

AGENDA: 5:30-8:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order/Roll Call
2. Land Acknowledgement
3. Approval of the Agenda
4. [Positive Culture & Well-Being report](#)
5. Adjournment

We acknowledge our presence on ancestral Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Confederacy land as determined by the Dish with One Spoon treaty.

The intent of this agreement is for all nations sharing this territory to do so responsibly, respectfully and sustainably in perpetuity.

We respect the longstanding relationships with the local Indigenous communities, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the Six Nations of the Grand River.



HWDSB Annual Plan Report

Name of Report: Positive Culture and Well-Being Report (Update)

Date: November 2022

This report provides an update on the Positive Culture and Well-Being Strategic Direction Priority since the last report in June 2022. This report serves as the monitoring report on this priority area with a number of related monitoring updates being shared throughout the year.

Positive Culture and Well-Being Reporting Schedule:

- **November 2022 – Equity Action Plan, Mental Health and Well Being and Safe Schools Action Plan**
- March 2023 – Mid-Year Update
- June 2023 – Equity Action Plan, Community Mapping and Safe Schools Action Plan

Priority: Positive Culture and Well-Being: We will build student and staff well-being through positive climate strategies and supportive relationships.

Goal: Improve the well-being of all students and staff and close the gap for those currently and historically underserved.

Target: At least 80 per cent of students and staff who self-identify as Black, Indigenous, Racialized, Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+, and people requiring special education supports and/or services self-report feeling safe, supported, accepted, and affirmed in their diverse and distinct identities.

Investing in People

Strategy #1: *Provide differentiated professional learning on culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, Indigenous Cultural Safety and Learn.Disrupt.Rebuild @HWDSB with a focus on relationships and conditions impacting learners who are currently and historically underserved.*

To support students who self-identify as Black, Indigenous, Racialized, Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ and people requiring special education supports and/or services feeling safe, supported, accepted, and affirmed in their diverse and distinct identities, staff engage in a variety of professional learning focused on classroom conditions and relationships.

Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP): A continued priority for professional learning in the 2022-23 school year is to use Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP) approaches. This year a focus has been placed on literacy. Every educator must expect that every

curiosity • creativity • possibility

student can learn how to read. An understanding of bias and how an educator's identity and experience can influence their practice continues to be critical learning. CRRP also supports student engagement in reading. Students connect and are interested in reading texts that include their experiences (i.e., where they can see themselves and their interests). Having students enjoy reading and inspiring students to read for pleasure are important goals for all reading programs. Small group targeted instruction with a CRRP approach is a focus for professional learning and is vital in engaging older students in reading. Program staff created a resource called the *Junior Reading Strategy* to support teachers in Grades Three to Six which is based on the Ministry guides for *Effective Instruction in Literacy, Grades 4 to 6*. A "Milestones" document also charts a progression of observable reading behaviours as part of the *Junior Reading Strategy*.

The concepts of CRRP are embedded into all Vice Principal and Principal learning sessions. As Vice Principals and Principals engage in learning regarding Human Rights, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), responding to incidents of hate, bias and prejudice and Reading Instruction, the core tenets of *Cultural Competence, High Expectation, and Critical Consciousness* are embedded into the learning. Throughout the 2022-2023 school year, staff will continue to provide professional development and embed CRRP into all areas of the curriculum and de-streaming practices.

Strategy #2: Provide differentiated professional learning to system leaders on Human Rights, systems of oppression, privilege, anti-racism and implications within the learning and working environments.

Vice Principal and Principal Learning: This school year, Vice Principal and Principal monthly learning sessions are focused on building a foundation of Human Rights and deepening knowledge and practice around the interrelationship between achievement, well-being, and equity. In September and October, Principals and Vice Principals engaged in learning Human Rights principles and our collective duties and responsibilities based on the board's new Human Rights Policy. Learning has been centered on understanding the protected code grounds in the Ontario Human Rights Code as well as the [Ontario Human Rights Commissions' 2018 six recommendations](#) to create an education system that respects Human Rights, promotes inclusion, and supports all students to achieve their full potential. Learning sessions were also held to deepen understanding of HWDSB's Responding to Hate, Bias, and Prejudice guidelines, as well as how to support repairing harm and engaging in learning when harm occurs. Learning will continue throughout the remainder of the school year. In relation to Human Rights, other areas of learning included are: Universal Design for Learning, understanding and addressing ableism, the Right to Read and grade 7-10 programs and pathways, including de-streaming.

Service Leader Learning: This fall, Senior Managers, Managers, and Executive Council engaged in a full day of learning on Human Rights and Accountability. We focused on understanding the fundamentals of Human Rights, service leaders' obligations as duty bearers and their roles in fostering a culture that respects Human Rights in all HWDSB environments. Participants had an opportunity to discuss HWDSB's new Human Rights Policy and their roles in implementing the policy. Participants also engaged in conversation to understand power, privilege, and bias in a workplace context. Learning will continue with service leaders throughout the 2022-2023 school year.

Leveraging Effective Practices

Strategy #1: Implement differentiated strategies to provide targeted and enhanced support to Black, Indigenous, Racialized and Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ students and students requiring special education supports and/or services.

Graduation Coach Program: The Graduation Coaches for Black Students Program operated in three secondary schools: Bernie Custis, Westdale, Sherwood and Sir Allan MacNab Secondary Schools in the last school year. For the 2022/23 school year, two more Graduation Coaches have been introduced and the program has been expanded to include two more secondary schools: Nora Francis Henderson and Sir Winston Churchill. The Graduation Coaches promote Black excellence and serve as mentors and advisors to Black students who may need culturally responsive support that affirms students' intersecting identities. The program operates throughout the school year and in the summer.

The Graduation Coaches for Black Students ran a leadership summer 2022 program to keep students engaged and stay connected with their peers and mentors from local communities. It was a well-attended program that kicked off with a *Give Back to the Community Park Clean Up*. Throughout the program, three coaches coordinated both in-person and virtual sessions engaging 40-50 students where the students worked with mentors from areas of interests they identified (e.g., photography, basketball, music production, financial literacy, hair styling, African/Caribbean cooking skills, etc.). Coaches, students, and families reported successful outcomes that have helped students stay engaged and motivated going into this school year.

Outcomes from the 2021/22 school year include:

- The program had a case load of 75 students in both semesters. In semester one, 64 students were successful which was an 85% success rate and in semester two, 66 students were successful which is an 88% success rate. (Success is defined as those that have passed 50% or more of their course load.)
- Strong relationships fostered by our five graduation coaches through empowering students to develop connections with their peers and educators. They support students in strengthening their well-being and overall needs beyond academic priorities which leads to higher engagement and positive outcomes.
- Barriers identified and removed using the whole family approach. Financial support is available including bus tickets, grocery gift cards, and school supplies throughout the year.

Student Voice Groups for Racialized and Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ Students: Student voice groups for racialized and Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ students began in October 2022. The purpose of these groups is to gather student voice about their experiences in HWDSB. Safe spaces are created for students to share, reflect and provide voice and insight on how to better serve students. The in-person meetings include a social aspect where students can gather together in shared identity and advocacy.

Understanding and Supporting Transgender, Non-Binary and Diverse Gender Identities: The updated Resource Guide/Factsheet: *Understanding and Supporting Transgender, Non-Binary, and Diverse Gender Identities* has been distributed to schools and learning has occurred for staff about inclusive practices for transgender, non-binary and gender fluid students. This learning is essential

to creating safe and inclusive conditions for students with non-binary and diverse gender identities. The Resource Guide/Factsheet is available on the board website. It will continue to be updated as needed.

On The Horizon: Moving Toward More Inclusive and Safer Classrooms: This guide supports discussions about sensitive issues that arise in the classroom, either as part of the planned teaching or spontaneously through classroom discussions. The document supports safer and more inclusive practices in the areas of:

- Being aware of controversial issues in school subjects
- Suggested classroom norms
- Specific guidelines for Indigenous and Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression learning

The guide is available to all staff, and aspects of it are embedded in all learning sessions related to Safe Schools, Equity, Indigenous Education and Mental Health. Deeper learning opportunities will be available to school teams, individuals, and leaders about how to build safer and more inclusive learning environments as well as to better understand our own social location, biases and belief structures that can contribute to systemic oppression and inequity.

Identity Affirming Mental Health and Well Being Programming: We offer social connection opportunities to students from historically and currently underserved populations; for example, Transcend Student and Parent Groups and Positive Space teams in schools. To ensure that these programs provide safe and supportive environments, we support leaders to ensure that best practices are implemented. In addition, the Social Work Department is in the initial stages of developing, implementing, and measuring several initiatives aimed at providing identity affirming mental health and well-being support to the many diverse student groups in schools. These initiatives are being developed by staff and in partnership with community services such as Youthrive, which is a collaborative effort that includes THRIVE Child and Youth Mental Health, St. Joseph's Youth Wellness Centre, Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC), De dwa da dehs nye (Aboriginal Health Centre) and HWDSB.

Project SEARCH: Project SEARCH is a unique, business-led, one-year, school-to-work transition program. It is an experiential work opportunity available for young people with an intellectual or communication exceptionality who are in their last year of high school. The main objective of the program is to prepare students for employment with job skills training through a combination of classroom instruction and hands-on career training. This program takes place entirely at the workplace with competitive employment as the goal for every graduate. Project SEARCH team members select interns using information from referrals, a written application, skills assessments, and an interview. During the school year, interns participate in classroom instruction and three 10-to-12-week internship placements. Upon graduation, interns are connected to a community employment service provider who supports the intern with securing competitive employment (working in an integrated setting, non-seasonal, and a minimum of 20 hours/week). The program reports a success rate of 75% of interns finding employment within one year of graduation.

Currently, HWDSB has two Project SEARCH sites. The first location at HWDSB's Education Centre started in September 2000. The second location at the YMCA of Hamilton, Burlington, Brantford (site location is the YMCA Downtown) and YWCA Hamilton, began in September 2022. Our graduates have successfully found employment at HWDSB's Education Centre, the Travelodge Simcoe, Hamilton Golf and Country Club, and the Hamilton Public Library – Redhill Branch. Recent

applications have been submitted to the City of Hamilton and Canada Post. This program has been life-changing for the interns and their families. The interns have developed independence, confidence, and the employability skills necessary for the workplace. Families have witnessed the capabilities of the interns and supported the steps towards greater independence and employment success.

Strategy #2: Implement Emotion Coaching, to enhance student-staff relationships (e.g., caring adult). Emotion Coaching is a communication strategy that can calm the brain in as little as 60 seconds, and help improve relationships.

Emotion Coaching has two steps: VALIDATION: Conveying that we are trying to understand why they feel, think, or act a certain way. SUPPORT: Then, we provide emotional and practical support using strategies like reassurance, limit-setting, redirecting, collaborative problem-solving, teaching skills, etc. Emotion Coaching is a communication strategy that promotes classroom engagement.

In 2020/2021, the first phase of Emotion Coaching training began. During this time, staff shared that they needed time and opportunity to apply Emotion Coaching skills to specific situations arising in their work. In October 2022, deeper learning on how to use Emotion Coaching in situations where heightened emotions, our own or others, are anticipated, was introduced. The training is tailored to specific situations and provides staff with the tools and skills to build self-awareness and better understand their own emotional responses. Then staff learn how to respond in helpful ways when supporting students through difficult situations.

We will provide four sessions for school staff to reflect on situations that have arisen where they have applied Emotion Coaching, and to discuss situations where staff struggled to respond or support students. Staff will be encouraged to reflect on how they supported students as well as their own reactions, emotions, and thoughts and explore why they may have reacted in certain ways. As educators and support staff embark on this journey, we will use the *On the Horizons* document to set the conditions for safety and inclusivity in the classroom.

The Social Work department has also increased the opportunity for caregivers to learn about *Emotion Coaching* through a joint partnership with the Hamilton Family Health Team and the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board. We offer monthly 90-minute webinars that introduce the elements of *Emotion Coaching* to caregivers and how to use this approach to support their children and youth. We also offer a 6-session group for caregivers that digs deeper into how to embed the *Emotion Coaching* approach into their parenting practices.

Strategy #3: Implement Employment Equity Action Plan

HWDSB completed an Employment Equity Audit (Employment Systems Review) to examine Human Resource policies and practices related to hiring, advancement, and inclusion of employees from diverse backgrounds. In the fall of 2020, HWDSB acted upon the recommendations from this audit and created *Reflecting our Community: Employment Equity Audit Action Plan*. The Action Plan laid out 70 recommendations into three phases to revise policies and practices, set priorities, and develop resources to continue building a more diverse, inclusive, welcoming, and supportive learning and working environment for everyone. The Employment Equity Audit and corresponding Action Plan are a key part of the HWDSB Equity

Action Plan. Staff have completed 46 of the recommendations to date. Many of these 46 recommendations are 'on-going' and part of our regular board practices and procedures. In addition, a further 22 recommendations are in progress to be implemented in the 2022-2023 school year.

The HWDSB Employment Equity Action Plan is a living document and continues to be updated by the Employment Equity Audit Steering Committee and through feedback from staff and student voice. We have reprioritized some recommendations and the timelines between the phases. Staff are committed, as per recommendation 70 of the Employment Equity Action Plan, to complete another audit beginning in the fall of 2024 to further assess progress and develop a new Employment Equity Plan.

Highlights from Phase 3 of the Employment Equity Audit Action Plan

The implementation of the recommendations of the Employment Equity Audit is a priority of the Human Resource Services division specifically for implementation of new hiring and recruitment practices, professional development, and community relations. In collaboration with multiple departments, we have:

- Removed all financial costs when applying for employment opportunities through Apply to Education,
- Provided a focused recruitment process for Black and racialized elementary and secondary Teachers, Vice-Principals, and Principals,
- Continued development and implementation of new policy and procedures,
- Launched our new Careers website which incorporates the feedback and recommendations from employees and the audit. The Careers website will provide a wealth of information for prospective HWDSB employees including information about accommodations.

In addition, this year we will review all Human Resource Services policies and procedures following the approval of the Human Rights Policy and Anti-Black Racism Policy.

Refining Measures of Progress

Strategy #1: Develop and implement the tools required to collect student identity-based data as part of the Student Census and update annually.

Further to our update in June 2022, Research & Analytics along with Communications and Community Engagement completed an [infographic](#) of Student Census frequencies and communicated it to the public and to those who originally participated in the Census.

We have proceeded with next steps in the census process in preparation for linking datasets and calculating disproportionalities. To that end, we are preparing for community consultation.

Information from the census has a direct and important impact on the lives of students and their families, particularly those who experience marginalization. Care must be taken to ensure communities have a say in how their data is reported and used in ways that benefit them. Seeking

community input to understand their priorities, concerns and interests is also in line with the [Anti-Racism Data Standards](#).

Staff from the Research & Analytics Department and the Human Rights Office will engage in conversations with community members about the census to build a context and stories to couch the census disproportionality findings in a way that increases understanding, empathy, and avoids stigmatization and assumptions. Ultimately, these findings will be publicly reported.

While we engage in that work, we are exploring options for how to continue to build the dataset from the original participation rate of 48% in a way that makes it easy for students and families to participate and for educators to support.

Strategy #2: *Develop and implement a Safe Schools Action Plan to respond to the recommendations from the Safe Schools: Bullying Prevention and Intervention Review Panel.*

The *Safe Schools Action Plan* addresses three fundamental areas related to bullying:

Prevention includes those things that schools do to create safe, welcoming, and inclusive classrooms and schools. Prevention focuses on the development of positive relationships and connections. Prevention is how we treat each other.

Intervention focuses on what schools do when an incident of bullying has occurred with a focus on supporting the student who has demonstrated bullying behaviour in changing that behaviour. It also includes support for the student who has experienced bullying, support for those who have witnessed bullying and support for families.

Responding gives attention to steps schools take when investigating and responding to bullying within the context of Board Policy and Ministry of Education Safe Schools requirements. This also considers student and family supports.

Appendix A provides an overview of the *Safe Schools Action Plan* priorities in each of these areas. As previous reports have focused on Responding, this report will highlight some of the work related to Prevention and Intervention.

Prevention: Engagement

Staff have a relentless focus on working alongside those impacted by bullying through the implementation of the *Safe Schools Action Plan*.

The voice structures to support this work include:

- Student Advisory Groups
- Parent/Guardian/Caregiver Advisory Group
- Community Advisory Group
- Organizational Advisory Group (internal departments and unions)

Working groups support each of the priority areas within the Plan. Staff have built and modified the structures to be responsive to participants. The invitation to join groups is ongoing. Working groups are co-facilitated by students/parents/guardians/caregivers and HWDSB staff. See Appendix C for more information.

Prevention: Reimagining Wellness 2.0

HWDSB initially introduced *Reimagining Wellness* to support a return to in-person learning as part of pandemic recovery in 2021. This learning focused on creating safe, welcoming, and inclusive classrooms and schools and on building caring relationships. In September 2022, we provided an updated resource *Reimagining Wellness 2.0*. It is a data-informed strategy being used to support student learning and achievement as well as mental health and well-being. *Reimagining Wellness 2.0* was designed with the original *Reimagining Wellness* framework in mind, and adjusted after feedback from students, staff, and the community. Staff were invited to submit their own lessons for potential inclusion in the *Reimagining Wellness 2.0* toolkit.

Reimagining Wellness 2.0 connects multiple HWDSB priorities including equity and mental health. Each lesson includes embedded curriculum and learning skills connections for educators to use. This work is foundational as it will help to support the creation of safer and more inclusive classrooms for all students and close the gap for those who are currently and historically underserved.

Reimagining Wellness 2.0 activities includes three categories: Community & Team Building, Physical Activation, and Social Emotional Skill Development. Within the categories, the weekly themes covered personal and collective identity, understanding, and managing emotions, self-care, collective empowerment, and collective action.

While usable throughout the school year, elementary classrooms were asked to engage in activities (or a staff developed alternative) during September. A revised secondary school resource is under development so secondary classrooms were provided with the option to use the elementary resource.

Appendix D provides a high-level overview of staff and student feedback. To date, the Positive Culture and Well-Being Consultant has worked with approximately 150-200 students and 15 classroom staff to evaluate the impact of *Reimagining Wellness 2.0*. Similar to last year, we will ask all staff and students to complete a Thought Exchange survey later this month to continue to develop this valuable resource in a way that maximizes its impact across the system. The following video shares a snapshot of some of the student and staff experiences to date: [Reimagining Wellness 2.0](#)

Prevention: Bullying Prevention and Intervention Week - Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying was identified in the Safe Schools Action Plan in direct response to student and parent voice. As a result, in spring 2021, all school staff engaged in learning related to cyberbullying. School staff also used this opportunity to share their thoughts around what further learning/resources would be helpful as they consider how to support students to prevent, intervene and respond to cyberbullying. Over 500 staff completed a ThoughtExchange providing over 400 thoughts and over 7000 ratings of suggested areas of need. Infographics (see Appendix E) have been developed for students, staff, and caregivers to help facilitate and guide these conversations. These resources include a QR code to route users to the digital version of the same poster where they can access a variety of cyberbullying resources online to support topics such as: What is Cyberbullying? How Can I Stay Safer Online? And What if I am the one that is impacted?

During Bullying Prevention and Intervention Week, November 20 – 26, 2021, students and staff explored different cyber topics related to digital citizenship, online safety & cyberbullying. Each

day there was a literacy component which used a video/image as a discussion prompt or a quick write prompt. In addition, each day included a math/numeracy component that had students investigate statistics or graphs that align with the given topic of the day. Topics included: Media Balance, Digital Footprint, Being Mindful Online, How Technology Makes Us Feel and Digital Citizenship.

Prevention - Roots of Empathy

Roots of Empathy is an evidence-based program which reduces the rates of bullying. A baby and a parent visit a classroom throughout the school year to cover nine themes geared to help children develop empathy skills. The program mission is to build caring, peaceful, and civil societies.

Staff have been working with Roots of Empathy to understand how this program could be part of HWDSB bullying prevention work. For more than 20 years, HWDSB has hosted Roots of Empathy in classrooms. This year HWDSB is taking a more targeted approach with Roots of Empathy taking place in 41 classrooms across 32 schools. Many programs are facilitated by educators in schools in a variety of roles. We are also fortunate to partner with Public Health and EarlyON programs to host other programs as well as volunteers, many of whom are parents. In the past year, Roots of Empathy provided presentations to Home and School, the Special Education Advisory Committee and the Parental Involvement Committee. We also communicated Roots of Empathy opportunities to all School Councils. Staff will be working with Roots of Empathy to consider how to measure the impact of this program.

Intervention - Alternative Suspension Program

Engagement and collaboration with community partners is fundamental when considering approaches to bullying prevention, intervention and responding. In spring 2022, staff began meeting with the YMCA to discuss a possible partnership related to supporting students who are on short-term suspensions (3 to 5 days). Currently the YMCA Alternative Suspension Program supports 350 schools across Canada, France, the United Kingdom and Ireland. This research-informed program has seen good results, such as fostering resilience, independence and the ability to stay in school, positively influencing motivation and attitude towards school and ending the cycle of repeated suspensions.

This Program has 7 Essential Elements which contribute to the outcomes (Appendix F). HWDSB students may begin to access the Program in December 2022.

Appendix A: Safe Schools Action Plan Areas of Focus



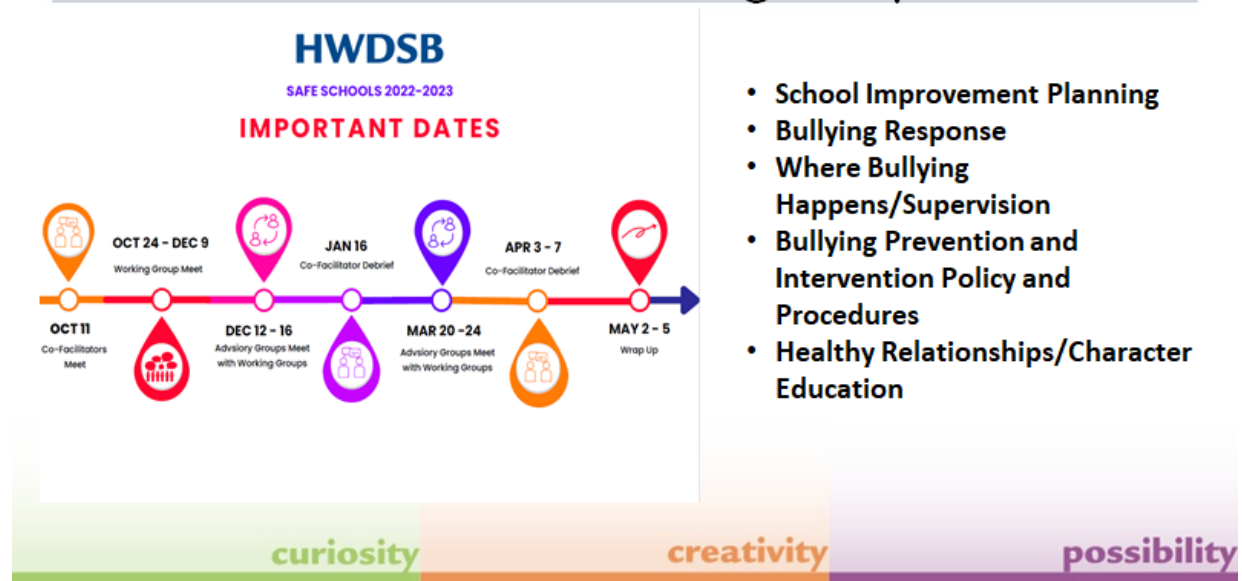
Appendix B: Safe Schools Action Plan Commitments to Students, Parents/Guardians/Caregivers and Staff

1. Being transparent with students, parents/guardians/caregivers, staff, and community about the Safe Schools Action Plan – what we are doing to be shared regularly – website, reporting to Trustees (4 times a year);
2. Create structures to ensure student, parent/guardian/caregiver, staff, and community voice inform school and board plans and that these plans are publicly shared and reported on;
3. Improved engagement with attention to working with those impacted by decisions;
4. Building relationships and trust through our actions – listening and responding and being accountable at the school and system-level for improvement in student safety and well-being.

Appendix C: Working Groups

HWDSB

Working Groups: Timelines




Appendix D: Reimagining Wellness 2.0 Feedback

Reimagining Wellness 2.0


Anecdotal Feedback

Student Feedback ■ Educator Feedback ■


This lesson got me to believe in my dreams and never give up!





That making mistakes/struggling is part of learning, and when you don't get something right there's always next time, and I WILL improve!




What I liked about the lesson is that it was fun and you also learned different stuff while having lots of fun some things I learned were cooperating in a group and imagination!



I liked that I learned different strategies to calm me down when feeling big emotions or having anxiety.





I liked getting up and moving and doing the workouts !




Dream BIG

100% of educators stated that Reimagining Wellness lessons supported the acquisition of curriculum/learning skills expectations.

TOMORROW, YOU CAN TRY AGAIN 

Students were already learning about exhibiting a growth mindset in our room and this lesson helped to reiterate and cement some of those big ideas we have been discussing.



I liked that there were multiple entry points. It was engaging for all -- everyone tried it. And I liked the video reminding students that speed is not the most important thing. Some kids who take more time actually said 'thank you' when they heard that message.

Take a DEEP BREATH

This was a good way to consolidate some of the learning we've done on how media (in many forms) can convey emotion. The task was simple and engaging and required creativity, but was not overly complicated. All learners could find a way in. This was a good activity to continue discussing the ways in which emotions are linked to art. It also connected to our grammar focus on adjectives.

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Appendix F – YMCA Alternative Suspension Program



YMCA ALTERNATIVE SUSPENSION

7 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

**3 DAYS MINIMUM**

The minimum stay is 3 days so that a trusting relationship can be developed. 5 day maximum.

**NEUTRAL ENVIRONMENT**

The program always takes place outside the school walls.

**TAILORED APPROACH**

The small group format allows program workers to take an individualized approach with each participant.

**BALANCED INTERVENTION**

1-on-1 meetings, group workshops, and a strong emphasis on academics.

**OPEN CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION**

Regular communication with the school and parents ensures everyone is involved in the process.

**ACCOMPANIED RETURN TO SCHOOL**

The student is prepared and accompanied for the reintegration meeting and the return to school.

**FOLLOW-UP**

1 month after the student returns to school a follow-up is completed with the school, parent and student.