

WellAhead

SD67 - Design Brief

Imagine if we unleashed all schools' full potential to foster the social and emotional wellbeing of children and youth.

1. THE CHALLENGE

Apart from the home, schools are the most influential setting for child and youth development. In addition to learning the traditional educational concepts of literacy and numeracy, there is the opportunity for students to develop knowledge, attitudes and skills that help them manage emotions and sustain positive relationships. This is commonly referred to as Social and Emotional Learning which research shows is directly related to an increase in sense of wellbeing for ALL students. However, adding wellbeing to an already packed schedule can be a challenge, so there is a desire among school communities to find new and creative ways to integrate wellbeing within their existing daily practice. In the next year in SD67, educators, administrators, parents, students and community partners are coming together to explore how to achieve this goal.

You are being invited to take part in a process which has three core elements:

- *Co-design*: Bringing together people from multiple perspectives to brainstorm and give input on everyday practices that could impact student wellbeing and consider how these could lead to integration of wellbeing into schools.
- *Prototyping*: Our district will choose one everyday practice they are most excited about, and actually try it out within a set of schools to learn about its impact and how change happens in the school setting.
- *Scaling*: Using learnings throughout the process to move beyond the "pilot" stage to broadly influence practice, policy, and public opinion.

2. KEY GOALS AND OUTCOMES

The goals of this process is to move toward sustained integration of wellbeing in SD67's school communities. Here's what we'll do to get there:

- Engage multiple perspectives in coming up with ideas for everyday practices, rather than taking a top-down approach
- Move from talk to action, using WellAhead's support to actually test out our ideas
- Talk openly about what we're learning and being open to changing our methods along the way
- Focus on what we can easily and naturally do to make a positive difference in students' lives.

3. WHAT IS AN EVERYDAY PRACTICE?

We want to talk about little things that make a difference - saying hello, creating positive convening spaces, getting a little bit of exercise at key points during the day, taking mindfulness breaks – and the perceived impact these have on students. Sometimes these practices are informed by research or taken out of a particular program or curriculum, other times they are new ideas borne out of practice and experience. Everyday practices:

- > Built on assets and capabilities of schools, educators and partners
- > Can become a natural part of the your/ your school community's DNA (values, practices, day-to-day)
- > May positively impact ALL students' socio-emotional wellbeing
- > Can be embedded into regular school life (not just once or twice per year, but regularly – daily, weekly, monthly)
- > Aren't dependent on significant external resources

In particular, we are seeking to identify everyday practices that are:

- > **Impactful:** There is reason to believe it will positively impact students' social-emotional wellbeing
- > **Desirable:** Educators, students, parents, and the broader school community are likely to want/like/accept it
- > **Feasible/viable:** The practice is low cost, sustainable over time, and relatively easy to implement
- > **Integratable:** The practice can be embedded into the school day/structure and become part of the school DNA

4. Key Issues and Opportunities

What we know from local data and research:

- **Our kids value school.** 92% of our youth report that their friends would be upset with them if they dropped out of school.
- While **79%** of youth report **good or excellent mental health**, **57%** report feeling **stressed**.
- **Aboriginal students** have a graduation rate of 63% vs. 84% for non-Aboriginal students.
- **Our kids have a positive self concept.** 78% of youth believe that they are good at something.
- **SD67 is a leader in teaching innovation** and has received a national award recognizing the focus on making education meaningful, relevant and engaging for ALL learners.

Some key insights to keep in mind:

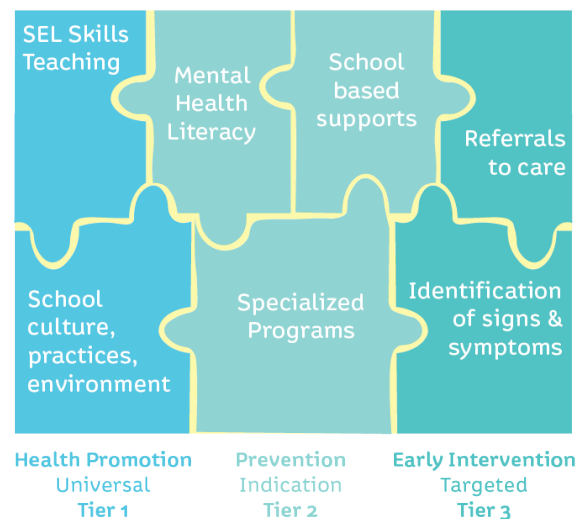
- Increasing numbers of kids are presenting with behavioural challenges that influence their learning, such as anxiety, and our classroom teachers do not have capacity or resources to support them.
- Kids across our district consistently report that they have caring teachers. The research shows that a positive relationship between student and teacher leads to higher academic success and increased social emotional skills in students.
- Feeling connected to school is really important to our kids. They often report school clubs, teams or other groups as a favourite part of their school experience and what motivates them to go.
- Our kids are really busy with many feeling stressed due not enough time to complete homework or other responsibilities.
- Social and emotional programming in schools reduces students' risk for failure including aggressive behaviour and emotional distress.

5. How WellAhead fits with current efforts in our district:

Existing initiatives:

WellAhead focuses on one piece of a broader puzzle of approaches to addressing child and youth wellbeing. In SD67, we are currently...

- creating healthy school communities
- incorporating the MindUP curriculum
- practicing inclusion in our classrooms and common spaces
- finding ways for students to feel connected to their school
- embracing our Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement
- focusing on the strengths of all learners



A focus on everyday practices related to school culture, practices and environment will allow us to bring attention to wellbeing across all areas of our school community. It will untie classrooms and schools in the common goal to enhance wellbeing in a manner that is sustainable with simple changes. It is about purposely doing things different to enhance wellbeing.

6. Values and Principles:

WellAhead builds on the **assets** of our school communities. By engaging with educators, administrators, parents, students and community partners in a **collaborative** way we can identify our strengths, and how these **strengths** can support the challenges. Just like our schools, we model **inclusion** by valuing the many voices of those involved to collaboratively design solutions. As ideas are tested we recognize the **courage to take a risk** and appreciate the **reflection** required to continually modify and adapt as we go. Throughout the WellAhead

process, we are reminded to keep focus on the **intention** of positively impacting social and emotional wellbeing.

7. Inspirations:

We know that our community is passionate about caring for our kids. We see it in our schools, our community and on our playgrounds. We have a talented and diverse local collaborative team that is committed to working together to support Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use. We have many local service groups that have taken action to provide positive supports for our kids. We have teachers and school communities who are truly educating from the heart. We have parents, grandparents and caregivers who are engaged with their kids. Most importantly, we have AMAZING kids who care for each other in the most inspiring ways.

Can you image the impact when we come together to work collectively to change the future for our kids? We can, and it is truly exciting!