



Stories of Change: Case Studies on Prioritization of Wellness in K-12 Education

Why Stories on Prioritizing Wellness in K-12 Education?

Focusing on wellness in K-12 education is proven to support positive mental health, improve academic performance and contribute to favourable life outcomes for students and staff.

Increasingly, jurisdictions across Canada, and their partners, are looking for insights on how to embed this focus across their school communities. To meet this need, this project aims to surface and share diverse stories on the 'how and why' of integrating wellness as a priority in Canadian school jurisdictions.

Who is Involved

The McConnell Foundation's WellAhead initiative aims to help integrate social and emotional wellbeing into K-12 education. In an effort to mobilize this knowledge to decision-makers in K-12 education within and across provinces/territories, WellAhead has partnered with researchers at the University of Alberta and University of British Columbia-Okanagan to conduct case studies in two provinces, Alberta and British Columbia, with deep dives into 3-4 school jurisdictions within each province.

Project Focus

Using data at provincial and school jurisdictional levels, the project aims to move beyond the "what" (what jurisdictions have implemented) to an exploration of the "how and why" - the story behind a shift towards wellness becoming a key priority (e.g., key enablers for change, challenges and successes, critical partners). This project is focused on highlighting key learnings about the prioritization of wellness across school communities, and mobilizing this knowledge to support others striving towards this goal. Using an exploratory multiple case study approach, with grounding in principals of participatory research, we aim to answer the following research question:

How and why are school authorities in Alberta and British Columbia able to shift their school community culture to one that prioritizes wellness?



Aim of School Authority Case Studies

To help understand the current and historical context of school authority wellness in Alberta and British Columbia, the research team will review and gather data at the provincial level (e.g. policy and program documents, surveys, literature, interviews). In order to understand and share in-depth stories of change at the school authority level, 3-4 school jurisdictions will be highlighted through a range of data generation strategies (e.g., review of local documents, review of local data, interviews and focus groups).

The research team will identify case jurisdictions based on input from key partners engaged as members of an integrated knowledge translation (iKT) advisory group. Considerations to achieve diversity in cases are as follows:

- Partner-informed (knowledge of recent and past embedding of wellness among jurisdictions; knowledge of participants' willingness to speak openly)
- Feasibility (timely access to school authorities, and ability to conduct research)
- Data-informed (drawing on existing data sources that provide indicators of wellness prioritization)
- Geographic diversity (e.g., metro, urban, 'rurban', rural, remote settings)
- Size of jurisdiction (number of students/staff/schools; geographic spread)
- Population diversity (socio-cultural make-up; diverse populations and voices)
- Outside supports (receipt of external resources for school authority wellness)

Knowledge Mobilization

To ensure that case study learnings are able to inform and strengthen the practice of decision-makers in K-12 education across Canada, this project will utilize an iKT approach. Knowledge users will be consulted throughout the project, and learnings will be shared at all stages. Key stakeholders will provide input on format and mechanisms for sharing to ensure greatest impact, and engaged as knowledge mobilizers themselves, thereby leveraging existing networks. Knowledge products and strategies will be tailored to diverse audiences and will include: videography, infographics, research briefs, backgrounders, reports, and targeted social-media.

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