

Featured Mental Health Initiative

Lancaster Wellness Hub

Lancaster Public School (Mississauga, ON)

Background

Lancaster Public School is a diverse Kindergarten to grade 5 school in Mississauga, ON. Families in the community experience a lower-than-average household income. Many students face numerous challenges, stresses, and mental health-related issues. The Wellness Hub was created through collaborative discussions during a Healthy Schools Team meeting. Staff and students leaders on their Healthy Schools Team identified that students experience difficulty with stress, anxiety, and difficulty managing their emotions. Their action plan was developed by their Healthy Schools Team with a focus on raising awareness and offering strategies to improve staff and students' mental well-being.

Promising Practice

Lancaster Wellness Hub came to fruition out of growing concern for the emotional well-being of students and staff. Results from a school-wide survey revealed that students and staff felt either anxious, stressed, upset, or nervous before and/or during school. These statistics prompted the school community to take action and create a Wellness Hub for Lancaster.

The plan for the Wellness Hub was developed in consultation with school administrators, students, support staff, teachers, and parents. The goal of the initiative was to create a place (room) that is safe, welcoming, and inclusive, where resources and strategies are provided in order to reduce the stress and anxiety levels of staff and students. Staff have engaged in professional development related to mental wellness and have been provided with resources and lessons that focus on mental health. Student and staff input was extremely important in the planning stages of the Wellness Hub. Students requested comfortable chairs, stability balls, mats, puzzles, and games. Staff wanted stress balls, salt lamps, calming music, and artwork. The Wellness Hub is intended to be used in a variety of ways: by classes, self-directed use during school breaks, and for groups of staff and students before school. The Wellness Hub is a physical space that promotes mental wellness through exercise, mindfulness, and multisensory experiences that can help a staff and students regulate and balance.



Impact

A school-wide survey that the staff administered to students found that students' stress and anxiety levels decreased as a result of using the Lancaster Wellness Hub. Results indicated that students experienced less school-related stress after participating in the meditation and mindfulness activities. The impact of this initiative has also led to teachers observing improved attention levels during instructional time, as well as better coping skills and reduced episodes of anxiety throughout the school day. The Healthy Schools Team measures the impact of their annual action plan by reviewing staff and student feedback, tracking the usage of the Wellness Hub, reviewing observation notes, and conducting a school-wide wellness survey.

Sustainability

The school has committed to continuing to evaluate and enhance the Wellness Hub through their Healthy Schools Team. A committed team that manages and promotes the hub supports their sustainability efforts. Currently, there are posters, meditation/yoga/mindfulness activities, and lesson plans placed in a Wellness Hub binder that staff can use with their classes for years to come. The Healthy Schools Team updates the binder with new resources and activities on a monthly basis to ensure that teachers have a variety of options available. In addition, the Healthy Schools Team makes morning announcements providing tips and information on improving and maintaining mental wellness. This information is also shared to parents/guardians and community partners in school newsletters. As a next step, the school is planning on incorporating the initiative as a part of their instruction in the Health and Physical Education program.

Modifications

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

- Create a Wellness Hub using an outdoor space
- Organize a Wellness Club that organizes activities that all students can participate in to improve mental well-being (e.g., Friday Lunchtime Yoga, or Music and Mindfulness, etc.)
- Develop a block of instructional time where all classes are focusing on wellness-related learning or activities

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