

## Featured Mental Health Initiative

### HOPE Wheel

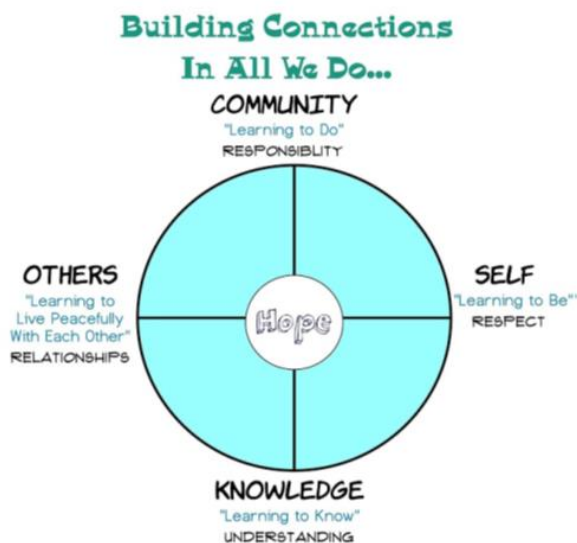
Joseph Welsh Elementary School (Red Deer, AB)

#### Background

The Kindergarten-grade 5 school has a diverse population representing immigrant students and a wide range of socio-economic levels.

#### Promising Practice

The HOPE Wheel Project is designed to help the school identify their cultural perspective toward student, staff, and family needs. It is a support construct and process that ultimately addresses mental health imperatives through careful consideration of physical, social-emotional, and cognitive support avenues. The HOPE Wheel focuses on four domains of need: self, understanding, others, and community. Correlating to each domain (in order) are contexts of respect, understanding, relationships, and responsibility. Also correlated in order are four pillars of learning: learning to be, to know, to live peacefully, and to do. The HOPE Wheel model of support is based on the ancient wisdom of the medicine wheel. The East is self (respect - learning to be), the South is knowledge (understanding - learning to know), the West is others (relationships - learning to live peacefully), and the North is community (responsibility - learning to do).



The hub in the middle of the medicine wheel represents HOPE (Health-Opportunity-Privilege-Education), and this place on the wheel is where perspective initiates as that is the place where students and their families begin their journey on the wheel. From the center of the wheel each journey moves first through the East and then travels around the wheel in a clockwise direction. The East is the domain of infancy, the South represents childhood, the West represents adulthood, and the North represents elderhood. Residing in each direction of the wheel are key school support personnel representing particular contexts or programs. In the East, are the administrators who provide specific support in the area of respect from what they informally refer to as the problem solving

department. In the South is the learning specialist, the West is the community liaison worker, and in the North, are key professionals supporting from a district and community base of expertise (counsellors, pathologists, etc.).

Each student, family member, staff, and anyone else related to the school travels the HOPE Wheel at their own pace, and on an individualized trajectory based on their experiences, environments, associations, and levels of resiliency. The HOPE Wheel allows school staff to assess where students are at in the present, and what type of supports they may need to keep their journey moving forward.

If students' needs are met in these four domains, it is a proactive way to support positive mental health through an appropriate and effective support of needs to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression that may occur when needs are not met.

### Impact

The school has learned that the first step in supporting positive levels of mental health and resiliency is to care. The second step is to care enough to act. The third step is to follow through and remain unconditional with the love and care that is the base of the HOPE Wheel support construct. A lot of talking with students and families occurs in order to assess the model. Also, the key people engaged at each direction and domain of support share feedback about how their support to students has been successful, and most importantly, what they need to do next to maintain positive levels of mental health and resiliency in students. The HOPE Wheel approach has been successful with even the individuals facing the most challenges using this model.

### Sustainability

The HOPE Wheel is 100% sustainable owing to the fact that it is entirely based on a construct that taps into previously secured personnel and the resources that the school provides. No funding is required to support the philosophy.

### Modifications

Here are suggestions to modify this approach for different learning environments.

- Engage the community with the HOPE Wheel approach and allow students and community members to collaborate when learning about mental health and resiliency.
- Use the HOPE Wheel in your classroom instruction and connect it to the curriculum that is being instructed.

A PHE Canada campaign



Presented by

