

ESS Report for DEC Ends Policy #3
15 March 2023

Engage system's leaders in improving mental health and resiliency for both learners and staff through proactive strategies such as Positive Education and Social Emotional learning.

Goal 3.1: Improve mental health and resilience for both learners and staff through proactive strategies

Section 1: PBIS & Restorative Practices

Strategy 3.1.1: Support adoption of PBIS in identified schools.

Strategy 3.1.2: Support adoption of Restorative Practices in identified schools

Status: In Progress & Ongoing

Definitions

Positive Behaviour Interventions & Supports (PBIS) is a research-based approach designed to establish the learning environment needed to achieve academic and social success for all students. The core principles of PBIS are creating improved outcomes for all students, supporting early intervention, using tiered models of support, using research-based, scientifically validated interventions, monitoring student progress to inform instruction and intervention, and using data informed decision making

Restorative Practices is an approach that helps people to strengthen relationships, build community, and prevent conflict. Restorative practices are rooted in restorative justice. They emphasize repairing the harm done to people and relationships, rather than punishing people. Unlike restorative justice, which is primarily reactive in nature, restorative practices include proactive practices to prevent conflict and improve relationships.

Actions

Six schools had previously been identified for support in PBIS but implementation was delayed because of the pandemic. These schools received initial professional learning on PBIS and Restorative Practices in June 2022 and has received consultation and support from the district ESS team as required throughout this school year. Additionally, schools were given funding by the district to support their PBIS initiatives.

The schools implementing PBIS are Apohaqui Elementary School, Bayview School, Beaconsfield Middle School, Blacks Harbour School, Fairvale Elementary School, and St Stephen Elementary School. Lakefield Elementary School is also supported in implementing

PBIS through EECD's PBIS Incubator School Project and has received some support from the district.

The schools implementing Restorative Practices are Barnhill Memorial School, Hampton Middle School, Forest Hills School, and Sussex Corner Elementary School.

Support for these projects has been coordinated by Todd Cormier, School Counselling Coordinator, and his team.

Section 2: Social & Emotional Learning and Positive Education

Strategy 3.1.3: Provide direct support to coordinators and coaches to increase integration of Social Emotional learning into curricular outcomes

Strategy 3.1.4: Provide direct support to teachers to implement Positive Education and Social Emotional Learning into their classroom practices, specifically at the middle school level

Status: Ongoing

Definitions

Social & Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. SEL is found throughout the New Brunswick curriculum.

CASEL is the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. The model of SEL competencies used in ASD-S and throughout New Brunswick is based on CASEL, and often represented in the "CASEL Wheel."

Positive Education is the application of the science of Positive Psychology within an educational setting to encourage students, faculty, schools, and communities to flourish. While SEL tends to focus on the curriculum, and these outcomes can be taught across the curriculum, Positive Education focuses more on instructional decisions which embed the skills of well-being students need to be strong and healthy with the skills of achievement

Actions

For the second year, the district employed a dedicated SEL & Positive Education Coach, Christine Morgan-Aherne. Ms Morgan-Aherne is a veteran classroom teacher and school counsellor with experience at both the high school and elementary school levels. Ms Morgan-Aherne's work this year has largely been providing professional learning to schools. This

includes both workshops for staff and coaching and consultation for individual teachers. At the high school level, this has focused on CASEL competencies across the curriculum. At the middle level, there has been focus on allyship, respect, and boundaries. At all levels, there is a focus on integrating “the skills of well-being” into the instructional decisions to teach curricular outcomes (“the skills of achievement”). A major event this year was in December when Ms Morgan-Aherne led professional learning for the high schools of the Hampton Education Centre, including collaborative time for teachers by subject area to brainstorm how to implement SEL outcomes into their courses. Ms Morgan-Aherne has also been supporting schools with specific initiatives, such as Zones of Regulation, Fourth R Healthy Relationships initiatives, and PBIS. Ms Morgan-Aherne also coaches beginning teachers individually on SEL topics, consults with school administrations and Education Support Services Teams (ESSTs) on individual issues schools are dealing with, and supports the district ESST in providing professional learning at the district level.

The district has provided two days of professional learning for beginning teachers in Positive Education and SEL. SEL skills are crucial for students to develop and maintain strong and healthy minds and be resilient. All learning takes place in the context of relationships, and the relationships in the classroom are the foundation on which lessons are taught. Providing beginning teachers, who face a steep curve during the first year in the classroom, a solid basis in SEL and Positive Education, as well as follow up coaching and consultation opportunities, helps build capacity in those teachers which will serve students for decades to come.

Six curriculum coaches have volunteered for additional training in SEL and Positive Education, which will take place in April. This will provide them with a level of expertise in this area, which though secondary to their primary expertise (e.g., literacy, FSL), which will allow them to add SEL coaching to their work in their subject areas.

These initiatives have been coordinated by Todd Cormier, School Counselling Coordinator, and his team.

Section 3: Positive Mental Health Framework

Strategy 3.1.5: Continue to implement the Positive Mental Health Framework with school and district leaders using the Mental Fitness Resiliency Inventory.

Status: Ongoing from 2021-2022

Dr Bill Morrison and Dr Patti Peterson, both well-respected professors of Education at UNB, have developed the Positive Workplace Framework, an evidence-based model for building resiliency, mental fitness, and positive leadership in the workplace. This model uses principles of Self-Determination Theory (sometimes called the CAR model for Competence-Autonomy-Relatedness) and Positive Psychology to assist workplace leaders to increase positive mental health practices on their teams.

Seventy-three school and District leaders completed the two half-day training from Dr Morrison and Dr Peterson last year, and more than a third of ASD-S schools completed the Mental Fitness and Resiliency Inventory, a 25-question inventory of positive mental health practices that principals can use a guide to improving positive mental health practices in their schools.

Section 4: School Mental Health Leadership

Strategy 3.1.6: Provide opportunities for school leaders to share their strategies and resource with each other.

This strategy is implemented on two levels. School administrators, who are the designated leaders in the schools, have opportunities at district administrator meetings to discuss common issues and share best practices. However, teachers take leadership roles on specific issues related to mental health within their schools, often leading a group of students. Time for sharing strategies and resources for these school leaders is part of our Mental Health Youth Forum, Middle School GSA Day, and ASD-S Antiracism Summit. In addition, our school counsellors, who often are the teachers taking leadership roles in SEL initiatives at schools, are given similar opportunities at their district school counsellor meetings.

Section 5: Additional Initiatives

Mental Health Youth Forum & School-Based Mental Health Initiatives

ASD-S has been running an annual Mental Health Youth Forum for high school students since 2017. All high schools are invited to participate, bringing a team of students to participate in workshops, share ideas, and return to their schools with student-led initiatives. Our guest speaker was Dr Anjum Faridi, child and adolescent psychiatrist and Chief of Psychiatry for the Saint John area. This event was coordinator by Todd Cormier, School Counselling Coordinator, and his team.

Professional Learning in the ARC Framework

ASD-S is trying a new professional learning delivery model this year, in which we have signed a licence with PESI, an online continuing education service, to allow a number of our staff to access a two-day, pre-recorded workshop on the ARC framework. The advantage of this format is that teachers may progress through the training at their pace without a large number of supply teachers needed on any particular day. The workshop also has an online test that must be completed at the end of the training and teachers must submit their certificates of completion.

The ARC Framework is a model for supporting students who have experienced trauma and is the model in which our Child and Youth Teams have been trained. It is not simply a set of therapeutic interventions for clinicians, but a model that schools can use to client a more trauma-informed school climate. The model was co-developed by American psychologist Dr Margaret Blaustein, who is delivers the pre-recorded two-day workshop.

“The Attachment, Regulation and Competency (ARC) Framework is a flexible, components-based intervention developed for children and adolescents who have experienced complex trauma, along with their caregiving systems. ARC’s foundation is built upon four key areas of study: normative childhood development, traumatic stress, attachment, and risk and resilience. Drawing from these areas, ARC identifies important childhood skills and competencies which are routinely shown to be negatively affected by traumatic stress and by attachment disruptions, and which – when addressed – predict resilient outcome”
(www.arcframework.org).

This year we are giving the training opportunity to high school Education Support Services Teams (ESSTs), the ESSTs of the priority schools in Saint John, as well as to all school-based social workers, school counsellors, behaviour intervention mentors, and district-staff including ESS lead teachers as well as the Healthy Learners Nurses.

EECD Youth Check-In Survey

We had previously referred to this as “The Pulse Survey”, because it is intended to “take the pulse” of middle and high schools several times a year and give administrators more immediate feedback on the impact of their SEL and mental health initiatives than our larger surveys which take place annually. Two ASD-S school helped calibrate the survey last year, and this year we are implementing the initiative at middle and high schools with two surveys to give each school a baseline. The goal is to be fully operational with this survey three times a year for next year.

Responsive Mental Health Services

The district maintains training goals for Violence Threat Risk Assessment, Mental Health First Aid, and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training. All administrators, school counsellors and guidance teachers, school social workers, behaviour intervention mentors, and Education CYT members must receive training in VTRA and MHFA. All school counsellors and guidance teachers, school social workers, behaviour intervention mentors, and Education CYT members also receive training in ASIST. District ESS runs a minimum of three trainings in each of these two-day workshops. In addition, school counsellors receive two days of training specific to their specialized roles each year, with the specific agenda determined by Todd Cormier, School Counselling Coordinator, and the School Counselling Leads, Jessica Bellis and Rob Mather, based on the identified needs of the counsellors.

- *Violent Threat Risk Assessment* is a community protocol developed by the Center for Trauma-Informed Practices (formerly North American Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response) that responds to specific threats and worrisome behaviour in our schools with the intention of creating intervention plans that will reduce any risk that is presented. Our VTRA trainers are Peter Smith, Director of Education Support Services, and Todd Cormier, School Counselling Coordinator, and often partner with Social Development and Horizon in delivering the training.
- *Mental Health First Aid for Adults Who Interact with Youth* is a course specifically designed to equip adults with the skills to recognize and take immediate steps to intervene in mental health concerns for youth. This course was developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Our MHFA trainers are Peter Smith and Todd Cormier, and we often have support from Jen Grant, EECD Learning Specialist, in delivering this training.
- *Applied Suicide Intervention Skills and Training*, developed by Living Works, helps prevent suicide by teaching how to recognize signs, provide intervention, and develop safety plans. ASD-S gratefully acknowledges the support of Jen Grant and Pam Miller, private ASIST trainer, in providing this training.

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