



# RIPPLE EFFECT REPORT

## HEALTHY SCHOOLS AS ACCELERATORS OF DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS IN YOUTH

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## ABSTRACT

PHE Canada, with the financial support of the Max Bell Foundation, conducted a systematic review of both national and international Healthy School<sup>1</sup> evaluation reports. Building on this, PHE Canada then undertook a meta-analysis to harvest the outcomes and the contribution of healthy school activations to the Search Institutes Developmental Assets Framework that outlines what young people need to thrive and grow into healthy, responsible, and resilient adults. The findings revealed substantial benefits of healthy school activations, most notably a 35% increase in feelings of safety, a 38% rise in social competence, a 44% increase in commitment to learning, a 35% increase in health-promoting habits and behaviours, and a 40% increase in feelings of meaning and purpose.

In the final stage of this project, PHE Canada extrapolated the findings to estimate the broader, long-term ripple effects of healthy school activations. By mapping out these potential outcomes, we highlighted how investing in healthy schools contributes to building healthier, more resilient individuals and communities.

This analysis not only underscores the value of healthy schools but also highlights the importance of investments and collective effort in building healthy schools. These results provide critical insights for policymakers, educators, parents, and community stakeholders on how to maximize the lasting impact of nurturing health and well-being within K-12 educational environments.

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<sup>1</sup> The term healthy school is used throughout this paper. Equivalents include health-promoting schools, the whole school, the whole community, the child model, and the healthy certification program. Regardless of the name, the common thread is that all are based on the Comprehensive School Health Model.

# INTRODUCTION

In 1986, the World Health Organization (WHO) published their Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, emphasizing the vital role that schools have in supporting the well-being and well-becoming of children and youth, offering a unique opportunity to lay the foundation for lifelong health through education and community engagement. Since the Charter's release, education systems across the world have initiated a plethora of healthy school activations. However, these activations often have limited resources and capacity, are fragmented, and have a tendency to function as isolated, one-time initiatives.

In Canada, PHE (Physical and Health Education) Canada and the Canadian Healthy Schools Alliance established Canada's first Healthy School Standards. The World Health Organization's Whole-School approach, Dr. Kate Storey's Essential Conditions, and the Comprehensive School Health model serve as the foundation for these standards, which aim to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of healthy school initiatives. Since the standard's creation, they have attracted interest from around the world.

The standards list three foundational elements required to establish a fertile foundation from which activations can grow and thrive (Figure 1). A comprehensive whole

school approach, which integrates the social and physical environment, teaching and learning, policy, and partnerships with families, communities, and other key stakeholders, forms the foundation for these fundamental elements. The Joint Consortium of School Health asserts that synchronizing actions across all four components enables students to reach their maximum potential as learners and become healthy, productive members of society (Joint Consortium for School Health, n.d.). Building on this foundation, the Healthy School Standards outline eight implementation standards that empower school communities to carry out their tailored plans, leveraging their unique assets and addressing social, relational, and systemic dimensions to meet their specific interests (Figure 2).

The Standards promote a strengths-based approach focused primarily on two areas: illuminating and deepening the strengths within the school community and moving from fragmented activities to a comprehensive approach. In these healthy environments and cultures, the protective factors and resilience necessary for health and well-being can thrive, and unhealthy behaviours are less likely to take root (Canadian Healthy School Standards, 2021).



**Figure 1.** Foundational Standards (Canadian Healthy School Standards, 2021)

# IMPLEMENTATION STANDARDS

## 1. STUDENTS AS CHANGE MAKERS:

Students should be at the centre of the process, leading the way.

## 2. SCHOOL-SPECIFIC AUTONOMY:

Activities should be driven by the school community and build on the school's strengths and assets.

## 3. DEMONSTRATED ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP:

Principals should be actively engaged for a sustainable and authentic process.

## 4. HIGHER-LEVEL SUPPORT:

Leadership and support set the tone in order to prioritize Healthy School activities and ensure resources are allocated.

## 5. DEDICATED CHAMPION(S) TO ENGAGE SCHOOL COMMUNITY:

School health champions must include multiple, and diverse members of the school community.

## 6. COMMUNITY SUPPORT:

Champions that respectfully reflect the diversity of the community from all levels.

## 7. QUALITY AND USE OF EVIDENCE:

School-based data and research are essential for planning, refining, and supporting wellbeing activities in school communities.

## 8. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING:

School staff should seek out learning opportunities such as attending training, conferences or workshops, and building learning networks and communities of practice.

**Figure 2.** Implementation standards (Canadian Healthy School Standards, 2021)

Across the world, approaches to school health are similar to what is outlined in the Canadian Healthy School Standards. Despite differences in the names of the approaches, these approaches share a commitment to promoting well-being through a comprehensive approach that is driven by a collaborative approach.

It is the intention of the Canadian Healthy Schools Alliance (the Alliance) to ensure that all schools in Canada are healthy schools (Canadian Healthy Schools Alliance, n.d.). To this end, PHE Canada, as the backbone organization for the Alliance, conducted a comprehensive review of existing research on healthy schools to harvest their outcomes. We then contrasted the findings with the Search Institute's Developmental

Assets Framework, with the goal of understanding the contribution of healthy school activations on the growth of key developmental assets that young people need to thrive and grow into healthy, responsible, and resilient adults. Specifically, it examines whether these activations contribute to external assets, such as supportive relationships and empowerment, while also nurturing internal assets like positive identity and social competencies.

By assessing these connections, we sought to understand the broader ripple effects of healthy schools on both individual and collective development, ultimately looking to validate the transformative potential of the healthy school activations on students, educators, and the school community.

# AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this study was to ascertain the impact of healthy school activations and their contribution to the building of key developmental assets in children and youth and the ripple effect of this on the boarder community.

The research questions that shaped this study were:

- What is the impact on those who experienced a healthy school activation?
- What is the connection between these impacts on the Search Institutes Developmental Assets Framework?
- What are the long-term ripple effects of these findings on students and their school communities?

## METHODOLOGY

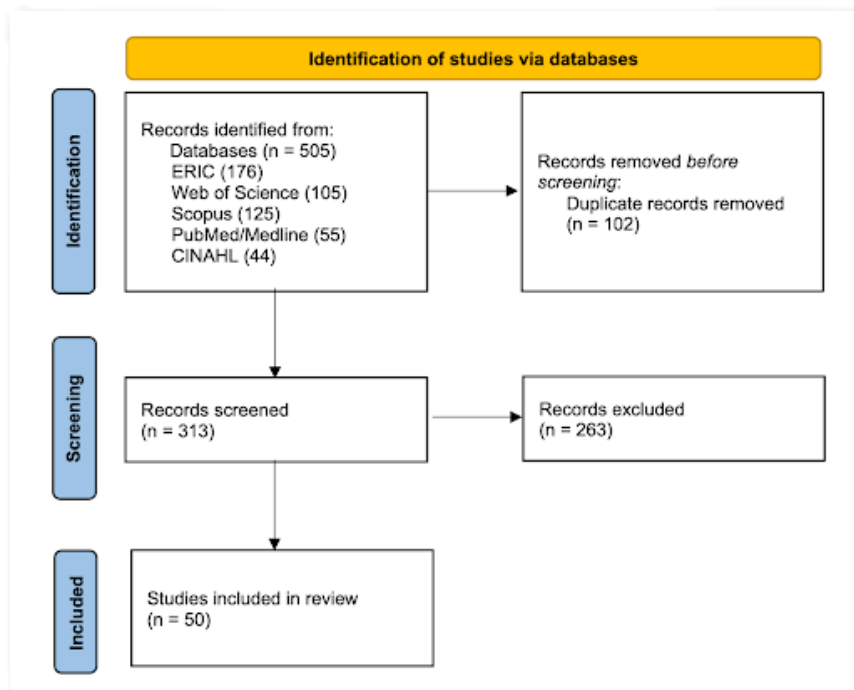
Phase one of this study involved a systematic review process aimed at harvesting the evidence of the impact of healthy school activations. We used databases such as ERIC, Web of Science, Medline (PubMed), Scopus, and CINAHL (EBSCO) to search peer-reviewed journals and other systemic reviews across all years and countries.

The search focused on K-12 students or school staff who participated in a healthy school activation, with titles containing specific keywords such as "Comprehensive School Health," "Health Promoting School," "Healthy Schools," "Whole School," "Whole Community," "Whole Child Model," "Healthy School Certification Program," "Wholistic Model," and "Apple School," along with impact-related terms like "impact," "return," "benefit," "value," "evaluation," "assessment," and "measurement." Further inclusion criteria are detailed in Table 1.

The search yielded a total of 505 papers across the databases ERIC (176), Web of Science (105), Scopus (125), PubMed/Medline (55), and CINAHL (44) (Figure 3). After excluding 102 duplicates, 313 unique papers were included for further review. We used Covidence to further screen articles based on the presence of healthy school activations related to the four pillars of comprehensive school health—teaching and learning, the social and physical school environment, partnerships and services, and/or policy implementation—that had a measured impact. The intervention focused on exposure to a healthy school activation, with comparisons made between those who experienced the program and those who did not, where applicable. Through this, we selected 50 papers.

**Table 1.** Inclusion criteria for studies in systematic review

	Inclusion	Exclusion
Papers	Peer-reviewed data from qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods	Grey literature, research reports, doctoral theses and unpublished studies
Population	K-12 students Teachers and stakeholders Pre-service teachers	Out-of-school
Intervention/ exposure	Health Promoting School exposure	Health Promoting School implementation process/orientation
Comparator / Context	Studies about the impact of healthy schools versus schools with no healthy school programming implemented	
Outcome	Impact of a healthy school-based program	Focus on specific aspects of the implementation process, not on the intervention impact



**Figure 3.** PRISMA diagram showing the included and excluded studies throughout each stage of the systematic review.

Of the 50 papers, 27 used the term “whole school,” 11 “comprehensive school health,” 7 “health-promoting school interventions,” 2 whole school, whole community, whole child,” and 2 “school-based healthy school intervention”. The 50 selected papers included contributions from Australia (8), Canada (10), China (3), Denmark (1), England (6), Ireland (3), the Netherlands (5), New Zealand (2), Oman (1), Scotland (2), Taiwan (1), Turkey (1), and the United States of America (6).

Once the papers were selected, phase two included categorizing each paper based on how its healthy school activation supported, enhanced, or intersected with the key components of the Search Institute’s Developmental Assets Framework.

The Search Institute’s Developmental Assets Framework identifies the positive qualities, relationships, and opportunities that young people need to thrive and grow into healthy, responsible, and resilient adults. The Developmental Assets Framework is rich in research and widely used in educational settings, youth programs, and community initiatives to guide strategies for supporting youth development. It's based on the idea that the more assets a young person has, the more likely they are to make healthy choices, achieve academic success, and avoid high-risk

behaviours. According to the Search Institute, “when young people have more assets, they are: more likely to thrive now and in the future; less likely to engage in a wide range of high-risk behaviours; and more likely to be resilient in the face of challenges (Search Institute, n.d.).

These assets are grouped into 40 developmental assets and are organized into two broad categories (Table 2). The first 20 assets are external, referring to the experiences and opportunities available within families, schools, youth programs, and communities. The remaining 20 assets are internal, representing the personal skills, values, and self-perceptions that enable young people to make positive choices and take responsibility for their lives, maintain independence, and flourish. Of these 14 external assets, all 20 internal assets (marked in bold) can be supported through a healthy school approach. By mapping these relationships, we were able to identify areas of strong influence, providing a clear understanding of the extent to which each study contributed to the promotion of these assets in educational contexts.



**Table 2.** Search Institute’s Developmental Assets copied with permission from [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)

External Assets	Internal Assets
<p>Support</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Family Support: Family life provides high levels of love and support.</li> <li>2. Positive Family Communication: The young person and their parent(s) communicate positively, and the young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.</li> <li>3. <b>Other Adult Relationships: A young person receives support from three or more non-parental adults.</b></li> <li>4. <b>Caring Neighbourhood: A young person experiences caring neighbours.</b></li> <li>5. <b>Caring School Climate-School provides a caring, encouraging environment.</b></li> <li>6. <b>Parent Involvement in Schooling: Parents are actively involved in helping young people succeed in school.</b></li> </ol>	<p>Commitment to Learning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21. <b>Achievement Motivation: A young person is motivated to do well in school.</b></li> <li>22. <b>School Engagement: A young person is actively engaged in learning.</b></li> <li>23. <b>Homework: A young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.</b></li> <li>24. <b>Bonding to School: A young person cares about their school.</b></li> <li>25. <b>Reading for pleasure: A young person reads for pleasure for three or more hours per week.</b></li> </ol>
<p>Empowerment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. <b>Community Values Youth: A young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.</b></li> <li>8. <b>Youth as Resources: Young people are given useful roles in the community.</b></li> <li>9. <b>Service to Others: A young person serves in the community for one hour or more per week.</b></li> <li>10. <b>Safety: A young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighbourhood.</b></li> </ol>	<p>Positive Values</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>26. <b>Caring: A young person places high value on helping other people.</b></li> <li>27. <b>Equality and Social Justice: A young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.</b></li> <li>28. <b>Integrity: A young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.</b></li> <li>29. <b>Honesty: A young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."</b></li> <li>30. <b>Responsibility: A young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.</b></li> <li>31. <b>Restraint: A young person believes it is important to take care of themselves and avoid harmful habits and behaviours.</b></li> </ol>

External Assets	Internal Assets
<p>Boundaries and Expectations</p> <p>11. Family boundaries: The family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person’s whereabouts.</p> <p><b>12. School boundaries: The school provides clear rules and consequences.</b></p> <p><b>13. Neighbourhood Boundaries: Neighbours take responsibility for monitoring young people’s behaviour.</b></p> <p><b>14. Adult Role Models—Parent(s) and other adults’ model positive, responsible behaviour.</b></p> <p><b>15. Positive Peer Influence: A young person's best friends’ model responsible behaviour.</b></p> <p><b>16. High Expectations: Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.</b></p>	<p>Social Competencies</p> <p><b>32. Planning and Decision Making: A young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.</b></p> <p><b>33. Interpersonal Competence: A young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.</b></p> <p><b>34. Cultural Competence: A young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.</b></p> <p><b>35. Resistance Skills: A young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.</b></p> <p><b>36. Peaceful Conflict Resolution: A young person seeks to resolve conflict non-violently.</b></p>
<p>Constructive Use of Time</p> <p><b>17. Creative Activities: A young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theatre, or other arts.</b></p> <p><b>18. Youth Programs: A young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school.</b></p> <p><b>19. Community: A young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in the community.</b></p> <p><b>20. Time at Home: A young person is out with friends “with nothing special to do” two or fewer nights per week.</b></p>	<p>Positive Identity</p> <p><b>37. Personal Power: A young person feels they control the "things that happen to me."</b></p> <p><b>38. Self-Esteem: A young person reports having a high self-esteem.</b></p> <p><b>39. Sense of Purpose: A young person reports that “my life has purpose”.</b></p> <p><b>40. Positive view of personal future: A young person is optimistic about their personal future.</b></p>

Studies were excluded if they did not demonstrate impact and direct relevance to healthy school activations within a comprehensive whole-school approach. Specifically, studies that emphasized professional development and assessment for learning systems; research on intercultural education in Australia; studies focused on resilience as a means to promote health; investigations into the roles of casual relief teachers in Australia; evaluations testing theoretical frameworks of whole-school interventions aimed at improving student learning outcomes; work on physical education classes, whole community, whole child approach that focused solely on implementation processes and suggestions without assessing impact; theoretical discussions on implementation practices; whole-school initiatives aimed at literacy evaluation, counselling, and blood pressure control; studies focused on the evaluation or validation of protocols; and research on human rights education, music, and youth radicalization. These exclusions ensure the review remains focused on relevant, impactful research aligned with our objectives.

Among the studies analyzed, 11 employed a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interventions' effects. Another 11 studies used a qualitative methodology, focusing on in-depth insights, participant perspectives, and contextual factors influencing the success of the interventions. The remaining 25 studies were quantitative, providing measurable outcomes, statistical analysis, and objective assessments of the interventions' impact.

In total, the selected papers represented data from 161 schools and 13 countries, involving 10,056 parents/caregivers, 5,469 school staff, and 143,352 students. Of the students, the majority of healthy school activations fell under the Comprehensive School Health Social and Physical Environment pillar, benefiting 122,467 students. The Partnerships and Service pillar had 17,708 student beneficiaries, the Teaching and Learning pillar had 3,177 student beneficiaries, and no policy activations were reported. Together, these studies provided a multifaceted perspective on the value and effectiveness of healthy school activations worldwide.

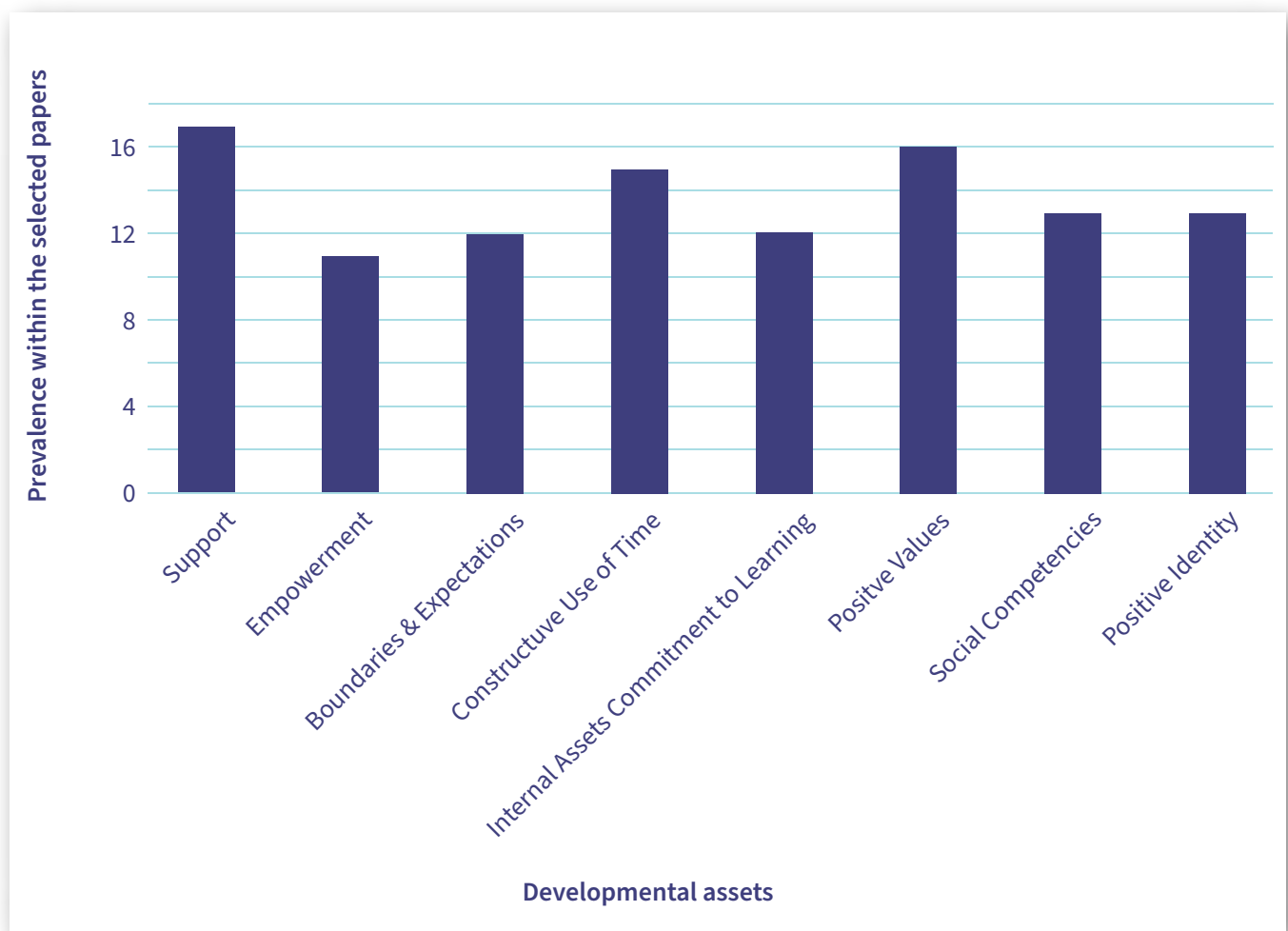


# FINDINGS

The findings from these studies demonstrated that healthy school activations positively influence the attainment of developmental assets, which are key factors in supporting the overall well-being, growth, and success of youth.

Figure 4 illustrates the impact of healthy schools activations on developmental assets. Table 3 provides a detailed overview, linking both the presence of the developmental assets and the corresponding

mean outcomes associated with the healthy school activations as reported in the study. It illustrates how each activation aligns with specific developmental assets and shows the average impact these activations have had on them. This comparison helps to visualize the relationship between healthy school activations and their effectiveness in promoting the developmental assets.



**Figure 4.** Impact of Healthy School Activations on Development Assets

**Table 3.** Summary of findings from meta-analysis

Developmental Asset	Prevalence within the Selected Papers	Mean Healthy School Student Outcomes Reported
Support	17	35% increase in support through a caring school environment and neighbourhood, adult relationship and parental involvement.
Empowerment	11	39% increase in psychological, environmental, and physical safety.
Boundaries and Expectations	12	31% increase in school boundaries, adult role models, positive peer influences, and encouragement.
Constructive Use of Time	15	35% increase in sports, physical, social, and creative activity participation in before, during, and after school activities.
Commitment to Learning	12	44% increase in achievement motivation, school engagement, and bonding.
Positive Values	16	35% increase in health-promoting behaviours and habits, integrity, and personal responsibility.
Social Competencies	13	38% increase in planning and decision-making, interpersonal and cultural competence, resistance, and positive conflict resolution skills.
Positive Identity	13	40% increase in sense of optimism, personal control, self-esteem, meaning, and purpose.

# DISCUSSION

## Distribution of external and internal assets in healthy school activations

Understanding the distribution of external and internal assets in healthy school activations is crucial for identifying the areas of greatest impact and uncovering opportunities for further development. Among the external assets, 17 activations focused on enhancing support, and 15 aligned with the constructive use of time assets. Activations that enhanced boundaries & expectations were moderately represented, with a prevalence of 12, and 11 focused on empowerment.

For internal assets, activities that contributed to the development of positive values stood out as the most frequently observed, with a prevalence of 16.

Activations that built social competencies and positive identity were equally represented, with 13 papers, while 12 advanced students' commitment to learning. Overall, programs that enhanced student support and positive values emerged as the most prominent focal point within healthy school activations. In contrast, empowerment and commitment to learning were less frequently emphasized, suggesting potential areas for increased focus. The relatively balanced representation of internal and external assets indicated a holistic approach to fostering both individual and environmental development.

# RIPPLE EFFECT ANALYSIS

Finally, using the data from our systematic review and meta-analysis, we extrapolated the findings to support a ripple effect evaluation to assess the broader cascading impact of the healthy school initiatives. The ripple effect analysis focused on understanding how increases in developmental assets, such as empowerment and social competencies, can impact not only the students directly involved in the interventions but also their peers, teachers, and the wider school community. Ultimately, this approach provided valuable insights into how healthy school interventions can create both immediate and lasting changes at the population level, with enduring benefits for the entire school environment after the activation is complete.

We conducted an additional literature review to determine the ripple effects of healthy schools and the developmental assets they nurture. What we found was that each developmental asset is far-reaching and can contribute to the creation of a healthier, more cohesive, and thriving society.

The 50 papers included in the systemic review profiled a diverse range of healthy school activations, including healthy food and physical activity programming, mental wellbeing supports, school and community

partnerships, mental health education, trauma-sensitive practices, and bullying reduction initiatives. The involvement of 10,056 parents/caregivers, 5,469 school staff, and 143,352 students underscores the potential reach of healthy schools and their ability to reinforce both external assets, like supportive relationships and empowering school environments, and internal assets, such as positive identity and social competencies. As well, through their diversity, these activations demonstrated their potential to cultivate environments where children and youth can thrive, ultimately contributing significantly to the developmental assets essential for lifelong success and resilience.

The impacts also extended to broader community engagement, encouraging lifelong civic participation and fostering inclusivity. Schools served as hubs of positive change, influencing public health, reducing aggression, and creating safer neighbourhoods. Teachers experienced increased job satisfaction and retention, while families and communities were empowered to reinforce healthy habits. This interconnected cycle of improvement ensured that the benefits of healthy schools extended beyond individual students, promoting healthier, more connected, and resilient communities over time.

### Developmental Asset: Support

Creating a supportive school environment has a positive (35%) impact on student well-being, fostering resilience, academic success, and life skills. Initiatives like APPLE Schools in Canada and Health Promoting Schools in Hong Kong demonstrate the value of comprehensive approaches involving students, staff, families, and communities. These programs improve school connectedness, belonging, and mental health by addressing safety, promoting positive behaviours, and strengthening relationships. Active parental involvement reinforces these efforts, enhancing academic performance and emotional well-being. Interventions such as restorative practices and nutrition programs further contribute to inclusive, nurturing environments, reducing stress, and promoting lifelong health. Collectively, these efforts underscore the importance of collaborative, whole-school approaches in creating spaces where students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

### Developmental Assets: Empowerment

Student-led interventions have been shown to increase psychological, environmental, and physical safety by 39%, highlighting the effectiveness of empowering students to actively shape and promote school health. When young people feel valued by adults, it boosts their self-esteem and sense of belonging and encourages participation in community activities that foster personal growth and social integration. Giving youth meaningful roles cultivates leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving skills, while volunteering promotes empathy, social responsibility, and emotional well-being. A safe environment at home, school, and in the community supports academic, social, and emotional development. By integrating mental health education into schools, students build resilience, coping skills, and a positive school climate, benefiting both individual well-being and the broader school community. Empowering youth in this way enhances their sense of purpose, belonging, and personal agency, creating a supportive environment for their overall growth.

### Developmental Asset: Boundaries and Expectations

A 31% increase in school boundaries and expectations highlights the importance of adult role models, positive peer influences, and consistent encouragement in shaping students' development. Clear and equitable standards in schools provide structure, promoting accountability and responsible decision-making, while active community involvement fosters shared accountability and safety. Positive adult role models and supportive peers guide youth in navigating challenges, building resilience, and making prosocial choices. High expectations from parents and teachers cultivate a growth mindset, motivating academic and personal success. Additionally, professional development programs for teachers, trauma-sensitive practices, and emotional health initiatives contribute to a positive school climate, reducing behavioural issues and promoting resilience. Together, these factors create a supportive environment that enhances students' behaviour, self-esteem, and overall success.





### **Developmental Asset: Social Competencies**

A 35% increase in health-promoting behaviours, personal responsibility, and integrity highlights the significant role individual actions play in enhancing social competence, which is key to youth development and well-being. Social competence enables youth to navigate relationships effectively, fostering positive outcomes across academic, social, and emotional domains. It promotes healthier relationships, enhances academic collaboration, boosts self-esteem, and improves emotional regulation, all contributing to resilience and mental well-being. Socially competent youth are better equipped to resolve conflicts constructively and manage stress, laying the foundation for future success in personal and professional life. Research supports the importance of collaborative efforts between families, schools, and communities in fostering safer, more connected environments, with programs like emotion coaching and opportunities for student autonomy further enhancing social skills. Initiatives in Taiwan and other settings demonstrate that partnerships between schools and universities can amplify the impact of health-promoting efforts, creating stronger networks that support emotional and social competence. Overall, these comprehensive school health models, which involve both students and staff, promote a cohesive, supportive school culture that benefits the entire community.

### **Developmental Assets: Constructive Use of Time**

Participation in sports, physical, social, and creative activities increased by 35% in schools with healthy school initiatives, demonstrating the positive impact of engaging students in structured activities before, during, and after school. According to the Search Institute's Developmental Assets Framework, creative activities such as music, theatre, and the arts foster emotional development, creativity, and cognitive skills like problem-solving and critical thinking. Similarly, youth programs like sports and extracurricular activities promote teamwork, leadership, physical activity, and mental well-being, while improving academic performance and emotional regulation. Healthy school activations, involving teachers, parents, and students, also enhance students' behaviours related to self-care, fostering a culture of respect and collaboration through restorative practices. Programs like FLASH (Fit Lifestyle at School and at Home) link school and community efforts to promote sustained physical activity and healthy habits, which in turn improve student engagement, reduce stress, and enhance academic outcomes in subjects like reading and math. Additionally, community involvement strengthens social networks, leadership skills, and empathy, while limiting unstructured time helps youth develop discipline and time management. Overall, these initiatives create an environment that supports personal growth, well-being, and future success by encouraging positive social interactions, reducing risky behaviours, and promoting a balanced lifestyle.

## Developmental Assets: Commitment to Learning

A 44% increase in achievement motivation, school engagement, and bonding highlights the importance of fostering a strong connection to school and academic success, which plays a key role in youth's personal development and lifelong learning habits. Achievement motivation drives students to set and achieve goals, fostering perseverance and a positive attitude toward learning, which leads to higher academic success and accomplishment. School engagement deepens cognitive development, encourages critical thinking, and improves academic outcomes. Integrating health education into the curriculum enhances both well-being and academic achievement, with students engaged in holistic learning showing improved focus and performance. Consistent dedication to homework cultivates strong study habits, time management, and self-discipline, essential for lifelong success. Additionally, reading for pleasure improves literacy, expands vocabulary, and fosters a love of learning, further contributing to academic and personal growth. Together, these factors lay a strong foundation for lifelong learning, supporting positive attitudes toward education and personal development throughout students' academic journeys and beyond.

## Developmental Assets: Positive Values

The impact of positive values on youth is profound, shaping their character, relationships, and approach to life. Healthy school activations led to a 35% increase in health-promoting behaviours, personal responsibility, and integrity, emphasizing the role of individual actions in promoting well-being. Youth who value equality and caring develop empathy, kindness, and a sense of community, which fosters positive social relationships and emotional well-being. Similarly, valuing social justice empowers youth to advocate for fairness, addressing societal issues like hunger and discrimination. Integrity builds confidence and resilience, as youth who practice it make ethical decisions and navigate adversity with trustworthiness. Responsibility enhances problem-solving skills, accountability, and self-regulation, while valuing restraint promotes health-conscious behaviours, such as avoiding risky activities.

School-based health programs, like those in Amsterdam, Nova Scotia, and Ireland, demonstrate the effectiveness of comprehensive approaches in promoting healthy habits, reducing risky behaviours, and improving long-term health outcomes. Additionally, integrating healthy eating practices into school wellness initiatives, as seen in studies from Ontario, Oman, and China, supports healthier food choices and strengthens family-wide health behaviors. Together, these values lead to ethical decision-making, stronger relationships, greater empathy, and healthier lifestyle choices contributing to personal growth, community engagement, and long-term societal benefits, including improved health outcomes and workforce readiness.



## Developmental Assets: Social Competence

The impact of social competence on youth is vital for shaping their ability to navigate relationships, make informed choices, and engage positively with others. A 38% increase in planning, decision-making, interpersonal and cultural competence, resistance skills, and conflict resolution abilities was observed through healthy school activations. Youth with strong planning and decision-making skills are better equipped to set goals, manage time, and make responsible choices, leading to academic success and personal growth. Interpersonal competence, including empathy and communication skills, fosters healthy relationships, emotional understanding, and trust. Cultural competence encourages respect for diversity, promoting inclusivity and reducing prejudice, while resistance skills help youth navigate peer pressure and avoid risky behaviours, strengthening their self-confidence. Peaceful conflict resolution abilities contribute to emotional regulation and healthier relationships, reducing aggression and promoting a supportive environment.

Programs like Friendly Schools and restorative practices address bullying, enhance psychological safety, and build resilience in students, while trauma-informed initiatives like HEARTS create safe, healing spaces in schools. Comprehensive school health initiatives, including teacher training, foster engagement, support skill development, and reduce stress, ensuring that youth are equipped with the social, emotional, and academic skills necessary for success in school and life. Together, these competencies contribute to well-rounded individuals capable of thriving in diverse social settings and navigating life's challenges with resilience and confidence.

## Developmental Assets: Positive Identity

The impact of positive identity factors—such as optimism, personal control, self-esteem, meaning, and purpose—on youth is crucial in fostering confidence, resilience, and personal growth. A 40% increase in these factors highlights their role in long-term success. Theorists like Erikson, Marcia, and Higgins emphasize that identity is dynamic, learned, and subjective, with emotional consequences. Erikson views identity formation as a key developmental task during adolescence, while Marcia's work focuses on the exploration and commitment stages of identity development. Higgins highlights the role of self-discrepancies in shaping identity. When youth feel in control of their lives, they develop a sense of agency and self-efficacy, which fosters resilience and proactive decision-making. High self-esteem strengthens their sense of worth and mental health, while a sense of purpose provides direction and motivation, leading to goal-setting and long-term achievement. Optimism supports perseverance, reduces stress, and promotes a proactive approach to overcoming challenges. Research shows that whole-school approaches, fostering supportive environments and engaging students in purposeful activities, enhance academic and personal growth, contributing to a stronger sense of belonging and resilience. These factors collectively empower youth to navigate life with confidence, resilience, and a clear sense of purpose, supporting emotional well-being and a positive future outlook.



# CONCLUSION

Given the profound impact of healthy school activations on student well-being, academic achievement, and overall school climate, the ripple effects highlight the healthy school approach as a necessary and powerful component for building developmental assets in children and youth. To attend to this, investment is necessary to entrench the critical foundational elements across all levels of Canada's education system. Once this foundation is set, school communities can implement more inclusive and responsive activations to support each and every student in attaining the developmental assets they will need to succeed. The collaboration of educators, students, families, and community

partners is key. As observed through the systemic review and meta-analysis, these activations best exist as a comprehensive continuum of activations that attend to students needs for physical activity, upstream harm reduction, mental well-being support, respectful relationships education, and social-emotional learning that include both students and school staff, we can create a supportive, wraparound, proactive, and dynamic school culture that nurtures every student's mental, physical, and emotional development and ensure that no student is left behind, no matter the complexity of their needs.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

Our comprehensive review of Healthy Schools interventions in Canada and across the globe shows compelling evidence of greater student outcomes and health-promoting behaviours. The interventions described in the studies demonstrated positive impacts on various developmental assets, such as building strong relationships between students and school staff, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion, and promoting healthy lifestyle behaviours. The Healthy Schools approach creates a robust ripple effect that extends well beyond the classroom. Continued support and investment in healthy school programs are essential for sustaining these benefits and promoting a culture of wellness for future generations. We conclude with the following recommendations:



## Policy Support

As noted in the systemic review, no papers evaluated the impact of policy. This is a significant gap. We recommend investment in local, provincial, territorial, and national policies that prioritize the implementation of as well as funding and resources for healthy school activation, ensuring all schools have the capacity and tools they need to implement effective programs.



## Training for Educators

Provide comprehensive professional development for teachers and staff on health education, mental wellbeing support strategies, and inclusive practices to enhance their ability to promote student well-being.



## Evaluation and Research

Implement ongoing evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of healthy school programs, using data to inform best practices and make necessary adjustments.



## Awareness Campaigns

Develop and promote campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of and the impact of healthy school initiatives, engaging the broader community, and encouraging support for school programs.



## Well-Being Initiatives for Teachers

Implement targeted wellbeing programs for educators, focusing on stress management, professional support networks, and work-life balance strategies to ensure teacher resilience and job satisfaction.

# INCLUDED PAPERS:

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Acosta, J., Chinman, M., Ebener, P., Malone, P. S., Phillips, A., & Wilks, A. (2019). Evaluation of a Whole-School Change Intervention: Findings from a Two-Year Cluster-Randomized Trial of the Restorative Practices Intervention. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 48(5), 876–890. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-019-01013-2>

This study evaluates the effectiveness of restorative practices in whole-school interventions. Conducted through a two-year cluster-randomized trial, the findings suggest significant improvements in school climate, reduction in disciplinary incidents, and increased student engagement, emphasizing the importance of restorative practices in fostering supportive school environments and promoting positive youth development.

Busch, V., Steenkamer, I., van Nassau, F., van Opdorp, P., van Houtum, L., Verhoeff, A., & Twisk, J. (2024). The Effects of the Jump-In Whole-School Intervention on the Weight Development of Children in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. *Journal of School Health*, 94(1), 37–46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.13363>

This research investigates the impact of the Jump-In intervention on childhood obesity, focusing on weight development among students in Amsterdam. The findings demonstrate a positive effect of the whole-school approach, with increased physical activity and healthier dietary habits contributing to improved weight outcomes. The study highlights the importance of integrating health promotion into school settings to combat childhood obesity.

Canadian Healthy School Standards. (n.d.). Canadian Healthy School Standards. Retrieved April 9, 2024, from [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5fa5d3a995cc5537744e8b52/t/60f1aab61673b2086a3ba52b/1626450621787/2021.07.16+CHSS\\_Final+v2-EN.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5fa5d3a995cc5537744e8b52/t/60f1aab61673b2086a3ba52b/1626450621787/2021.07.16+CHSS_Final+v2-EN.pdf)

This document outlines the Canadian Healthy School Standards (CHSS), providing guidelines for promoting health and well-being within school environments. It serves as a framework for schools to assess and improve their health-related practices, addressing aspects such as physical activity, nutrition, and mental health. The CHSS supports the creation of a holistic approach to health in schools, fostering positive student development.

Carrington, S. B., Saggars, B. R., Shochet, I. M., Orr, J. A., Wurfl, A. M., Vanelli, J., & Nickerson, J. (2023). Researching a Whole School Approach to School Connectedness. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 27(7), 785–802. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1878298>

This article explores the role of whole-school approaches in enhancing school connectedness, a critical factor in student well-being. The study found that fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion through a whole-school framework improved social support, peer relationships, and academic engagement among students. The findings support the integration of inclusive practices to strengthen school connectedness.

Centeio, E. E., Somers, C., Moore, E. W. G., Kulik, N., Garn, A., & McCaughtry, N. (2021). Effects of a Comprehensive School Health Program on Elementary Student Academic Achievement. *The Journal of School Health*, 91(3), 239–249. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.12994>

This study assesses the impact of a comprehensive school health program on academic achievement among elementary students. The findings show a positive correlation between health promotion activities, including physical activity and nutrition education, and improved academic performance. The study underscores the importance of health initiatives in enhancing students' academic success.

Comiskey, C. M., O'Sullivan, K., Quirke, M. B., Wynne, C., Hollywood, E., & McGilloway, S. (2015). An Analysis of the First Implementation and Impact of the World Health Organisation's Health Promoting School Model within Disadvantaged City Schools in Ireland. *Vulnerable Children & Youth Studies*, 10(4), 281–293. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450128.2015.1080394>

This article examines the first implementation of the WHO's health-promoting school model in disadvantaged schools in Ireland. The study highlights significant improvements in students' mental health and social behaviours, illustrating the benefits of a health-focused, whole-school approach in promoting well-being in vulnerable communities.

Cross, D., Lester, L., Pearce, N., Barnes, A., & Beatty, S. (2018). A group randomized controlled trial evaluating parent involvement in whole-school actions to reduce bullying. *Journal of Educational Research*, 111(3), 255–267. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2016.1246409>

This randomized controlled trial evaluates the role of parent involvement in reducing bullying through whole-school interventions. The results demonstrate that when parents actively participate in bullying prevention programs, there is a significant reduction in bullying incidents, showcasing the importance of community engagement in fostering a safer school environment.

Dassanayake, W., Springett, J., & Shewring, T. (2017). The Impact on Anxiety and Depression of a Whole School Approach to Health Promotion: Evidence from a Canadian Comprehensive School Health (CSH) Initiative. *Advances in School Mental Health Promotion*, 10(4), 221–234. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1754730X.2017.1333913>

This study investigates the impact of a comprehensive school health initiative on student anxiety and depression. The findings reveal a significant reduction in anxiety and depression symptoms among students who participated in the initiative, highlighting the effectiveness of a whole-school approach in improving mental health outcomes for youth.

Dorado, J. S., Martinez, M., McArthur, L. E., & Leibovitz, T. (2016). Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS): A Whole-School, Multi-Level Prevention and Intervention Program for Creating Trauma-Informed, Safe, and Supportive Schools. *School Mental Health*, 8(1), 163–176. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-016-9177-0>

This article discusses the HEARTS program, a trauma-informed, whole-school intervention aimed at creating safe and supportive learning environments. The study shows that trauma-sensitive practices can significantly improve students' emotional regulation and academic performance, reinforcing the importance of addressing trauma in educational settings.

Elfrink, T. R., Goldberg, J. M., Schreurs, K. M. G., Bohlmeijer, E. T., & Clarke, A. M. (2017). Positive Educational Programme. A Whole School Approach to Supporting Children's Well-Being and Creating a Positive School Climate: A Pilot Study. *Health Education, 117*(2), 215–230. ERIC. <https://doi.org/10.1108/HE-09-2016-0039>

This pilot study explores the Positive Educative Programme, which integrates well-being and positive psychology principles into the whole-school approach. The results indicate improvements in student well-being, including greater emotional resilience and a more positive school climate, highlighting the value of embedding well-being practices in everyday school life.

Goldberg, J. M., Sommers-Spijkerman, M. P. J., Clarke, A. M., Schreurs, K. M. G., & Bohlmeijer, E. T. (2022). Positive Education in Daily Teaching, the Promotion of Wellbeing, and Engagement in a Whole School Approach: A Clustered Quasi-Experimental Trial. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 33*(1), 148–167. ERIC. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2021.1988989>

This study evaluates the impact of a positive education approach on student wellbeing and engagement through a whole-school intervention. It uses a clustered quasi-experimental design to measure outcomes across various domains, such as student engagement and psychological wellbeing. The results suggest that implementing positive education practices can significantly enhance both academic engagement and emotional wellbeing, offering valuable insights for schools seeking to improve holistic student development. The research contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting the integration of wellbeing practices into daily teaching.

Gregory, A., Huang, F., & Ward-Seidel, A. (2022). Evaluation of the Whole School Restorative Practices Project: One-Year Impact on Discipline Incidents. *Journal of School Psychology, 95*, 58–71. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2022.09.003>

This article evaluates the effectiveness of restorative practices implemented in schools to address disciplinary issues. It provides a one-year impact assessment, focusing on the reduction of discipline incidents and the improvement of student behavior. The study highlights how restorative practices can create a positive school culture, reduce conflict, and improve the overall school climate. It emphasizes the importance of integrating restorative approaches into the fabric of school life for long-term positive changes in student behaviour.

Kearney, S., Leung, L., Joyce, A., Ollis, D., & Green, C. (2016). Applying Systems Theory to the Evaluation of a Whole School Approach to Violence Prevention. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia, 27*(3), 230–235. <https://doi.org/10.1071/HE16046>

This article applies systems theory to assess a whole-school violence prevention program, focusing on how the program's different components interact to address violence in schools. It provides a comprehensive evaluation of the program's effectiveness, emphasizing the importance of a multi-faceted, systemic approach to violence prevention. The findings highlight how such approaches can promote a safer school environment by addressing various risk factors and supporting students in making positive behavioural choices.

Kuru, N. (2023). Emotion Coaching Practice With the Whole School Approach “Emotionally Friendly Kindergarten Transformation Program” Process Analysis. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 12(2), 106. <https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v12n2p106>

This article examines the "Emotionally Friendly Kindergarten Transformation Program" and its implementation of emotion coaching as part of a whole-school approach. The study analyzes how emotion coaching fosters emotional regulation and empathy in both students and staff. It concludes that incorporating emotional education into the school environment significantly enhances social competence, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal relationships, particularly in early childhood education settings.

Liu, C.-H., Chang, F.-C., Liao, L.-L., Niu, Y.-Z., Cheng, C.-C., Shih, S.-F., Chang, T.-C., & Chou, H.-P. (2015). Expanding School-District/University Partnerships to Advance Health Promoting Schools Implementation and Efficacy in Taiwan. *Health Education Research*, 30(4), 638–646. <https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cyv028>

This study explores the partnership between school districts and universities in Taiwan to implement health-promoting initiatives. By examining the partnership's role in the success of health programs, the study shows how collaboration between educational institutions can enhance the delivery and impact of health-promoting schools. The research highlights the importance of building strong community networks to foster comprehensive health education that benefits both students and the wider school community.

Mclsaac, J.-L. D., Penney, T. L., Ata, N., Munro-Sigfridson, L., Cunningham, J., Veugelers, P. J., Storey, K., Ohinmaa, A., Kirk, S. F. L., & Kuhle, S. (2017). Evaluation of a Health Promoting Schools Program in a School Board in Nova Scotia, Canada. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 5, 279–284. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2017.01.008>

This article evaluates a health-promoting school program in Nova Scotia, Canada, focusing on its effectiveness in promoting healthier behaviours among students. The study examines various components of the program, including physical activity, nutrition, and mental health support, and provides evidence for its positive impact on students' overall health and wellbeing. It serves as a case study for other regions looking to implement similar health initiatives in schools.

Neely, E., Walton, M., & Stephens, C. (2016). Food Practices and School Connectedness: A Whole-School Approach. *Health Education*, 116(3), 320–340. <https://doi.org/10.1108/HE-11-2014-0095>

This article investigates the role of food practices in fostering school connectedness through a whole-school approach. It examines how promoting healthy eating habits and integrating food-related programs into the school curriculum can enhance student engagement and community ties. The findings highlight the positive impact of health-focused initiatives on students' social integration, academic engagement, and overall school satisfaction.

Nielsen, L., Meilstrup, C., Nelausen, M. K., Koushede, V., & Holstein, B. E. (2015). Promotion of Social and Emotional Competence: Experiences from a Mental Health Intervention Applying a Whole School Approach. *Health Education*, 115(3–4), 339–356. ERIC. <https://doi.org/10.1108/HE-03-2014-0039>

This article discusses the promotion of social and emotional competence through a whole-school mental health intervention. The study evaluates the effectiveness of integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) programs into the school environment, showing how these programs improve student mental health, resilience, and interpersonal skills. The research emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive, school-wide approach to mental health that supports both students and educators.

Nolan, A. D., Hannah, E. F. S., Lakin, E., & Topping, K. J. (2023). The Impact of an Elementary Whole-School Nurturing Approach: A Controlled Multiple-Perspective Follow-Up Study. *Revista Electrónica de Investigación Psicoeducativa y Psicopedagógica*, 211(59), 5–28. <https://doi.org/10.25115/ejrep.v21i59.4527>

This study explores the long-term impact of a whole-school nurturing approach in elementary schools. Through a controlled, multiple-perspective follow-up, the research shows how nurturing environments improve students' emotional and social development. It underscores the importance of creating supportive, caring school cultures to foster students' academic success and emotional well-being.

O'Leary, M., Rush, E., Lacey, S., Burns, C., & Coppinger, T. (2019). Project Spraoi: Two-Year Outcomes of a Whole School Physical Activity and Nutrition Intervention Using the RE-AIM Framework. *Irish Educational Studies*, 38(2), 1–22.

This article evaluates the two-year outcomes of the Project Spraoi intervention, which implemented a whole-school physical activity and nutrition program using the RE-AIM framework. The study assesses the program's impact on students' physical health, dietary habits, and academic performance. The results demonstrate the positive effects of integrating physical activity and nutrition into the school curriculum, offering valuable insights for schools aiming to improve student health outcomes.

Tsang, S. K., Hui, E. K., & Law, B. C. (2012). Positive identity as a positive youth development construct: A conceptual review. *ScientificWorldJournal*, 2012, 529691. <https://doi.org/10.1100/2012/529691>

This article provides a conceptual review of positive identity as a critical component of positive youth development (PYD). The authors argue that positive identity plays a vital role in shaping youths' psychological and social well-being, contributing to their resilience and successful adaptation in various life domains. The paper explores the relationship between positive identity and other PYD constructs such as self-esteem, social competence, and academic achievement. Through a review of existing literature, the authors discuss how cultivating positive identity in youth in schools can enhance their developmental outcomes and overall life satisfaction. This review underscores the importance of fostering positive identity within youth development programs and educational settings, highlighting its potential for preventing youth risk behaviours and promoting positive trajectories in life.

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