JCSH

Joint Consortium for School Health
Governments Working Across the Health and Education Sectors

Investigating
Positive Psychology Themes
In School Health

A Scan and Analysis of
Provincial/Territorial Education Department Websites

2008

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1 Introduction

Project Overview

The intent of this endeavour was to initiate an examination of the use of positive psychology themes in school health initiatives. As part of this effort, an initial investigation of health-related initiatives linked to provincial and territorial education department websites was undertaken. While this examination focused on education department websites, other government ministries/departments may also have initiatives that address positive psychology themes for children and youth.

This report was developed on behalf of the Joint Consortium for School Health by the Health and Education Research Group of the University of New Brunswick.

The following sections provide an introduction to positive psychology applications in the educational context and a summary of the range of initiatives that incorporate or make reference to these themes or concepts.

Mental Health Concerns and Educational Development

Recent investigations indicate that 85 percent of children and youth involved with community-based mental health services also report experiencing mental health related concerns within the school context (Zima, Hurlburt, Knapp, Ladd, Tang, & Duan et al., 2005). Mental health concerns may include either externalizing or internalizing features. Externalizing behaviours are identified as the most frequently reported classroom concern, with students described as disruptive or aggressive being at increased risk of encountering educational or learning difficulties (Davis, Kruczek, & McIntosh, 2006). In some instances, students with externalizing difficulties are removed from the classroom or segregated into alternative school programs, and over the long-term experience academic failure (Petras, Chilcoat, Leaf, Ialongo, & Kellam, 2004). Internalizing difficulties, although not as frequently reported, often include features of depression and anxiety. It should be noted, however, it is not uncommon for internalizing and externalizing features to occur at the same time in children and youth (Kessler, Berglund, Demler, Jin, & Walters, 2005). As with externalizing behaviours, internalizing characteristics have also been linked with poor academic outcomes (Blackman, Ostrander, & Herman, 2005).

Positive Mental Health Programming

Given that children and youth spend more than six hours daily and over 180 days a year in school, the educational context provides key opportunities for delivery of prevention and intervention activities related to mental health. According to Little, Little and Delligatti, (2004) school-based mental health-related programs or supports often focus exclusively on problems associated with developing or existing mental health issues in children and youth, and the methods or approaches required to remedy these areas of identified concern or risk.

In contrast, positive psychology provides additional options for responding to the mental health functioning of children and youth within the home, school and community contexts. Positive psychology may be seen as the investigation or application of positive individual traits, positive personal experiences and enabling initiatives/programs that

assist in enhancing the quality of life of children and youth, as well as preventing or reducing the risk of the development of mental health related concerns (Seligman, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive psychology applications in health and education often share key common assumptions related to promoting positive change and development. These include:

- people are active agents, capable of change;

- people have inner strengths to initiate, direct, and sustain change in behaviour;

- behaviour change requires energy and a willingness to engage; and

- people's subjective experience toward a given behaviour (situation/context) is an important determinant of their motivation to change (Gaetan, & Morrison, 2007).

Within the literature, positive psychology approaches have been related to a variety of educational and health-focused variables. These include:

- enhanced positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001; Lyubomirsky, 2001) and optimism (Schneider, 2001);

- decreased oppositional behaviour and increased pro-social attitudes (HERG, 2007);

- increased levels of physical activity and decreased smoking behaviours (HERG, 2007);

- enhanced readiness for positive life style change (Health Canada, 2008); and

- increased academic motivation (Ryan, & Deci, 2001).

Positive Psychology within a Comprehensive School Health Strategy

A range of key terms has been used to describe positive psychology approaches including resiliency, mental fitness, assets, protective factors, school connectedness, positive youth development, solution-focused approaches, and strength-based initiatives. The application of positive psychology concepts has the potential to contribute to the development of a range of new and innovative avenues for promoting positive mental health and associated healthy life style behaviours for all students. Although the potential use of positive psychology approaches within school health strategies has generally been positively received by educators and health providers, various challenges associated with their use have also been noted. These include: the lack of a unifying framework to bring together current evidence-informed practices based on positive psychology; the need for training for personnel in positive psychology health approaches that are tailored to the needs and priorities of specific schools and their communities; and the absence of targeted evaluation and research programs that report on the application of positive psychology concepts in comprehensive school strategies (Barton, 2006; Kurtz, & Linnemann, 2006).

2 A Preliminary Examination of Positive Psychology Themes in School Health

Purpose

The purpose of this endeavour was to identify educational initiatives that apply or link positive psychology concepts to comprehensive school health themes. This involved the investigation of education departmental websites from across provincial and territorial jurisdictions.

Methodology

This scan resulted from an investigation of student services and school health-related programs, services and activities linked to departmental websites, which identified positive psychology themes and concepts. Terms such as resiliency, mental fitness, success, strengths, protective factors and wellness were scanned for. A list of health programs or service applications incorporating positive psychology themes was created for each departmental website, and a summary description was completed based on the written text from each of the cited websites.

An examination of the specific departmental websites was completed independently by two graduate level researchers. Once complete, the resulting departmental lists were compared and areas of convergences and difference were noted. Omissions or discrepancies between these lists were re-examined to ensure the evidence of positive psychology themes. Agreement between researchers was required for inclusion of specific program or service examples in the final departmental lists.

This list and summary were subsequently sorted into specific theme categories, taking into account the nature of the specific programs or services, as well as their use of positive psychology applications. For each theme category, a written descriptive summary was also completed.

The following provides an overview of the various theme categories. They are organized according to seven major headings:

- Promoting safe and supportive school environments: These sites highlight programs and services that address student safety, as well as the development of positive school learning environments that foster respectful attitudes and appreciation of diversity.

- Investigating and exchanging positive psychology practices: These sites include positive psychology knowledge and evidence-informed practices from provincial forums, research endeavours and school health narratives.

- Strengthening school connectedness: These sites describe programs and services that incorporate positive psychology themes in increasing school readiness and reducing student attrition.

- Building integrated school health models: These sites present comprehensive school health approaches that link positive psychology themes to other healthy life style behaviours.

- Developing targeted positive psychology approaches: These sites highlight resources and processes, including evaluation processes for linking positive psychology themes to target health strategies or interventions.

- Integrating positive psychology themes in curriculum-focused activities: These sites highlight academic methods designed to foster student motivation and curriculum differentiation by incorporating positive psychology themes.

- Providing positive supports for students and families: These sites describe approaches for building student and family resiliency through the use of strength-based methods and the provision of concurrent school and community support.

Promoting Safe and Supportive School Environments

Safe and Caring School Strategies

Positive psychology descriptors: *caring schools, adult-student connections, belonging, school as an inviting place, pro-social helping attitudes.*

A common initiative across many departmental websites is the inclusion of safe and caring educational plans or strategies. These strategies emphasize the need for creating safe environments for all children, as well as the importance of reaching out and extending caring approaches to students at-risk for behavioural concerns. Safe and caring school climates are regarded as necessary ingredients for realizing a sense of belonging and connectedness among all students, and for supporting their academic development and success. Strategy components vary across websites, but often include bullying programs, educational sessions for students, discipline policies, child advocacy considerations, peer-helper/mentor approaches, as well as consultation and awareness forums for parents and the community. Characteristics associated with safe and caring school environments include a respectful school culture, safety and security, positive relationships among students and educators, social and behavioural expectations and community involvement.

Example sites (programs, strategies or initiatives)

Title: Safe and Caring Schools
Organization: Alberta Ministry of Education
Website: http://education.alberta.ca/teachers/safeschools.aspx

Title: Lions Quest
Organization: Lions Club International Foundation
Website: http://www.lions-quest.org/

Title: Bullying and Violence Prevention, Character Education, Conflict
                Management, and Respecting Diversity
Organization: Safe and Caring Schools and Communities, Government of Alberta
Website: http://www.sacsc.ca/index.html

Title: Safe Schools Manitoba
Organization: Manitoba Association of School Trustees
Website: http://www.safeschoolsmanitoba.ca/contact_us.html

Title: Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools
Organization: BC Ministry of Education
Website: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sco/

Title: Safe and Caring Schools Initiative
Organization: Newfoundland Department of Education
Website: http://www.gov.nl.ca/vpi/default.htm

Title: Safe Schools
Organization: Ontario Ministry of Education
Website: www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/safeschools.html

Bullying Prevention Programs

Positive psychology descriptors: *positive school climate, empowerment, respect.*

Bullying prevention programs are evident in the majority of departmental sites. In some instances these are included as one facet of an overall safe school strategy, and in other instances they are presented as singular strategies or initiatives. On-line content of these sites includes program or approach descriptions, teaching resources for teachers, fact sheets and promotional material for students and parents, and example surveys for measuring school climate and students' perceptions related to bullying. Matching appropriate bullying prevention strategies to identify areas of concern is also emphasized. Strategies range from full school-wide promotion of positive student behaviours and attitudes to targeted approaches for addressing specific instances related to bullying.

Example sites (programs, strategies or initiatives)

Title: Bullying and Violence Prevention in Schools:
                A Focus on Personal and Social Development
Organization: The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities
Website: http://www.sacsc.ca/PDF%20files/Research%20and%20
                Evaluation/Literature%20Review-Spevak-06.pdf

Title:	A Whole-School Approach to Safety and Belonging, Preventing Violence and Bullying
Organization:	Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, Safe and Caring Schools Initiatives
Website:	http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe_schools/initiatives.html
Title:	Focus on Harassment and Intimidation: Responding to Bullying in Secondary School Communities
Organization:	BC Ministry of Education; Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Website:	http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/docs/fob_sec.pdf
Title:	School-based Violence Prevention Programs: A Resource Manual
Organization:	RESOLVE: Research and Education for Solutions to Violence and Abuse – University of Calgary
Website:	http://www.ucalgary.ca/resolve/violenceprevention/English/index.htm
Title:	Anti-Bullying, Caring and Respectful Schools
Organization:	Government of Saskatchewan
Website:	http://www.publications.gov.sk.ca/details.cfm?p=11449
Title:	Binoculars on Bullying: A New Solution to Connect and Protect Children
Organization:	Dr. Debra Pepler, York University and the Hospital for Sick Children
	and Dr. Wendy Craig, Queen's University
Website:	http://www.voicesforchildren.ca/report-Feb2007-1.htm
Title:	A School-based Anti-Violence Prevention Program
Organization:	Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System
Website:	http://www.lfcc.on.ca/asap.htm
Title:	Registry of Bullying Prevention Programs
Organization:	Ontario Ministry of Education
Website:	http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/bullyprevention.html

Suicide Prevention Programs

Positive psychology descriptors: *resiliency, coping skills, collaboration, bounce back.*

These types of programs focus on the importance of developing students' capacity for resiliency and their level of hope even in the face of overwhelming life circumstances. Program content emphasizes the importance of teaching communication, problem-solving and coping skills to students. In addition to skill building lessons or activities for students, many of these approaches include descriptions of suggested support roles for educators and counsellors, as well as example school-wide activities to promote pro-social and supportive school climates.

Example sites (programs, strategies or initiatives)

Title: Suicide Prevention Program
Organization: PEI Division of Canadian Mental Health Association
Website: http://www.cmha.ca/bins/site_page.asp?cid=284-294-296-322

Title: Preventing Suicide in Youth: Taking Action with Imperfect Knowledge
Organization: BC Ministry of Children and Family Development
Website: http://www.childhealthpolicy.sfu.ca/research_reports_08/rr
                   _documents/RR-9-05.htmf

Title: It's Cool to be Alive in Nunavut
Organization: Government of Nunavut
Website: http://www.gov.nu.ca/education/suicide_prevention/index.html

Investigating and Exchanging Positive Psychology Practices

Forums on Resilience in Students

Positive psychology descriptors: *successful learners, productive citizens, youth resiliency, resiliency research, success stories.*

A few jurisdictions include explanations of forums or events that focused on promoting or increasing understanding of resiliency in youth. The content of these events includes emphasis on the interplay of the challenges and life circumstances that some students face with the protective factors that facilitate their emotional and social development and academic success. The purpose of various events involved raising awareness, highlighting best practices and encouraging dialogue on resiliency among community members, education and health practitioners and policy stakeholders. Others highlighted the value of sharing narratives of strength or resiliency and developing concrete plans for fostering resiliency in specific youth populations identified as at-risk.

Example sites (programs, strategies or initiatives)

Title: Resilience in Youth
Organization: BC Ministries of Education and Health
Website: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/other/youth_mental_health.htm

Title: Yukon Health and Learning Symposium
Organization: Yukon Health and Social Services
Website: http://www.hss.gov.yk.ca/news/2008/id_139/

Research on Resilience in Students

Positive psychology descriptors: *protective factors, buffers, mental fitness, positive relationships, healthy attitudes, caring social environments, school connectedness, relatedness, competency, autonomy*.

Various departmental websites highlight school-based, regional or province-wide research activities relating to resiliency, protective factors, school connected or mental fitness. Research approaches include mixed methods, cross sectional and longitudinal designs. In most instances, positive psychology research themes are linked with associated or predicted outcomes related to positive youth development, enhanced school functioning, decreased personal distress, decreased participation in high-risk health behaviours and evidence of participation in healthy life style behaviours. Protective and resilience factors focus primarily on the presence of positive relationships within the lives of students, including caring family interactions, healthy attachments in the school context and supportive friends. Other identified strength-focused or mental fitness factors include possessing a sense of worth and competency and having opportunities to express autonomy or choice.

Example sites (programs, strategies or initiatives)

Title: Building Resilience in Vulnerable Youth
Organization: McCreary Centre Society
Website: http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/vulnerable_youth_report.pdf

Title: Applying the Construct of Resilience to Career Development
Organization: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation
Website: http://www.resilienceproject.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=text.&str_cmpID=103

Title: Pathways to Resilience
Organization: Dalhousie University
Website: http://www.resilienceproject.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=text.&str_cmpID=103The

Innovative /Promising Practices for Positive Mental Health Promotion

Positive psychology descriptors: *students helping students, learning new skills for healthy living, dignity and respect, working together, celebrating together.*

Various websites focus on presenting innovative ideas or practices for the promotion of positive psychology themes (e.g., talking about mental health, respecting and valuing diversity, managing and coping with challenges/stressors, enhancing parent-youth relationships and helping younger students). Suggested positive psychology practices are highlighted for application within classrooms, schools and the wider community.

Example sites (programs, strategies or initiatives)

Title: Roots of Empathy
Organization: Roots of Empathy
Website: http://www.rootsofempathy.org/index.html

Title: I'm a Thumbody
Organization: Canadian Mental Health Association
Website: http://www.cmha.pe.ca/bins/content_page.asp?cid=284-294-296-321

Title: Building a Healthy High School
Organization: Ontario Ministry of Education
Website: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthyschools/mentalHealth.pdf

Title: My Life – It's Cool to Talk About It
Organization: Canadian Mental Health Association
Website: http://www.cmha.ca/mylife/

Strengthening School Connectedness

School Readiness Programs

Positive psychology descriptors: *positive connections between families, schools and the community; creating positive opportunities for developments, collaborative family-school goals; build on family strengths.*
Educational jurisdictions that employ these programs emphasize the creation of positive learning interactions between parents/guardians and their children. Through inclusion of home-based supports or age-appropriate educational resources, parents are invited to enhance child readiness for school through literacy and social development activities. These independent family efforts are also supplemented by readiness events in schools where parents come together with other community members and organizations that may play supportive roles in the child's development. In addition, it is the intent

of these initiatives to create and maintain positive departmental linkages (education, social services, health) with families to serve as positive supports for them at future points throughout their children's academic development and school programs.

Example sites (programs, strategies or initiatives)

Title: Ready, Set, Learn!
Organization: BC Ministry of Education
Website: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/rsl/

Title: Early Childhood Intervention Programs
Organization: Government of Saskatchewan
Website: http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/ECIP

Title: KidsFirst
Organization: Government of Saskatchewan
Website: http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/Default.aspx?DN=8d5a689a-1dc8-47f2-8a2f-0246139c96e8

Title: Parent Reaching Out Grants
Organization: Government of Ontario
Website: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/reaching.html

Title: ABC123 Reach Every Student
Organization: Government of Ontario
Website: www.edu.gov.on.ca/abc123/

Resiliency building in Students At-Risk for School Attrition

Positive psychology descriptors: *strength, resilience, circle of support, safe and caring environment, coaching for success.*

This type of school-based initiative focuses on strengthening the school connectedness of students deemed at-risk for not completing their secondary education. Similar to wrap-around approaches, teams of school-based professionals provided "circles of support" for students. Provision of such support includes counselling, collaborative problem-solving, coaching for academic success, promoting physical and healthy life style choices, as well as ensuring continuity of contact and follow-up. For these students, regular educational methods are supplemented by personalized strategies involving the application of child and youth care methods.

Example sites (programs, strategies or initiatives)

Title: Mental Health Capacity Building in Schools
Organization: Alberta Health Services
Website: http://www.amhb.ab.ca/knowledge/childrenAndYouth/Pages/
                CapacityBuildingPilotProjects.aspx

Building Integrated School Health Models

Pillars of a Healthy Life Style

Positive psychology descriptors: *social and emotional health, wellness activities, mental health promotion, student and family development.*

These strategies involve either regional or province-wide integrated school health initiatives. In this model, positive psychology or positive mental health promotion themes are identified as pillars of healthy living or student wellness in addition to physical activity, healthy eating, tobacco-free living or other health issues such as addictions, sexual health and injury prevention. In addition, an important assumption of such integrated school health approaches is that student health is critical to learning and that schools are in a unique position to influence healthy student and family development.

At the school level, wellness or health committees are identified as important components of this type of approach for assessing the priorities and carrying out specific plans related to health promotion. Ideally, members of these groups include students, educators, parents, and community and health stakeholders. With respect to key components, many of these strategic approaches include provincial health or wellness campaigns, targeted funding to support local school and community health promotion activities and written or web-based resources to assist school health or wellness committees in their planning and implementation activities.

Example sites (programs, strategies or initiatives)

Title: School Health Promotion in Manitoba
Organization: Interdepartmental Collaboration, Province of Manitoba
Website: http://www.jcsh-cces.ca/upload/School%20Health
                %20Promotion%20in% 20Manitoba.doc

Mental Fitness / Positive School Environments: A Foundational Framework for Healthy Life Style Behaviours

Positive psychology descriptors: *wellness, creating readiness for change, mental fitness needs, self-determination, healthy life style behaviours*

This model is similar to other integrated school health models in that it involved emphasis on a range of healthy life behaviours; however, it differs in that positive psychology

concepts are applied as a foundational framework for other wellness or healthy life style behaviours. Mental fitness needs include autonomy, relatedness and competence. An assumption of this model is that when these needs are met within the school, family and community, there is increased readiness for people to be self-determined in applying health-related knowledge and adopting healthy life style behaviours. Similar to other integrated strategies, this approach emphasizes active participations of students, educators, parents, and community and health stakeholders. Core activities include school level assessment of heath priorities, health promotion planning, targeted funding to support local school and community health or wellness activities and execution of provincial wellness campaigns.

Example sites (programs, strategies or initiatives)

Title: NB Student Wellness Survey
Organization: Health and Education Research Group, University of New Brunswick
Website: http://www.unbf.ca/education/herg/sante/sftp_en.html

Title: Foundations for a Healthy School
Organization: Ontario Ministry of Education
Website: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthyschools/foundations.html

Title: Mental Fitness
Organization: NB Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport
Website: http://www.gnb.ca/0131/Healthy-NB-en_sante/mental_fitness-e.asp

Student Leadership and Comprehensive School Health

Positive psychology descriptors: *social and emotional health, working together, collaboration, student leadership, active healthy school communities*.

As with the preceding integrative models, this approach focuses on strategic approaches, programs or action modules related to developing healthy schools. Positive psychology themes are described in terms of emotional and social well-being, and are undertaken concurrently with other health modules including healthy eating, tobacco reduction and student leadership. The student leadership module introduces the importance of student engagement and leadership in influencing the creation of healthy environments both inside and outside of the school. In this approach emphasis is placed on building collaborative relationships among students, school personnel and community members. Consistent with other models, relationships are engaged in and mobilized through school-based health or wellness committees. Health modules provide schools with ideas on how to use their existing strengths and resources to promote healthy life style behaviours. The completion of all modules allows schools and their community to be recognized as "Active Healthy School Communities".

Title: Rural Youth: Leading Today, Tomorrow and Beyond
Organization: The Ontario Rural Council
Website: http://www.torc.on.ca/documents/TheTORCReport-
                RuralYouth2007_003.pdf

Title: Wellness Activities
Organization: New Brunswick Advisory Council on Youth
Website: http://www.gnb.ca/0049/activities-e.asp

Title: Speak Up: You are the Student Voice
Organization: Government of Ontario
Website: www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/students/speakup

Developing Targeted Positive Psychology Approaches

Resiliency Assessment and Evaluation Activities

Positive psychology descriptors: *strength-based assessment, protective factors, resiliency assessment questionnaires, interpretation of resiliency profile summaries, strength-based programming models.*

The importance of assessing resiliency needs is highlighted by a few jurisdictions as a key consideration in developing responsive school and community approaches for strengthening protective factors for students in both the school and community. Use of specific questionnaires was also noted on various websites (e.g., Developmental Assets, Mental Fitness/SHAPES, Resiliency Canada). In general, assessment or evaluation processes include: training in the administration and application of resiliency questionnaires; interpreting and reporting outcomes; identifying health or wellness priorities based on resiliency findings; and developing/implementing interventions or activities to address identified priorities.

Example sites (programs, strategies or initiatives)

Title: 40 Developmental Assets
Organization: The Search Institute
Website: http://www.thrivecanada.ca/snapfiles/PDFs/40Assets.pdf

Title: Resiliency Canada Assessment and Intervention Framework
Organization: Resiliency Canada
Website: http://www.resiliencycanada.ca/

Funding Programs to Promote School *Wellness*

Positive psychology descriptors: *environments conducive to development, positive wellbeing, health promotion, wellness.*

A few sites highlight grant or funding programs designed to promote school- based planning and actions relating to wellness or healthy life style behaviours. Positive psychology themes are not explicitly highlighted on these websites but are generally linked as facets or pillars of healthy school environments.

Example sites (programs, strategies or initiatives)

Title: Grants Available to Elementary and Secondary Schools 2007–08
Organization: Sir Wilfred Laurier School Board, PQ
Website: http://www.swlauriersb.qc.ca/english/edservices/pedresources/documents/grants.pdf

Title: NWT Student Success Initiative
Organization: NWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment
Website: http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/PDF_File/NWT%20User%20Guide%202007.pdf

Title: Grants for Student-Led Projects
Organization: Government of Ontario
Website: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/students/speakup/application.pdf

Integrating Positive Psychology Themes in Curriculum-focused Activities

Enrichment Strategies and Programs

Positive psychology descriptors: *differentiation, gifts, interest and preferences, mentorship, exploration and validation of strengths.*

One on-line educational resource describes learning opportunities that develop and apply students' gifts, talents, interests and abilities. Such enrichment approaches highlight potential modifications, enhancements and additions to the standard curriculum that can be used to explore and validate students' preferences and strengths. These include: mini-courses and/or enrichment clusters (special interest groupings scheduled during designated time blocks during the regular school day), independent studies (individual or small group studies), differentiated curriculum and/or multi-level instructional theme-based curriculum strategies, curriculum compacting (a strategy which eliminates the teaching of what students already know and provides time for learning new material or learning at a faster pace), and mentoring (students work with individuals who have an area of expertise and mutual interest).

Example sites (programs, strategies or initiatives)

Title: Enrichment: A Guide for Parents
Organization: NB Department of Education
Website: http://www.gnb.ca/0000/publications/ss/Enrichment-for-parents.pdf

Cultural Curriculum Connectors

Positive psychology descriptors: *cultural identity, enhanced understanding and appreciation, positive connections.*

This programming approach advocates the use of music, drama and visual arts as a means to express individual and cultural identity across all grade levels. A key feature of this curriculum component is to foster positive linkages between artists and students in their school environment. Students who participate in such activities learn to value the contributions of individuals from diverse heritages.

Example sites (programs, strategies or initiatives)

Title: Cultural Connections: K-12 Arts and Culture Strategy
Organization: Newfoundland Department of Education
Website: www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/culturalconnections/

Individualized Strength-focused Academic Plans

Positive psychology descriptors: *learning needs and strengths, adaptation, collaboration.*

One website resource highlights a program designed to tailor curriculum goals and activities to the needs and strengths of individual students. This programming model entails the involvement of school-based student services teams in collaboration with students, their parents and subject or homeroom teachers. Structuring the individualized academic plan involves undertaking appropriate adaptations (accommodations and modifications) based on a thorough understanding of students' learning needs and strengths.

Example sites (programs, strategies or initiatives)

Title: Pathways to Programming and Graduation
Organization: Ministry of Education, Newfoundland
Website: http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/overview.html

Providing Positive Supports for Students and Families

Collaborative Wrap-around Support Projects

Positive psychology descriptors: *mental health capacity building, positive supports, success, coping well with change, bouncing back.*

Various jurisdictions highlight singular or several project initiatives involving inter-departmental services, community stakeholders or interdisciplinary service provider teams. Common features of these efforts include a collaborative and co-ordinated approach to enhance the resiliency of students indentified as at-risk of developing mental health concerns. These projects often entail the provision of positive supports to both students and their families, within and outside the school setting. For these initiatives, building resiliency is described as teaching coping skills, providing wrap-around support through times of change and transitions, and building on the successes of students and their families as they reach their goals.

Example sites (programs, strategies or initiatives)

Title: School[Plus] Initiatives
Organization: Ministry of Education, Government of Saskatchewan
Website: http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/schoolplus

Strength-focused Approaches for Students with Exceptionalities and their Families

Positive psychology descriptors: *strengths, can do, success, empowerment, advocacy, partnerships.*

These websites highlight the importance of applying strength-based methods in working with children with exceptionalities. In contrast to focusing exclusively on deficits, these program-related sites assert the need to build on students' strengths in both school and home settings. The approach promotes understanding of "what students can do", applies such knowledge in addressing learning challenges, and builds on daily and continued success. Ongoing communication with families is identified as vital for understanding students' daily functioning. Similarly, parents' participation, empowerment and advocacy roles in academic decision-making are regarded as an integral part of the school-family partnership.

Example sites (programs, strategies or initiatives)

Title: Friends for Life
Organization: BC Ministry of Children and Family Development
Website: http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/mental_health/friends.htm

Title: Making a Difference With Students with FASD
Organization: Yukon Ministry of Education
Website: http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/pdf/fasd_manual_2007.pdf

3 Summary Reflections

The outcomes of this preliminary investigation resulted in the identification of seven theme categories that relate to the application of positive psychology concepts to school health-related initiatives. These categories highlighted the relevance of positive psychology themes to the creation of healthy school climates and interactions (promoting safe and supportive school environments; investigating and exchanging positive psychology practices), the enhancement of student readiness for and engagement in learning (strengthening school connectedness; integrating positive psychology themes in curriculum-focused activities), the promotion of healthy life style changes (building integrated school health models), and the design of tailored resiliency or wellness focused initiatives for students and their families (developing targeted school health approaches; providing positive supports for students and families).

Although this scan and analysis is not an exhaustive documentation of all existing positive psychology themes in school health, it does provide a preliminary examination of the nature and types of positive psychology applications that were evident on education departmental websites at the time of this investigation. As a follow up to this work, it may be advantageous to complete a systematic literature review, as well as to carry out key informant interviews with provincial education and health stakeholders on practices relating to the use of positive psychology concepts in school health. Such efforts may assist in synthesizing a more in-depth and wider range of current evidence and practice-based insights related to the application of positive psychology practices within a comprehensive school health framework.

4 Resource Organizations and Consultants

The following list includes key organizations and consultants that are cited in the literature and on websites focusing on positive psychology applications in school health. It may serve as a useful resource for health and education personnel as they consider plans for developing school-based initiatives to enhance student wellness or resiliency.

The Canadian Centre for Positive Youth Development

Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network (PREVNet) (Dr. Debra Pepler and Dr. Wendy Craig)

Peaceful Schools International (PSI)

McCreary Centre

Canadian Mental Health Association

Dalhousie University Resiliency Research Centre (Dr. Michael Ungar and Dr. Linda Liebenberg)

The Aboriginal Community Youth Resiliency Network

Resiliency Canada

University of Toronto Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (Dr. Tatyana Barankin and Dr. Nazilla Khanlou)

McGill University, Roots of Resiliency (Dr. Laurence J. Kirmayer)

The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities

The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement

University of New Brunswick Health and Education Research Group (Dr. Bill Morrison and Dr. Patricia Kirby)

University of Victoria School of Child & Youth Care (Dr. Jennifer White)

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