

Promoting and Supporting Student Well-Being in Ontario

Fact Sheet for Parents

Spring 2017

Well-being is fundamental to overall student success. Students are better able to learn when they feel safe and welcome at school, and have the tools and the motivation to make healthy, active choices, whenever they can. Children and students who have strong relationships and a positive sense of self are most likely to reach their full potential and thrive.

These four areas of work help to promote student well-being, which is a key goal for the ministry:

- **Equity and Inclusive Education** involves identifying and removing discriminatory biases and barriers in the system to support student achievement and well-being by demonstrating respect for our diverse identities and strengths.
- **Safe and Accepting Schools** set out expectations for all school boards to provide safe, inclusive and accepting learning environments that support the achievement and well-being of every student. These expectations include addressing and preventing bullying and creating a positive school climate.
- **Healthy Schools** are key to establishing the learning conditions necessary to help students reach their full potential. With these conditions in place, students are more likely to adopt healthy, active habits and continue with them throughout their lives.
- The **Mental Health** strategy involves helping school boards develop and implement mental health and addiction strategies and working with staff to support positive mental health for all students, including supporting those with mental health needs or addictions.



What is Well-Being?

The nature of well-being is complex and means different things to different people. As a starting point, we can consider well-being to be a positive sense of self / spirit and belonging that we feel when our cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs are being met. Well-being in early years and school settings is about helping children and students become more resilient, so that they can make positive, healthy choices to support learning and achievement, now and in the future.

What Makes up Well-Being?

Well-being can be seen as having four interconnected elements that are critical to student development, with self / spirit at the centre. The concept of self / spirit has different meanings for different people. It can include cultural heritage, language, community, religion or a broader spirituality.

- **Physical** — the growth and development of the body, affected by physical activity, sleep patterns, healthy eating and healthy life choices.
- **Cognitive** — the development of abilities and skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and the ability to be flexible and innovative.
- **Emotional** — the ability to learn about and experience emotions, and understand how to recognize, manage, and cope with them. It includes developing a sense of empathy, confidence, purpose and resilience.
- **Social** — the development of self-awareness, including the sense of belonging, collaboration, relationships with others, and communication skills.



Promoting student well-being is about fostering learning environments that encompass all of these four elements (cognitive, emotional, social, physical), including the self / spirit. Educators and staff who are motivated and enthusiastic about their work are an essential part of promoting student well-being and achievement.

Next Steps

In the fall/winter of 2016-17, we worked with community and education partners, such as school boards, students and parents to better understand what student well-being looks like, what is needed to support it and how we can understand our impact. We will continue to work together as we analyze the feedback we received and determine the next steps for supporting student well-being.

In addition to our work with students in elementary and secondary schools, in the future we also plan to expand our focus to include children in the early years system, as well as educators and all staff.

Our goal is that all children, students and staff will feel supported in the areas of cognitive, emotional, social and physical well-being which includes recognizing their sense of spirit. We know that children and students will be more successful when they have a positive sense of self, spirit and belonging, and the skills to make positive choices.

Ontario is committed to helping students build the knowledge and skills associated with positive well-being, so they can become confident, capable and caring citizens.

Promoting well-being is one of the ministry's four goals outlined in *Achieving Excellence, Ontario's Renewed Vision for Education*. Learn more at ontario.ca/studentwellbeing