

PROMOTING CONNECTEDNESS



A school-based toolkit

SUPPORTING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR A HEALTHY SCHOOL



ML
BUREAU DE SANTÉ DE
MIDDLESEX-LONDON
HEALTH UNIT

PROMOTING **CONNECTEDNESS**

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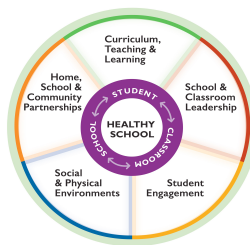
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Original Source: Ministry of Education, Foundations for a Healthy School:
A Companion Resource to the K-12 School Effectiveness Framework
(<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthyschools/resourceF4HS.pdf>)



Strategies to Increase Connectedness: Secondary School Toolkit

The purpose of this resource is to provide educators with strategies to increase connectedness and student sense of belonging to their school. Strategies target multiple levels of influence including attitudes and knowledge as well as the social and physical environments.

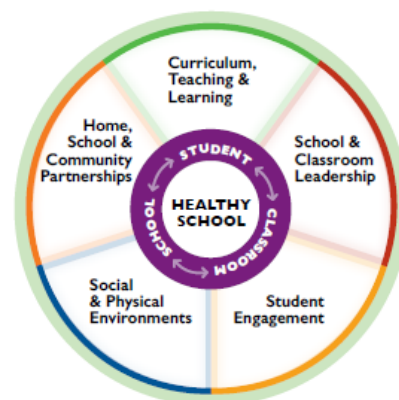
Highlights of the Toolkit:

- Curriculum related activities that can be used in the classroom and school to enhance student sense of belonging and connectedness.
- Activities to support school and classroom leadership and student engagement.
- School level initiatives to create supportive environments.
- Announcements and health walls.

How was this resource developed?

This toolkit was designed to support *The Foundations for a Healthy School* resource, which recommends that health promotion activities in schools' target each of the components of the framework which include:

- Curriculum teaching and learning
- School and classroom leadership
- Student engagement
- Social and physical environment
- Home, school and community partnerships



For more information about the Foundations for a Healthy School visit
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthyschools/foundations.html>

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The evidence clearly demonstrates that for an initiative in the school setting to be impactful, it has to be multicomponent and delivered over an extended period of time versus single component or "one off" programming. Therefore, to effectively address connectedness, the best action plan is to implement various activities from each component of the Foundations for a Healthy School Framework.

Why focus on school connectedness?

In Canada, approximately 14 to 25% of children and youth experience mental health concerns (Waddell, Shepherd, Chen & Boyle, 2013). According to the 2015 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey, an estimated 16.5% of students in grades 7 to 12 reported fair or poor mental health, a significant increase from 11.4 % in 2007 and a non-significant increase from 15% in 2013 (Boak, Hamilton, Adlaf, Henderson, & Mann, 2016). Further, females were more likely to report fair or poor mental health compared to males (23.2 % compared to 10.3% respectively). The likelihood of reporting poor mental health was found to increase significantly with grade, ranging from 7.7% among grade 7 students to approximately 18.9% in grade 12 (Boak et al., 2016).

Mental health concerns during childhood and adolescence are associated with poor academic achievement, substance misuse, an increased risk for poverty, and other adverse outcomes throughout the lifespan (Barry, Clarke, Jenkins & Patel, 2013). According to the 2002 Mental Health and Well-being Canadian Community Health Survey, almost 70% of young adults aged 15–24 years with mood or anxiety disorders reported that their symptoms had started before the age of 15 (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006). During childhood and adolescence, there is an opportunity to lay the foundation for positive mental health and to reduce the risks for mental health concerns later in life (Barry et al., 2013; Weare & Nind, 2011).

Literature has indicated that enhancing protective factors and reducing risk factors can help children and adolescents avoid multiple behaviors that place them at risk for adverse health and educational outcomes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017). Protective factors are defined as “individual or environmental characteristics, conditions or behaviours that reduce the effects of stressful life events to promote social and emotional skills and reduce risks” (Centers for Disease and Control Prevention, 2017). Some protective factors include positive school climate, a sense of belonging, and recognition of achievement (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, University of Toronto and Toronto Public Health, 2014). Additionally, there is an association between school connectedness and improved emotional health, increased academic achievement, and reduced risk-taking behaviours (Chapman, Buckley, Sheehan & Shochet, 2013).

The Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium of School Health defines school connectedness as “the extent to which students perceive that they are accepted, respected, included and supported by others in the educational environment” (Morrison & Peterson, 2013). According to the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, “school connectedness is the belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health conducted in the United States, found that students’ sense of school connectedness was one of the strongest protective factors of youth high-risk behaviors, such as substance use, violence, and suicidality (Resnick, Bearman, Blum, Bauman, Harris, Jones, Tabor, Beuhring, Sieving, Shew, Ireland, Bearinger, and Udry, 1997 and, McNeely, Nonnemaker & Blum, 2002). School connectedness has also been shown to be a protective factor for adolescent sexual and reproductive health (Markham, Lormand, Gloppen, Peskin, Flores, Low, & House, 2010). Since school connectedness has been shown in the research literature to be a predictor for mental health (Kidger, Araya, Donovan & Gunnell, 2012), enhancing the implementation of activities to increase school connectedness and sense of belonging can be part of an overall strategy at schools to improve the positive mental health for children and youth.

Why schools should play a role?

Schools have been identified as an ideal setting to work with children and youth because of the universal enrollment of children in school and the consistent access to this target population. However, a more compelling reason aligns with *Ontario's Well-being Strategy for Education*. It is undisputed that healthy students are better prepared to learn. Studies demonstrate that promoting student health and well-being can help schools meet their educational goals, such as reduced absenteeism, fewer behavioural problems, and higher school-wide test scores and grades (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014).

A healthy school not only provides educational opportunities but creates a supportive environment for health and well-being. The *Foundations for a Healthy School* is an Ontario Ministry of Education resource that emphasizes the importance of taking a comprehensive approach to address health-related topics that contribute to well-being. This approach demonstrates that multiple levels of influence determine individual behaviour and recognize that no single factor can adequately account for why children and youth engage in health risk or health promotion behaviours.

Why is student engagement important?

Students are arguably the most important stakeholders in the education system and thus student engagement should be at the heart of a healthy school. *The Foundations for a Healthy School* defines student engagement as “*the extent to which students identify with and value their learning; feel a sense of belonging at school; and are informed about, engaged with and empowered to participate in and lead academic and non-academic activities*”. While student engagement is one of the five components of a healthy school, student engagement is best achieved when it is integrated into all of the Foundation's components. When students are given the opportunity to be active contributors to their learning and their learning environments, they derive a sense of belonging and connectedness to the school community, and gain feelings of competence and satisfaction. The role of the adult is to empower students; give them the skills and confidence to contribute equally to decisions, lead meetings, organize and implement activities. Refer to the ‘Student Engagement Activities’ for ways to increase school connectedness in your school.

What is Public Health's Commitment to Schools?

The goal of Middlesex-London Health Unit's (MLHU) Child and Youth Program Team is to improve the health of children and youth, and contribute to a positive, healthy school climate. Specifically, our team works with school boards and/or staff of elementary and secondary schools, using a comprehensive health promotion approach, to influence the development and implementation of healthy policies, and the creation or enhancement of supportive environments to address key topics. Each school in London and Middlesex County is assigned a Public Health Nurse (PHN). For a list of PHNs assigned to schools, visit <https://www.healthunit.com/public-health-at-your-school>. Contact your PHN to determine how they can support this resource and collaborate with your school to improve the health of youth.

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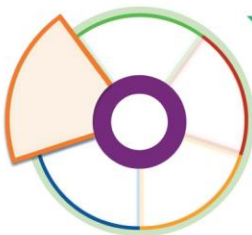
Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

- Announce It!
- Self-Care Challenge
- Transitions



School and Classroom Leadership

- Brainstorming
- Mind Mania Mural



Home, School and Community Partnerships

- After School and/or Evening Events
- Mental Health Symposium
- Real Acts of Caring



Social and Physical Environments

- Chill Room
- Connecting Through Art
- Random Acts of Kindness
- Therapy Dogs
- Welcoming Environments and Greeting Students



Student Engagement

- “How Do You Chill?” Board
- Student Driven Committees

RELATED FOUNDATIONS

- Student Engagement
- Social & Physical Environments

RESOURCES:

- [Announce It!](#)
- Example Announcements and Tweets
- Follow @MLTeens on [Twitter](#) & [Instagram](#)

Announce It!

ACTIVITY GOAL: To increase awareness and knowledge about connectedness and mental well-being.

ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- Use communication strategies such as daily announcements, health walls, and social media to raise awareness about connectedness.
- Visit [Announce It!](#) on the website for the Middlesex-London Health Unit. This will provide you with access to examples of announcements, health walls and social media messages that you can use for your school.
- These communication strategies should be a part of a comprehensive healthy school approach.
- For a more youth-friendly approach, engage students from committees or a class to assist with communication strategies.
- Retweet @MLTeens twitter and Instagram health-related messages.



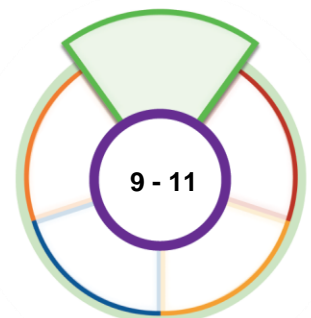
ML Teens @MLTeens · Sep 12

Tired of eating the same #lunch every day? Try something new! Check out @eatrightontario for #HealthyLunchIdeas bit.ly/2jkoOG4 ^AD



Curriculum Connections

- Grade 9 C2.2 Relationships – skills and strategies
- Grade 10 C1.1 Mental Health – factors that enhance
C3.5 Relationships – effects on self and others
- Grade 11 C3.4 Skills for stressful situations
C3.5 Mental illness – reducing stigma



Example Announcements for Promoting Connectedness

Feeling stressed about school assignments? Try using a planner to organize your time & don't be afraid to connect with your teachers for help when you need it!

Hey (school mascot). Do you want to get more connected to (school name)? Try joining a new club or team. Introduce yourself to someone new at lunch!

Hey (school mascot)! Have you been feeling disconnected lately? Try talking to your parents! Spending time with family and friends can help to improve mood and keep you mentally well!

Disconnect from the Tech! Stay mentally well by connecting with friends in person. This will improve your mood & make you feel more connected!

Good morning (school name). Feeling slow & sluggish this morning? Try doing some exercise today to get your heart pumping and improve your mood! Go for a walk with friends, or check out the weight room after school! (add details about times when its open)

Want to get a better night's sleep? Disconnect from your phone & avoid screen time before going to bed. Practice yoga or meditation before bed to help your body to relax and prepare you for sleep. Getting 9 to 10 hours at night will make you feel more rested and improve your mental health!

Hey (school mascot)! Did you know that being connected to your family, friends & school helps you feel more mentally well? So, take some time tonight to see your friends & family! Try getting involved in school activities and improve your mental health!

When studying avoid distractions! Put your phone away & create a study plan. Try studying with friends to help keep each other on track and quiz each other on what you have learned!

From your Public Health Staff

Example Tweets

Connect with your #teacher and #GuidanceCounsellor. They will give you the support you need!

Joining the healthy school committee is a great way to get connected and make a difference #healthyschools

Help others in your community! You can feel more connected & improve your self-esteem. #bekindtooneanother

Texting is great but spending time with others is more fun #realfacetime

Try moving more to improve your mental health! Take a walk with a friend!
@inmotion4Life

Spending time outside allows your mind to rest. Take time to connect with yourself!
Try practicing #Yoga #MeTime

Increase face to face time with family & friends to improve your mental well-being
#connect

#Bekind to others. Remember to be kind to yourself too #randomactsofkindness

From your Public Health Staff

RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Student Engagement
- Social & Physical Environments

RESOURCES:

- Self-Care Calendar
- Pledge Sheets
- Posters to advertise event
- Prizes for participation

Self-Care Challenge

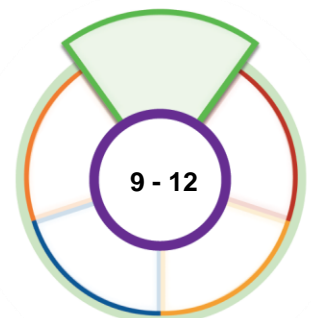
ACTIVITY GOAL: To challenge students to take care of themselves and connect with others.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. The Self-Care Challenge is a week-long activity. Each day of the week has a theme (e.g., Mental Health Monday, Treat Yourself Tuesday, Wellness Wednesday, Thoughtful Thursday and Feel-Good Friday).
2. This activity may be helpful during stressful times of the school year such as during exams.
3. Involve student led groups such as healthy school committee or leadership classes to organize and create their own self-care challenge.
4. The challenge can be advertised throughout the school on TV monitors, announcements, posters and the school Facebook page.
5. Distribute Self-Care Challenge calendars. Encourage students to complete the self-care activities each day of the week and check off the activities that they complete.
6. At the end of the challenge, celebrate achievements and give prizes to students who participated.

Curriculum Connection

- Grade 9 C2.2 Relationships – skills and strategies
- Grade 10 C1.1 Mental Health – factors that enhance
C3.5 Relationships – effects on self and others
- Grade 11 A1.3 Personal health practices influence health
B1.2 Factors to contribute to wellness and healthy living
B2.3 Implement a personal plan for healthy living
C3.5 Mental illness – skills for stressful situations
- Grade 12 B2 Ability to plan and coordinate an event related to healthy, active living
C2.1 Ability to help others develop and implement a personal healthy active living plan



Self-Care Challenge Chart

Mental Health Monday	Treat Yourself Tuesday	Wellness Wednesday	Thoughtful Thursday	Feel-Good Friday
Hug a friend	Open a door or give a high five to friends at school	Sit down and talk to your parents about school today	Ask someone how they are doing	Smile & connect
Go for a walk with a friend	Dance to your favourite song	Do 20 squats/ lunges	Practice your balance	Take the stairs today
Take time to relax today... read a book or listen to music	Write a positive affirmation on a post it-somewhere you can see it each day	Sleep enough for you	Give yourself time to be alone & unwind	Compliment yourself while looking in the mirror
Carry a reusable water bottle and stay hydrated!	Eat 7 servings of vegetables or fruit today	Swap coffee or pop for herbal tea or water	Eat a colourful snack between meals	Pack a balanced lunch today
Make your own!	Make your own!	Make your own!	Make your own!	Make your own



Social



Getting Active



Mindfulness



Nutrition

Adapted with permission from Jack.org/ Brecksia chapter (Jack.org is a national network of young leaders transforming the way Canadians think about mental health).

Self-Care Pledge

This week I will: _____

Self-Care Pledge

This week I will: _____

Self-Care Pledge

This week I will: _____

Self-Care Pledge

This week I will: _____

RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Social & Physical Environments
- Home, School & Community Partnerships

RESOURCES:

- [Public Health Nurse](#)
- Guest speakers

Transitions

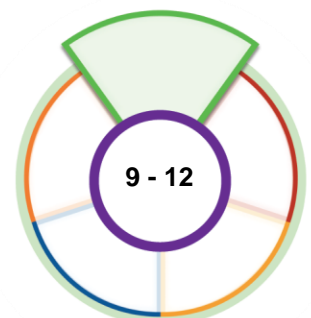
ACTIVITY GOAL: To support Grade 9 students in adapting to high school and help prepare Grade 12 students for post-secondary life.

ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- Provide students with an opportunity to visit the high school before starting Grade 9. Example programs include High School Here I Come and Orientation evenings. Invite your school's Public Health Nurse to provide information on the nurse's role in the school and community.
- Hold a session for Grade 9 and new students at the beginning of the school year. Have the school Social Worker, Guidance Counsellor, Public Health Nurse, and Community Safety Officer provide students with information about their roles in the school and community.
- Organize a session for Grade 12 students to help prepare them for post secondary life. Presentations can include guest speakers, such as, current college/university students (formally from your school), College/University Professors, other post secondary support services and/or a financial advisor. Additional topic areas may include study skills, food preparation skills and other life skills.

Curriculum Connections

- Grade 9 C2.2 Relationships - skills and strategies
C3.2 Mental Health Concerns – warning signs and responses
- Grade 10 C1.1 Mental Health – factors that enhance
- Grade 11 C3.4 Skills for dealing with stressful situations
- Grade 12 C2.4 Identifying personal aptitudes and interests, developing life plans
C2.5 Maintaining health and wellbeing when independent



RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Social & Physical Environments
- Student Engagement

RESOURCES:

- Flip chart/white board/graffiti wall
- Markers
- [The Centre of Teaching and Learning](#) website
- [SpeakUp Project Proposal Toolkit for Students](#) website

Brainstorming

ACTIVITY GOAL: To promote student voice and allow for active participation by students through brainstorming.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

Brainstorming is a large or small group activity that encourages students to focus on a topic (i.e., belonging or welcoming environment) and contribute to the free flow of ideas.

Steps for Brainstorming:

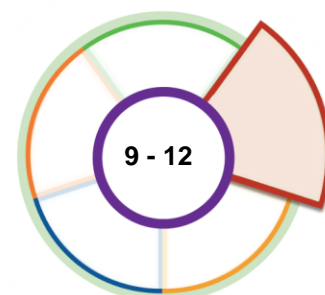
1. The students will select a leader, a recorder and a time keeper.
2. Set up rules for the session (i.e. allow everyone to contribute, no discussion of ideas until all contributions have been made etc.)
3. Begin the session by writing down the question/topic on flip chart/white board/graffiti wall, making it visible to everyone.
4. Get everyone's input and write them on the board.
5. Group ideas by common themes.
6. Decide on a priority.
7. Implement an action plan.

For more information on Brainstorming, visit:

- The Centre of Teaching and Learning
<http://humber.ca/centreforteachingandlearning/instructional-strategies/teaching-methods/classroom-strategies-designing-instruction/brainstorming/brainstorming.html>
- SpeakUp Project Proposal Toolkit for Students
http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/students/speakup/speakup_toolkit.pdf

Curriculum Connections

- Grade 9 C2.2 Relationships – skills and strategies
- Grade 10 C1.1 Mental Health – factors that enhance
- Grade 11 C3.4 Skills for dealing with stressful situations
C3.5 Mental illness – reducing stigma
- Grade 12 C1.3 Skills and strategies for evolving relationships



RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Social and Physical Environments
- Student Engagement

RESOURCES:

- Chart Paper
- Markers
- 10-15 minutes of class time

Mind Mania Mural

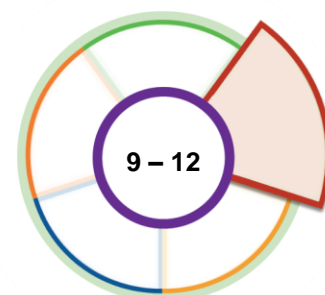
ACTIVITY GOAL: To provide opportunities for the whole school community to brainstorm ideas for activities that can increase student connectedness with peers and staff.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Create a box titled “Brain Buster Box” and place it in a common area (e.g., main office).
2. Encourage students, staff, parents and administration to brainstorm activities/programs at school to increase connectedness. Have participants write their ideas on sticky notes.
3. Use announcements and promotions to encourage students to place these ideas into the “Brain Buster Box”.
4. After a selected amount of time, student volunteers from Student Council or the Healthy School Committee review all the submissions.
5. Students can decide on a process for identifying ideas and prioritizing potential school activities based on all the ideas submitted.
6. Create a list of activities chosen from all the submissions to determine final activities to implement.
7. Post a large piece of mural paper in the school for a “Mind Mania Mural”. Students can use artwork, drawings and written words to depict the list of chosen ideas/activities to be implemented.

Curriculum Connections

- Grade 9 C2.2 Relationships – skills and strategies
- Grade 10 C1.1 Mental Health – factors that enhance
- Grade 11 C3.4 Skills for dealing with stressful situations
- C3.5 Mental illness – reducing stigma
- Grade 12 B2 Ability to plan and coordinate an event related to healthy, active living



RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Social & Physical Environments

RESOURCES:

- Poster board
- Markers/pens
- Sticky notes
- Prizes for participation

How Do You Chill? Poster Board

ACTIVITY GOAL: To have students identify ways they can de-stress or 'chill out' and share these ideas with others.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Students from a school committee (e.g., Healthy Schools/Mental Health) can encourage their peers to write down ideas about how they 'chill' on the sticky notes and place them on a poster.
2. Students can then take this opportunity to engage their peers with other examples of how they can positively cope with stress.
3. After completion, the poster can be placed in a busy area of the school such as the library for students to see.
4. Depending on budget, students who participate can submit their name to win a prize. All ideas written for the 'Chill Board' need to be reviewed/monitored for appropriateness before posting.
5. This activity can be used in combination with other mental health activities such as therapy dogs visits.



Curriculum Connections:

- Grade 9 C2.2 Relationships – skills and strategies
- Grade 10 C1.1 Mental Health – factors that enhance
- Grade 11 C3.4 Skills for dealing with stressful situations
- Grade 12 C1.3 Skills and strategies for evolving relationships



RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- School & Classroom Leadership
- Home, School & Community Partnerships

RESOURCES:

Student Driven Committees

ACTIVITY GOAL: To provide an opportunity for students to engage in leadership roles in promoting connectedness.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

Student driven committees such as Healthy Schools, Safe Schools, Mental Health or Wellness committees can plan and implement activities targeting various health promoting behaviours.

1. Promote the establishment of a school committee involving students, school administration, teachers, public health nurse, and/or parent representatives (e.g., Wellness committee, Safe School committee, Healthy School committee, Mental Wellness committee).
2. Recruit students. Ask students who do not usually volunteer for school committees.
3. Define the purpose of the committee while emphasizing the importance of student voice and development of leadership skills as an integral part of the success of the committee.
4. Encourage students to plan activities that align with their identified goal. For example, if the goal is to improve school connectedness, all of the activities planned during the school year should target this and build on each other. Refer to the activities in this resource for ideas.
5. In addition to impacting the health goal identified, a key outcome of this committee is to build leadership skills among students. Make student voice integral to the success of the committee.
6. Recognize student contributions as school leaders and celebrate accomplishments.

Curriculum Connections:

- Grade 9: C2.2 Relationships – skills and strategies
- Grade 10: C1.1 Mental health – factors that enhance
- Grade 11: C3.4 Skills for dealing with stressful situations
- Grade 12: C1.3 Skills and strategies for evolving relationships
C2.5 Maintaining health and well-being when independent



RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Student Engagement

RESOURCES:

- Staff to monitor the room
- Healthy snacks
- Low lighting
- Comfortable furniture
- Calm Music
- Mental Health information (e.g., [Stress Information](#))
- Colouring pages
- Markers/pencil crayons

Chill Room

ACTIVITY GOAL: To create a relaxing environment where students have the opportunity relax, or connect with a peer or staff, in a safe and non-judgmental space.

ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- The Chill Room can be located in a variety of spaces within your school such as within a resource room, or a corner within the library.
- Your Chill Room can be open all day, during the lunch hour, or just during certain periods throughout the day. The Chill Room can be a year-long activity that runs every day, once a week, or a few key times throughout the year (possibly near exam periods).



- The Chill Room should be a calm space where students can go to relax & de-stress. Low lighting and calm music are recommended. You may also choose to provide students with a healthy snack option in the room.

- Within the Chill Room there should always be a staff member present to monitor students. The room should have an information/resource space with handouts/brochures related to mental health supports.

Curriculum Connections:

- Grade 9: C3.2 Mental health concerns – warning signs and responses
- Grade 10: C1.1 Mental health – factors that enhance
- Grade 11: C3.4 Skills for dealing with stressful situations
- Grade 12: C2.5 Maintaining health and wellbeing when independent



RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- School & Classroom Leadership
- Student Engagement

RESOURCES:

- Banner paper
- Markers/Paint

Connecting Through Art

ACTIVITY GOAL: To create a large art piece that every student contributes to, so that students feel more connected to each other and the school environment.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

- Engage your school's Healthy School Committee or a leadership group to initiate the project and assist with implementation.
- It is important that all students have the opportunity to contribute something to the overall art project. Each student contributes and all of the art work is connected, symbolizing that each student is a part of the whole school community.

Examples:

Giant Mandala

1. Have your school's Healthy School Committee or art class draw the outline of a Mandala on large banner.
2. Post it on a wall in the hallway or on a large table.
3. Invite all students to participate in colouring a portion of the art work.
4. In addition to stress reduction, colouring this giant art work can also help to increase connectedness as many students are coming together to contribute to a larger school wide activity.

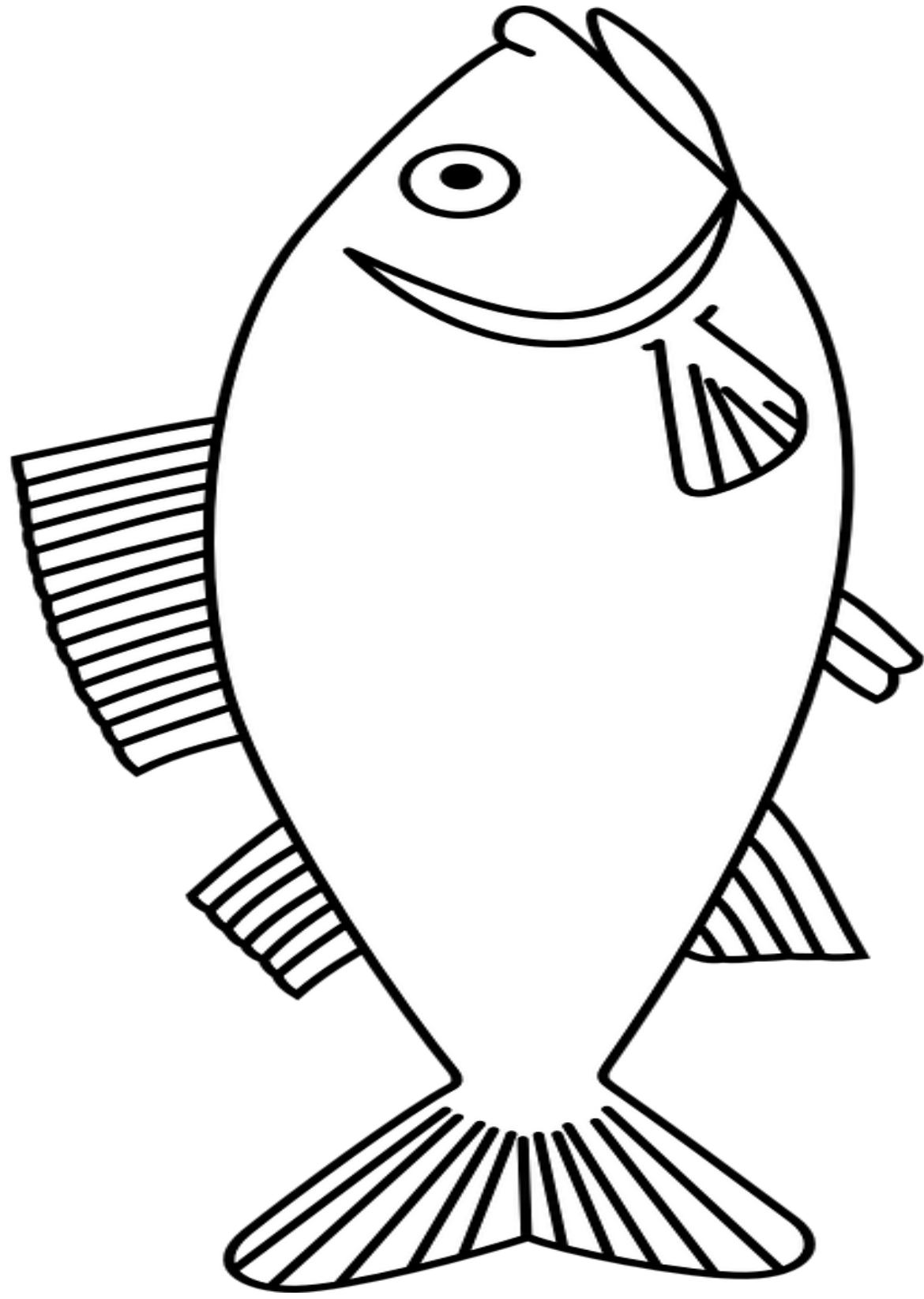
School of Fish

1. Cut out enough fish to give one to each student.
2. Have students write their name or initials on the fish and colour/design them to represent themselves.
3. Collect all of the fish and display them together in the hallway. This is meant to represent all the individual students coming together to create the larger "school of fish" and promote feelings of connectedness between the students and the school.

Curriculum Connections:

- Grade 9: C2.2 Relationships – skills and strategies
- Grade 10: C1.1 Mental health – factors that enhance
- Grade 11: C3.5 Mental illness – reducing stigma
- Grade 12: C1.3 Skills and strategies for evolving relationships





RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Student Engagement

RESOURCES:

- Post-It Notes
- Spinning Wheel
- Plink-O
- RAK Cards
- [Random Acts of Kindness Ideas](#)

Random Acts of Kindness (RAK)

ACTIVITY GOAL: To promote a positive caring environment within the school community by encouraging students to complete acts of kindness for one another.

ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- Engage a group of students within your school, such as the Healthy School Committee or a leadership class, to plan a RAK event!
- Allow the student leaders to decide what type of Random Acts of Kindness students will do within your school.
- Some examples of activities include:
 1. Positive Message Sticky Notes
 - Students write positive messages or compliments on sticky notes and leave them on lockers around the school
 2. Third Party Compliments
 - Encourage students to write a compliment about someone else in the school anonymously. Have a different student(s) hand out these compliments to the recipients!
 - Watch Carroll High School's students read their Third Party Compliments! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-2dGZvN608>
 3. RAK Plink-O or Spinning Wheel Game
 - Use a game such as Plink-O or a Spinning Wheel to engage students.
 - Students who participate in the game will receive a RAK Card. RAK cards contain different Random Acts of Kindness for them to do, then pass on to someone else (i.e., hold a door open for someone, or give someone a compliment). Keep these going all day long!

For more ideas, visit <https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/kindness-ideas>

Curriculum Connections:

- Grade 9: C2.2 Relationships - skills and strategies
- Grade 10: C1.1 Mental Health - factors that enhance
- Grade 11: C3.4 Skills for dealing with stressful situations
- Grade 12: C2.5 Maintaining health and wellbeing when independent



RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Curriculum Teaching and Learning
- Student Engagement

RESOURCES:

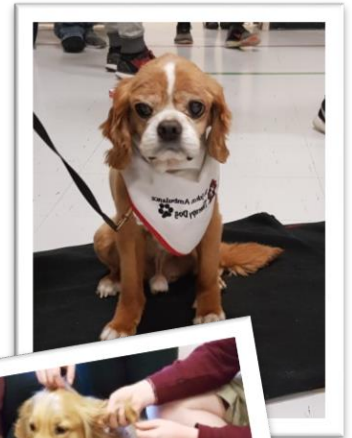
- [St. John's Ambulance](#)
- How do you Chill?
Poster Board Activity
from this toolkit

Therapy Dogs

ACTIVITY GOAL: To reduce stress by connecting with therapy dogs and other peers who are participating in the event.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Use your school's Healthy School or Mental Health committee to organize this event. Many schools choose to have this event near exam time to promote positive coping skills.
2. Book the therapy dogs to come to your school by contacting St. John's Ambulance directly or talk to your Public Health Nurse for assistance in booking.
3. Most schools choose to have the therapy dogs visit over the lunch hour in the gym or library.
4. Therapy dog visits present an excellent opportunity to provide additional information and increase awareness about mental wellness.
 - Use the "How do you Chill? Board" and ask students to contribute by adding their ideas on how they reduce their stress
 - Have a display with information on stress and mental wellbeing
 - Provide students who attend with a Stress Brochure or a copy of the "Things I can Learn from a Dog" handout (Bounce Back Resource)
5. Advertise the event through posters and announcements!



Curriculum Connections:

- Grade 9: C2.2 Relationships – skills and strategies
- Grade 10: C1.1 Mental health – factors that enhance
- Grade 11: C3.4 Skills for dealing with stressful situations
- Grade 12: C2.5 Maintaining health and well-being when independent



Unleash Your Stress



*Therapy Dogs are in the
(insert location)
on (insert date)*

Example Announcements:

- 1) Good morning (insert name of school's mascot)! Have you been feeling stressed lately? Did you know that animal therapy can help! The St. Johns Ambulance Therapy Dogs will be visiting (insert date/time) so come out to the (insert location) and de-stress with some animal therapy!

- 2) When was the last time you paid attention to your mental health? To achieve an overall healthy body, we all need to strive for both physical and mental wellness. What better way to feel happiness and joy, then by being around animals. Animal therapy has been shown to reduce stress levels, lower blood pressure, comfort the hopeless and distract those in pain. Come to (insert location) at (insert time) to spend some time with loveable furry friends!

(Source: Bounce Back resource)

RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Student Engagement

RESOURCES:

- Sticky notes
- Markers
- Positive message posters

Welcoming Environments and Greeting Students

ACTIVITY GOAL: To create an inviting school space where students, staff and parents feel connected and welcomed.

ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- When students first walk into the school, the environment should feel inviting. Ways to create this are:
 - Display student art work or create a welcome sign that is placed in the front entry way.
 - Door Greeter: A teacher, VP or Principal can stand at the door to greet students as they enter the school. Depending on school size, the greeter can also get to know the student's names which can help to enhance the students sense of connectedness to the school.
 - Positive message posters
 - Sticky notes on lockers or bathroom mirrors: positive messages can be written on post-it notes by a Healthy School Committee or leadership group and left on lockers/mirrors.



Curriculum Connections

- Grade 9: C2.2 Relationships – skills and strategies
- Grade 10: C1.1 Mental Health – factors that enhance
- Grade 12: C1.3 Skills and strategies for evolving relationships
C2.5 Maintaining health and well-being when independent



*Dear you,
You are*

Amazing!

**please take one
& then feel free to pass it on...**

you are beautiful	you are worth it	you can do it	you are loved	you are talented	your smile is beautiful	you are appreciated	you can make it happen	you are inspiring
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Help Everyone at Our School Feel Welcome!

Give a compliment or do something nice

Simple ideas:

- **HOLD THE DOOR**
- **SAY HELLO**
- **SMILE**
- **OFFER TO HELP**
- **BE POLITE**
- **GREET OTHERS WITH THEIR NAME**
- **PAY SOMEONE A COMPLIMENT**



Take One, Pass it Along!

Thank You for being Kind	You are a great friend	Thank You for being Kind	You are Awesome	Welcome to our school	You are Awesome	Thank You for being Kind	You are a great friend	You are amazing	Welcome to our school	You are a great friend
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RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Curriculum Teaching & Learning
- Social & Physical Environments
- Student Engagement

RESOURCES:

- Volunteers
- Food
- Guest Speakers
- Student consent forms.

After School and/or Evening Events

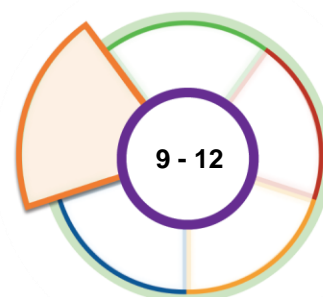
ACTIVITY GOAL: To encourage connectedness among students.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. The event may be held at the school or a community site.
2. Consider what student driven committee may be interested in being involved in planning an after school or evening event.
3. Event activities may include: guest speakers, physical activities, mental wellness activities, music/talent show, dinner/snacks, displays, group photos/photo booth, whole group creative activity such as making a mural or signing a banner.
4. Plan the theme, location, guest speakers, budget, food, activities and incentives.
5. This event can be implemented at the beginning of the year as a 'kickoff' for other complementary events.
6. If there is some funding available, incorporate a 'takeaway item' such as a t-shirt, water bottle or other incentive for students to remember the event and overall message or theme.

Curriculum Connections:

- Grade 9: C2.2 Relationships – skills and strategies
- Grade 10: C1.1 Mental health – factors that enhance
- Grade 11: C3.4 Skills for dealing with stressful situations
- Grade 12: C1.3 Skills and strategies for evolving relationships
C2.5 Maintaining health and well-being when independent



RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- Curriculum Teaching & Learning
- Student Engagement

RESOURCES:

- Volunteers
- Guest speakers

Mental Health Symposium

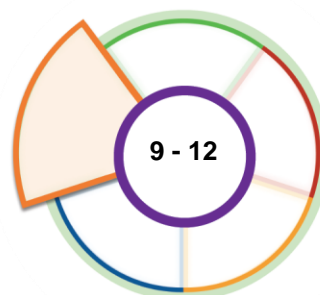
ACTIVITY GOAL: To increase student awareness about a specific mental health topic or theme through a formal event. A parental component may also be included.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

1. A half, full day or evening symposium on the topic of mental health with a variety of activities, displays and skill-building opportunities.
2. Educational sessions may include community or in-school guest speakers.
3. Encourage a student led group such as a healthy school, mental wellness committee or leadership class to participate in organizing the symposium.
4. Target population may also be parents from the school community.
5. Event may be held at the school or a community site.

Curriculum Connections:

- Grade 9 C2.2 Relationships - skills and strategies
- Grade 10 C1.1 Mental Health – factors that enhance
- Grade 11 C3.4 Skills for dealing with stressful situations
C3.5 Mental Illness – reducing stigma
- Grade 12: C1.3 Skills and strategies for evolving relationships
C2.5 Maintaining health and well-being when independent



RELATED FOUNDATIONS:

- School and Classroom Leadership
- Social and Physical Environments
- Student Engagement

RESOURCES:

- Ideas and examples can be viewed at [Real Acts of Caring](#)
- Brainstorming activities from this Connectedness Toolkit

Real Acts of Caring (RAC)

ACTIVITY GOAL: To increase mental well-being by the implementation of intentional initiatives with *Real Acts of Caring* which engage students, staff and/or families to provide intentional caring activities for others at school or within the community.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Real Acts of Caring* can be implemented as a classroom activity, or as school-wide initiative.
- Use the brainstorming activities described in this toolkit as a way to create a list of ideas for acts of caring.
- Plan RAC activities throughout the school year as a part of a school promotion of well-being. Document/maintain photographs and stories about the accomplishments and the 'sense of caring' that is created by the various activities. Share stories and images with the community and families as a part of newsletters or other communication channels.

Source: Information for this activity has been reproduced with permission from Real Acts of Caring <http://www.realactsofcaring.org/>

Curriculum Connections:

- Grade 9: C2.2 Relationships- skills and strategies
- Grade 10: C1.1 Mental health – factors that enhance
- Grade 11: C3.4 Skills for dealing with stressful situations
- Grade 12: C1.3 Skills and strategies for evolving relationships

