly strengthens its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working. This philosophy has given way to a comprehensive school-based approach that recognizes that healthy schools support a healthy community.

To that end, one of the aims of St. Benedict's has been to nurture the "Heart of the Community Project," which has been to create an outdoor healthy active living centre for families of all ages. Creating an innovative and superior place for people in the city of Cambridge to study, work, socialize, gather and live is the heart of the project. With an understanding of the connection between holistic wellness and community design, we can improve our community environment and target the health of our citizens.

The multi-generational approach is intended to provide positive role modeling for youth and create a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment for all, while building community through recreation and positive social connections. Community partnerships have been the key to our success. In the past four years, the school, along with its partners—the Region of Waterloo Public Health, The Cambridge Public Library, Waterloo Catholic Schools Foundation, Neighborhood

In January 2015, SBCSS was awarded the \$100,000 AVIVA Community Fund Grand Prize as they went live on Canada AM with host Jeff Hutchinson and crew.



and Community Associations, other local supporters and parent champions—has been successful in a variety of initiatives and projects. Collectively, they secured \$20,000 from the Ministry of Education Physical Activity in Secondary School Grant in 2014, followed by winning one of the \$100,000 Grand Prizes in the AVIVA Community Fund Contest in 2015. St. Benedict and partners then received a \$300,000 grant from the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation Children and Youth Capital Grants Program in 2015 to support Phase II of the Heart of the Community project.

In 2016, SBCSS's project momentum continued to broaden its scope when it received \$10,000 from the Riddell Football Grant, \$10,000 from Barrday Schools of Excellence, \$600 Canadian Cancer Society Youth4Action Grants (2016-17) and \$10,000 from the Ministry of Education Supporting Radicalized Students in Ontario Grant. In the winter of 2017, SBCSS then received \$2,500 from the Ontario SpeakUP grant in support of SBCSS Students as Researchers (StAR) inquiry project and an additional \$45,000 dollars from the Teaching Learning and Leadership Program Grant. In addition to the "Heart of the Community Project," SBCSS pursued

the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (OPHEA) Healthy Schools Certification in 2016. This certification looks to recognize and celebrate school communities for promoting and enhancing the health of students, staff and the broader community. Only 107 schools across Ontario were recognized with a healthy school certification. SBCSS was one of the 54 schools awarded a gold rating and the only school within the region to earn such a designation.

Significant to the Healthy Schools Certification success was St. Benedict's participation in the Hero of Play contest. An event brought to Canadian students in partnership with Canadian Tire and Canada's Olympic Team, the contest recognized students, staff and community members who are active daily, inspire others to live a healthy, active lifestyle and who embody the Olympic values of excellence, friendship and respect. St. Benedict C.S.S. was one of only two schools across several provinces in Canada to have won this grand prize. SBCSS actively pursued certification for 2017 in a quest for a repeat gold certification and have again earned a gold rating.

SBCSS continues to promote a culture where a holistic approach to working with

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youth and members within our community are at the forefront of practices in Ontario and Canada. Above all, the transformative work and the evidence of a school-wide community approach to health and wellness in the past four years is the understanding that we need to continually strive to meet the needs of all the people we serve.

Augmentation to the existing footprint of the project has the potential to further develop an experience of comfort and accessibility, closer integration among youth and adults, strengthening partnerships established throughout the project and fostering the behaviors needed for positive social connections among all. SBCSS continues to pursue funding to make the heart of the community a genuine “community hub” in a Phase III to the project. Completing this project means the implementation of a model for interconnection internally in the public library and externally in the physical activity centre between adults, children and youth to support a meaningful co-existence among them all.

Finally, through all the work SBCSS and its community partners strived to accomplish, we have truly transformed the way that the school envisions its impact on youth and the greater community moving forward. Grounded in consultation with the community and student voice is the recipe for our success. We have remained connected to and always anchored in the needs and issues that are relevant to the community which helps generate passion and long-term sustainability. Being intentionally focused on a holistic approach to an entire school and community positively influences learning, engagement and the quality of life for all. ○

Sally Reis-Power is a Healthy Active Living Teacher, and Dan Witt is Principal, at St. Benedict Catholic Secondary School.

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On Bouge, On Marche, on Danse,
 on Mange Bien; We Move,
 we Walk, we Dance, we Eat Well



By Martina Schiavone, Dina Vourdousis, and Lisa Trotto,
 Galileo Adult Education Centre

*“The heart
 of the home
 beats in the
 kitchen and
 a healthy one
 beats three
 times a day.”*

–Bangambiki Habyarimana
 (Great Pearl of Wisdom)

At Galileo Adult Education Centre, a second home to many of our students, this saying rings true. The heart of the school is the kitchen, which fuels Galileo’s population with a healthy dose of nutrition, learning and cultural integration that makes up the unique diversity of our centre. On any given day, the aroma of fresh delicacies baking in the oven fills our hallways, a scent that awakens the nostalgic senses of our own childhood.

Furthermore, Gadget, our pet therapy Bernese dog and school mascot, provides students with a sentiment of wellbeing. Providing a familiar environment for our students and staff encourages a feeling of security and acceptance and, most importantly, unity in a communal setting that is encompassed by a healthy lifestyle.

Programs offered at Galileo: S.I.S., C.C.B.E., and academic

Galileo Adult Education Centre, part of the English Montreal School Board (EMSB), educates over 1,000 students with various learning needs. Our S.I.S. (Social Integration Services) program caters to adults living with special needs ranging in age from 21 to 56 years old. Our C.C.B.E. (Common Core Basic Education) program educates adult learners aspiring to learn the English or French language. Furthermore, we offer credit courses to academic students who wish to complete their high school diploma or to attain pre-requisite courses leading to higher education. With a student body as diverse as ours, it can be challenging at first to find common ground. But there’s one thing with which we can always find commonality, food!

Objectives of programs

The schedule alignment of the three educational programs featured at our centre affords

ongoing multi-faceted healthy nutrition, physical fitness and learning integration-based models. This is because all students participate in school-wide events that celebrate a balanced healthy lifestyle throughout the year as contributors, consumers or both. The objective of our S.I.S. program is to integrate students within a social setting and transfer their learning to their own environments. At Galileo, our S.I.S. students learn to cook healthy meals through hands-on cooking activities that are always planned for a purpose, such as transition to independent living, welcoming guests to the centre or fundraising for extracurricular activities.

Cooking programs at Galileo and fundraising

Ralph's Kitchen is a culinary program that runs every Wednesday, featuring weekly hot meal lunch specialties. S.I.S. students assist in the preparation of a variety of roasted meats and vegetables, homemade soups, lasagna, home-made pasta with vegetarian and/or meat sauces made from scratch as well as cauliflower crust vegetarian pizza. All of our hot lunches are made on site and are available to the entire faculty and students.

Basic Language students visit our kitchen and prepare traditional recipes from their countries of origin: couscous, vegetables and various baked dishes. Not only do these students willingly lend their time, but they also construct step-by-step guidelines to ensure S.I.S. students' ability to recreate these recipes. This also gives our language learning students an opportunity to acclimate and familiarize themselves with the S.I.S. population. Working with students who are managing their learning challenges alters their perspective of tolerance to a healthy viewpoint of inclusivity.

Café Galileo is set up daily for coffee breaks and S.I.S. students sell healthy fresh baked goods. Apples picked from the annual apple picking field trip are used as ingredients year-round, preserving them as soon as they're picked. The same is done with pumpkins, as the seeds are used for freshly baked bread on Fridays. In-class cooking projects have allowed students to participate in international pastry competitions, like the Bordeaux, France Abilympics of 2016.

At Galileo, learning to be empathetic is an essential component of leading a healthy lifestyle, therefore, we work at helping others in need too. In 2016, we held a pizza fundraiser

for *Leucan*, an organization committed to helping cancer-stricken children and their families. In two weeks, we raised \$3,000 in collaboration with the *Ky Cares Foundation*.

School-wide health and nutrition activities

We begin the year with a Welcome Back Corn Roast. Students husk the corn, while teachers serve it up and introduce the corn as a Canadian cultural food. By February, we visit the Sugar Shack, where there is dancing, sleigh rides and maple syrup savouring. We also organize end of term dances and potluck dinners, where students share their cultural dishes, learning an appreciation for healthy foods from around the world. Dancing allows participants to keep in shape and impart new dance moves to their peers.

Likewise, daily activities are also ongoing; spinning bikes are available during the day for students to exercise, and there are daily rehearsals for the S.I.S. Musical. The basketball court is also open for free play and is always busy with many players. We have an end of year BBQ and talent show with healthy vegetarian and Halal options. The event benefits everyone in that the relationships that have been formed

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are celebrated with the underlying philosophy of our principal, Martina Schiavone; “on bouge, on marche, on danse et on mange bien. We move, we walk, we dance and eat well.”

During the course of the year we leave the centre to exercise our minds, bodies and spirits in new spaces, such as Upper Canada Village, Quebec City, Ottawa and the Botanical Gardens, as well as walking tours in addition to the Planetarium to visit outer space. S.I.S. students go camping, yearly, to get in touch with nature in a healthy and outdoor activity-laden setting with fishing, archery, swimming, boat rides, zip lining and soccer. All through the term we invite guests to give lessons in traditional Gumboots, Zumba and other dances.

Pet therapy has been a healthy lifestyle component in terms of emotional intelligence and is composed of learning to trust another living entity. Feeding and caring for the animals is emotionally stimulating and provides a sense of security in a healthy environment.

The pet therapy program has done so much to bridge the gap between all the Galileo students and teachers. As a result, the S.I.S. students are eager to communicate more often with the students from the other

educational programs—this has become a model of what true integration is all about and proves that pets really do bring out the good nature in everyone.

Even the teachers use the services of pet therapy when they are having a difficult day and need to take a break. They will come to Mr. Alain’s class and tell him, “I need to hug an animal” and they’ll take one of the dogs with them during lunch time, or walk the dog outside during their break, or bring the dog to class. (Martina Schiavone, *Precious Pets*, Vol.3. Issue7. March 25, 2016).

Brain-based learning

Healthy nutrition and lifestyle is the brain-based approach to learning employed at Galileo Adult Centre, as in all EMSB centres and schools. At Galileo, we are unique in that the centre is composed of special needs, academic and C.C.B.E. adult students in three separate but integrated programs. Our school promotes a healthy and safe environment that supports learning and growing together, while celebrating our differences. Furthermore, at Galileo the focus on balancing the body, mind and spirit is also promoted through activities that fuel

cognitive, emotional and social development through physical activity and proper nutrition. The natural flow of the programs fuels the symbiotic relationship bringing the centre’s population together and accepting all unique differences.

One brain-based approach to pedagogy, as defined by Jeffery A. Lackney and which is intricate at Galileo, comprises linking indoor and outdoor spaces through movement. “When engaging the motor cortex linked to the cerebral cortex, for oxygenation, it creates coherency and meaning for students.” Thus, learning is best accomplished when the learning activity is connected directly to physical activity. Upon entering Galileo centre, its hallways, stairwells, gymnasium and classrooms are a buzz with the hustle and bustle of activity-based programs in action, as students prepare for a new day of abundant learning, in a healthy environment. ○

Martina Schiavone is the Centre Principal at Galileo. Dina Vourdousis is Vice Principal. Lisa Trotto is a teacher at Galileo, who helped edit this article. Learn more about Galileo at www.gaec.ca.

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Building the Community, Building Healthy Schools

By Ryan Sawula and Paul Stewart, Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools



Jr. high students making lunch that will be delivered to a shelter for the homeless in their city.



Sr. high students at the school on a Saturday as they prepare to head out on a scavenger hunt that raised over \$35,000 to support service dogs for people in need.

As our society grows and adapts, and our world experiences increased globalization, the ability of schools to form communities that are responsive to all stakeholders becomes increasingly difficult. The question becomes how schools can adjust to reform under the influences of globalization. How can schools and school boards hope to honour the multiple narratives and merge conflicting viewpoints? How can schools increase student engagement and success as they transition to become contributing members of society?

It becomes clear that within our society there will be an increasing level of socio-cultural globalization with increased exposure to other worldviews and ideologies. Building community is extremely valuable in school improvement and reform so how can this be achieved with the far growing complexity of school demographics? The answer would seem to be an increase of school choice based on values and ethics that relate to the students and their family.

While much of the educational research around effective school communities does not specifically relate to Catholic schools, the language, theories and perceptions of the research on community are similar to church philosophies and teachings. Educational researchers have established the groundwork for a fundamental shift in the examination of educational communities. This shift aligns a way of thinking about communities that particularly suits the Catholic teachings.

Schools, with their community focus, help students to develop a healthy sense of belonging and value for community. This belief is a critical element of a functioning society and ensures that education serves its fundamental purpose of engendering functioning citizens with a healthy future in a democratic society. Schools that are able to form community are far more likely to connect with students and families, resulting in increased engagement and success so students graduate as healthy students with a healthy outlook on the future.

A specific example relates to an issue that is very current and is happening in all school jurisdictions—student sexual orientation and genital identity. If we simply view the policies

of a Catholic school division regarding same sex relationships through a purely secular lens, it can seem very intolerant in contrast to a public school. Yet, Catholic schools approach such controversial policy issues often from a lens that fully supports human dignity, respect and includes all members of the community.

For example, the recent *Guidelines for Best Practices: Creating Learning Environments That Respect Diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities, and Gender Expressions* set out by the province of Alberta is to establish a greater respect and more welcoming learning environment for students with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. The response of the Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta, in conjunction with the Alberta Catholic School Trustees Association, has been to establish a LIFE Framework that promotes inclusion for all students.

This framework describes a community approach to dealing with these controversial issues that Catholic schools must undertake. Catholic Schools are expected to use the LIFE Framework as a guideline for the creation and operation of inclusive student groups that are

open to the exploration of a variety of issues, including bullying, sexual harassment, sexual orientation, gender identity, discrimination, justice, and respectful relationships and language. This framework embraces the tenants of community and specifically emphasizes the philosophy and theology of communion while emphasizing inclusion, hospitality, respect and justice.

If schools are to form a community the members of it must share particular beliefs, a common way of life and personal interests. While communities can exist outside of faith, the traditional values and teachings of many faith-based systems relate to and help to develop a sense of community, especially in an educational organization. The vision and characteristics of a school community are particularly well suited to the doctrine within Catholic schools. Theological teachings continually accentuate community as a goal for Catholic schools.

Catholic schools are community institutions that also serve to promote societal values that are critical in a democratic and pluralistic country such as Canada. Research demonstrates that students who participate in a Catholic faith experience rooted

in community are more likely to engage in community service, are more politically and socially tolerant, and are likely to participate in the political process. Catholic schools adopt an interconnected and collaborative leadership model that seeks to engage all stakeholders and bring members of the community together, especially Church and school. If Catholic schools hope to reflect and emulate true faith communities, then acceptance, understanding and forgiveness must be central in the policy and procedures. It is clear that developing community in schools is a positive approach to effective governance.

The influence of Catholic values on preparing students as active community participants becomes evident in examining social justice projects undertaken by schools. Schools within Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools incorporate several social justice projects to build community and foster a sense of Catholic values while helping students develop a sense of self. These projects are not always related to Catholic charities but rather set out to help instill in students the value in making community a healthier place.

The key factor for these projects is that students understand making a difference

means more than simply donating or collecting, but fully embracing their calling to make their local community better. While donations may be involved, the students are taught to understand their role in serving others to better help ourselves. Examples of these projects include a high school that raised over \$100,000 in one weekend for suicide prevention based on a local need outlined by their community; a middle school where students give of their time during lunch to help the affiliated parish across the street prepare for each Sunday's Mass and clean after parish celebrations that take place during the week; and an elementary school that provided cards of welcome and solidarity to a mosque in their community that had been vandalized. These are examples of ways in which Catholic schools help foster healthy well-rounded students who contribute actively to make their community healthier. ○

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