

Featured Mental Health Initiative

Conducive and Inclusive Learning Environments

John Bernard Croak Victoria Cross Memorial School (Glace Bay, NS)

Background

John Bernard Croak Victoria Cross Memorial School is made up of diverse students from two communities in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia serving children in grades pre-primary to grade 5. Low socioeconomic status and mental health struggles are prevalent within the school community, yet students are achieving academic success due to student commitment and the dedication of teachers and volunteers.



Promising Practice

While the building is dated, the staff are creative in how they utilize the space and focus on developing conducive learning environments. This includes offering flexible seating for students who have difficulty self regulating as well as “Conflict Corners” and a “Problem Solving Wheel” to support the development of conflict resolution skills. In addition, the schools has had a local artist who works to support mental health paint an alphabet mural to represent their feelings. The mural is

something the entire school community sees themselves reflected in.

Impact

The school is hoping to see a decrease in office referrals and calls from parents/guardians related to mental health. The goal is that by teaching conflict resolution skills and having a place where students can engage in productive conversations will support the overall mental health of the students. In order to measure this, student surveys will be analyzed, and teacher feedback on student self-regulation will also be analyzed in order to see if these are initiatives are successful and what their next steps need to be moving forward.

Sustainability

The initial investment is small but can be greatly impactful for a school with limited funding. The seating, the mural, and furnishing for “Conflict Corners” will remain in classrooms for years to come. Additionally, the practices and skills that teachers implement each year to develop a conducive learning environment will help all students better self-regulate and cope with the stressors in their lives for years to come.

Modifications

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

- Dedicate a space within your school to function as a “Wellness Room”, and fill it with resources and materials to improve health and well-being
- If your school does not have a space to paint a mural, have students draw or paint on a piece of paper and find a creative way to display their art work
- Create a “Bio Break Pass” that students can use to take a walk within the school when needed

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