

## **Module 6: Student Wellbeing**

Welcome to module six, student wellbeing.

In this module, you'll learn about:

- High Quality Teaching and Learning,
- Engagement of All Students, Families, and Communities,
- Healthy, Sustainable Physical and Social Environments,
- Reduction In Anxiety Levels,
- Cultural Competencies,
- Feeling Welcomed, Safe, and Included, and the
- Identification of Emotions and Access of Supports.

Student wellbeing goals fall within 3 of the 4 aspirational statements of Good Spirit's strategic plan. These aspirational statements are:

- High Quality Teaching and Learning,
- Engagement of All Students, Families, and Communities, and
- Healthy, Sustainable Physical and Social Environments.

### **High Quality Teaching and Learning**

One of the ways that schools in Good Spirit School Division are working towards the aspiration of high-quality teaching and learning is by:

- providing a wide range of opportunities to learn, practice, experience and demonstrate understanding, confidence, and motivation for a healthy and balanced life.

The goal that directly affects student wellbeing is:

- by June 30<sup>th</sup> the number of students in Grades 4 to 12 reporting high levels of anxiety will reduce by 2% as compared to the data from the previous year.

### **Engagement of all Students, Families, and Communities**

The schools in Good Spirit are working towards the engagement of all students, families, and communities to help promote student wellbeing. They are working towards this aspiration:

- by ensuring efforts are aligned to promote student, family, staff, and community health and well-being, and

- by engaging schools, families, and communities in ongoing discussions and shared efforts to promote and support the health and well-being of staff, students, and the community.

The goal that directly affects student wellbeing under this aspiration is:

- by June 30<sup>th</sup> Good Spirit School Division will increase its organization’s cultural competencies through division-wide processes and professional learning that grow our collective understanding about Indigenous identity, histories, worldview, and systemic barriers.

### **Healthy, Sustainable Physical and Social Environments**

Finally, in regard to healthy, sustainable physical and social environments, the schools in Good Spirit are working towards this aspiration:

- by developing relationships that influence and are influenced by families, cultural perspectives, and the community, and
- by providing informal role modelling, peer support, nurturing of families, and safe communities.

The goals that directly affect student wellbeing are:

- by June 30<sup>th</sup> students and staff will report feeling welcomed, safe, and included at school, and
- by June 30<sup>th</sup> students and staff will develop strategies for identifying emotions and accessing supports to enhance mental wellbeing.

Let’s look at each of these four goals individually.

### **Reduction in Anxiety Levels Goal**

The first goal we will look at states, “By June 30<sup>th</sup> the number of students in Grades 4 to 12 reporting high levels of anxiety will reduce by 2% as compared to the data from the previous year.”

### **Goal Evaluation**

To evaluate the anxiety levels of students, data from Our School Survey and the Student Orientation to School Questionnaire (SOS-Q) will be used. The Our School Survey provides general information as to the overall picture of each school and the school division as a whole while the SOS-Q data provides detailed information about individual students.

Teachers take a deep dive into the data and look at the responses provided by the students. Supports are put in place for students at Tier 2 and 3 to help reduce their anxiety levels.

## **Division Strategies**

The division strategies that address the reduction of anxiety levels of students include:

- the creation of Alliances For Gender and Sexual Diversity,
- the identification of provincial outcomes and indicators that support mental health and wellbeing,
- hiring Indigenous School Success Consultants,
- offering Mental Health First Aid to staff and students,
- building a collection of mental health resources, and by
- establishing mental health capacity building partnerships.

Let's look at four of these strategies a little closer.

### **Alliance For Gender and Sexual Diversity**

Good Spirit School Division has established Administrative Procedure 319 to create environments that are inclusive of all students, including those that self-identify as being members of a sexual or gender minority. The purpose of an Alliance for Gender and Sexual Diversity, also referred to as GSA, Rainbow Club, or Diversity Club, is to help bring awareness and protect students from harassment and discrimination and to help all students feel respected, protected, and included.

### **Mental Health Capacity Building**

Good Spirit has been granted a three-year partnership that is a collaboration between the Saskatchewan Health Authority and the Ministry of Education. This partnership builds capacity among students and staff to support mental wellbeing. This partnership started at Dr. Brass School and is being expanded to all other schools in the Good Spirit School Division.

### **Mental Health First Aid**

Mental Health First Aid or MHFA is a training program that was developed by the *Mental Health Commission of Canada*. It teaches participants how to recognize the signs of mental health problems and how to get the help and support for others when needed. At least one staff member at each school is trained in Mental Health First Aid. In addition, two Good Spirit staff members have been trained as facilitators. The Mental Health and Wellbeing 20L class gives staff and students the opportunity to receive a MHFA certificate.

## **Mental Health Resources**

Good Spirit's centralized library has a collection of resources that emphasize the importance of mental health education. This collection supports the wellbeing of both staff and students. Resources include teacher instructional materials, professional resources, and toolkits for students.

## **School-Based Strategies**

To help reduce the anxiety of students, schools within the Good Spirit School Division implement a number of strategies. These strategies include:

- Club Connect,
- Circle of Courage Philosophy,
- Friends Resiliency Program,
- Girl Power,
- Girl Empowerment,
- Mental Health and Wellbeing 20L,
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports,
- Positive Phone Calls Home,
- Rainbow Club,
- Social Thinkers,
- Take Me Outside Day,
- Teen Boost,
- Teen Yoga,
- We Thinkers, and
- Zones of Regulation.

We'll look at a few of these strategies in more detail.

### **Circle of Courage Philosophy**

Circle of Courage is a First Nations philosophy focused on child rearing. There are four values or domains that are central to this philosophy. These values include:

- generosity,
- belonging,
- mastery, and
- independence.

They are applicable to all children across all cultures.

## **Teen Boost**

Teen Boost is a program that is provided in partnership with the Saskatchewan Health Authority. It is a Tier 2 intervention and focuses on the mental health of students. Sessions in the Teen Boost program include:

- self-esteem and body image,
- bullying and cyberbullying,
- stress,
- anxiety and depression,
- emotions and communication, and
- mindfulness and resiliency.

All schools within Good Spirit participate in the Teen Boost program.

## **Mental Health and Wellbeing 20L**

Mental Health and Wellbeing 20L is a locally developed course that is available to students in the Good Spirit School Division if their school chooses to offer this course. With the prevalence of mental health problems and mental illnesses, the Mental Health and Wellbeing 20L course was created to help students develop the confidence and competency they need to focus on their health and wellbeing.

## **We Thinkers**

We Thinkers is a program that focuses on helping students develop appropriate social skills. It gets students thinking about how to solve problems in a variety of social situations. These situations are presented through a series of stories and encourage students to verbalize their thinking. Information is sent to parents about what they can do to support the social learning of their children by practicing the social concepts that are introduced at school.

## **Questions To Ask**

Questions that SCC members can ask teachers at their school include:

- Tell me more about the We Thinkers program.
- How is your Alliance for Gender and Sexual Diversity active in your school?
- What types of supports are provided to students to reduce their anxiety?
- What is Mental Health First Aid?
- How do students access mental health supports?
- How does the Indigenous Student Advisory Council impact the mental health of students at your school?

- How does this year's Our School data related to the anxiety of students compare to last year?
- What is your school's plan for supporting students who reported moderate to high levels of anxiety?

### **SCC Action Plan Ideas**

Possible SCC action plan ideas include:

1. bringing in guest speakers that have diverse experiences and voices to talk to students,
2. bringing in guest speakers that have diverse experiences and voices to talk to SCC members in order to deepen their understanding of the strategies being implemented in Good Spirit School Division,
3. holding a parent evening and having a professional come and help parents understand anxiety and provide strategies for helping their children cope with anxiety,
4. helping the school division create a common definition of mental wellness, anxiety, and trauma informed schools, and finally
5. examining how bias and prejudice influence decisions of SCC members.

### **Cultural Competency Goal**

The cultural competency goal is, "By June 30<sup>th</sup> Good Spirit School Division will increase our organization's cultural competencies through division-wide processes and professional learning that grow our collective understanding about Indigenous identity, histories, worldview, and systemic barriers."

### **Goal Evaluation**

The cultural competency goal is measured through qualitative data and progress towards the disrupting stage as outlined in the assessment rubric contained within Animating the Inspiring Success Framework.

### **Division Strategies**

The division strategies include:

- access to a cultural advocate,
- anti-racism and anti-oppressive presentations,
- Indigenous learning materials,
- the formation of an Indigenous Advisory Committee as a standing committee of the Board of Education,
- Allocation of Indigenous Student Success Leads (ISSLs) and Indigenous Community Workers (ICWs) in schools,

- Indigenous Student Success Consultants positions, and
- raising cultural awareness by honouring days that recognize Indigenous peoples such as National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Indigenous Veterans Day, Ribbon Skirt/Shirt Day, Indigenous Storytelling Month, MMIWG, and the National Indigenous Peoples Day.

Let's look at the cultural advocate, the Indigenous learning resources, and the roles and responsibilities of the Indigenous School Success Consultants in more detail.

### **Cultural Advocate**

All the schools in Good Spirit School Division have access to a cultural advocate whose name is Andrew Quewezance. Andrew goes into the schools and gives presentations about the Indigenous culture and worldview. Andrew is also a member of the Good Spirit School Division Indigenous Advisory Committee. His position is supervised by the Indigenous Student Success Consultants.

### **Indigenous Learning Resources**

The division has purchased a variety of Indigenous learning resources to support the cultural competency goal. These resources include:

- early years Indigenous culture literacy kits with books and diverse play materials,
- Under One Sun and Take Action for Reconciliation literacy resources for all Kindergarten to grade 8 classes, and
- Indigenous Games Kits.

Coaching is provided to teachers on how to use the materials with their students.

### **Indigenous School Success Consultants**

The Indigenous School Success consultants provide leadership and support in all matters related to Indigenizing the K to 12 curriculums and school cultures.

The roles and responsibilities of the consultants include:

- assisting in the facilitation of safe and positive learning environments,
- working collaboratively with schools and staff members in the development of action plans to address concerns,
- supporting provincial and federal partnerships that involve stakeholders and the schools, and
- assisting the Student Services department in the development of culturally inclusive practices and supports.

## **School-Based Strategies**

Schools within Good Spirit implement a number of different strategies to promote their cultural competency goal. Strategies include:

- Blanket Exercise
- Circle of Courage Philosophy
- Drum Group
- Elder Presentations
- Engaging Young Leaders
- Ensouling Our Schools (Book Study)
- Hoop Dancing
- Indigenous Art
- Indigenous Education Team
- Mandatory Indigenous Studies 10
- Orange Shirt Day
- Ribbon Skirt/Shirt Day
- Storytelling Month Activities
- Smudging
- Talking Circles
- Understanding of Indigenous Worldview

We are going to take a closer look at the Indigenous Studies 10 course and the in-school supports provided by the Indigenous Education Team.

### **Indigenous Studies 10**

The Indigenous Studies 10 course is mandatory for all Grade 10 students in Good Spirit School Division. It is offered in all the high schools and is comprised of 4 units:

- Identity and Worldview,
- Community and Kinship,
- Governance, and
- Economy.

Through this course, students have the opportunity to learn about Indigenous people and communities prior to contact, the impacts of colonization, as well as today's efforts towards reconciliation and cultural revitalization.

### **Indigenous Education Team**

There is an Indigenous Education Team in place to offer in-school supports to Indigenous students as well as to support the curricular outcomes that are based on Indigenous

knowledge, worldview, and perspectives. Teachers, principals, and other school staff may reach out to members of the Indigenous Education team for support with curricular outcomes, student concerns, or for help in supporting Indigenous families.

Schools with higher self-declared Indigenous populations may have in-school support such as an Indigenous Community Worker (ICW) or an Indigenous Student Success Lead (ISSL). The Indigenous Education Team is led by the Indigenous Student Success Consultants and is overseen by the Director of Good Spirit School Division.

### **Questions To Ask Principal**

To find out more about how your school is addressing cultural competencies, ask your principal some of the following questions:

- What actions are you taking to move forward with Truth and Reconciliation?
- How are you increasing the cultural competency at your school?
- Tell me more about the Circle of Courage philosophy.
- How is the Circle of Courage philosophy being infused into your school?

### **SCC Action Plan Ideas**

Some possible SCC action plan ideas include:

1. participating in a learning walk for diversity and inclusion,
2. bringing in Knowledge Keepers to talk to teachers and help build their capacity with cultural competencies, and
3. bringing in Knowledge Keepers and/or Elders to talk to students.

### **Feeling Welcomed, Safe, and Included Goal**

The feeling welcomed, safe, and included goal states, “By June 30<sup>th</sup> students and staff will report feeling welcomed, safe, and included at school.”

### **Goal Evaluation**

This goal is assessed anecdotally using the data from Our School Survey, the Student Orientation to School Questionnaire (SOS-Q), and student attendance.

### **Division Strategies**

The division strategies that promote the feeling welcomed, safe and included goal include:

- regular staff professional development on anti-racism

- continuing to focus on anti-racism and anti-oppressive education through staff professional development as well as through the development of and changes to policies and procedures,
- implementation of the Circle of Courage philosophy,
- working with schools to establish Alliances for Gender and Sexual Diversity,
- understanding trauma-informed practices, and
- focusing on the social emotional learning philosophy.

### **Social Emotional Learning**

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults develop and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to:

- understand and manage emotions,
- set and achieve positive goals,
- feel and show empathy for others,
- establish and maintain positive relationships, and
- make responsible decisions.

Teachers and support staff support the social-emotional philosophy by adopting and implementing practices that explicitly teach students skills in the areas of:

- social awareness,
- self-awareness,
- self-management,
- relationship skills, and
- informed decision-making.

### **School Strategies**

School-based strategies include:

- active Alliances for Gender and Sexual Diversity in schools,
- attending a provincial or local Gay Straight Alliance Summit,
- Pride Month Celebrations,
- Safe at School Programs,
- school-based extracurricular activities,
- SEL student groups in some schools, and
- settlement workers in schools to support newcomer families.

## **Alliances For Gender and Sexual Diversity**

Each school has established an active Alliance for Gender and Sexual Diversity. These alliances are first and foremost a place of belonging. They provide safety, acceptance, and a welcoming space for Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer (2SLGBTQ+) students during some of the hardest times in their lives.

Research shows that the presence of Alliances for Gender and Sexual Diversity make schools a safer environment for all students. You can read more of this research in the Ministry of Education’s document *Deepening the Discussion: Gender and Sexual Diversity* or the Egale’s report *Still in Every Class in Every School*.

### **Questions To Ask Principals**

To discover more about what your school is doing to make students feel welcome, safe, and included, ask your principal the following questions:

- What does your Our School data say about feeling safe at school?
- How is your Alliance for Gender and Sexual Diversity active in your school?
- How does the social emotional learning philosophy integrate with instructional strategies in your school?

### **SCC Action Plan Ideas**

Possible SCC action plan ideas include:

1. taking advantage of access to professional development such as attending Rural Congress, and
2. inviting an educator involved in this work, from Good Spirit School Division or a provincial organization, to attend an SCC meeting.

### **Identification of Emotions and Access of Supports Goal**

The identification of emotions and accessing supports goal states, “By June 30<sup>th</sup> students and staff will develop strategies for identifying emotions and accessing supports to enhance mental wellbeing.”

### **Goal Evaluation**

This goal is assessed using information from the Our School Survey, anecdotal data, tracking of professional development and resources shared with staff, and tracking of referrals to mental health.

## **Division Strategies**

The division strategies include:

- a mental health unit in Wellness 10,
- an Indigenous Education Team,
- use of Indigenous Pedagogy – Circle of Wellness,
- school counsellors,
- Zones of Regulation,
- FRIENDS, and
- We Thinkers.

## **School Strategies**

School strategies include:

- school clubs,
- mental health speakers, and
- many other initiatives already mentioned previously that support this goal and contribute to the mental wellbeing of students.

## **Questions To Ask Principal**

Ask you principal the following questions for further information:

- How do you address mental health stigma and normalize mental health conversations in your school?
- How do you support your students and staff in developing tools to identify when they aren't doing well and who to access for support?

## **SCC Action Plan Ideas**

Possible SCC action plan ideas include:

1. being an advocate for mental health and diversity in the community,
2. including mental health discussions, wellness warm-ups and updates on SCCs meeting agendas,
3. reading of professional mental health resources, and
4. supporting the division's wellbeing goals.

That's it! We're done. If you want more information on student wellbeing ask your principal.