## Policy

Healthy school policies include leadership practices and decision-making processes, as well as guidelines, rules and procedures that affect how programs, services and

relationships are negotiated in the school and community settings. Effective leadership and policies are critical for supporting the application of well-being practices at all system levels.

Effective Leadership

Educational leaders and administrators play a key role in communicating the importance of well-being promotion and modeling behaviours and actions in their daily routines that are consistent and reinforcing to these policies. Specific leadership activities that effectively support positive mental health promotion include:

* Ensuring that everyone in the building is held accountable for upholding and modeling rules pertaining to respectful behaviour
* Ensuring that every student in the school is assigned an adult who will take time to know and care for that student
* Encouraging teachers to consider potential curriculum linkages for embedding well-being perspectives and practices
* Adding social and emotional learning goals to School Improvement Plans

Policies that Promote Safe and Caring Environments

Policies at the school and district levels that support well-being perspectives and practices are recognized and prioritized along with core academic areas such as literacy and numeracy. Such policies identify safe and caring school climates as necessary ingredients for realizing a sense of belonging and connectedness among all students, and for supporting their academic development and success

Policies for Inclusion

Positive mental health promotion requires the implementation of clearly articulated

policies related to inclusive education programming. Inclusive education is a

philosophical approach to teaching that enhances opportunities for all students to

participate in education in an atmosphere of respect and safety. Ideally, inclusive

education policies are based on a value system that is student-centered and socially

responsible toward all students, including those with exceptionalities. It is essential that such values be shared by schools, families and communities in order to ensure that all students may participate fully and actively in the teaching and learning environment.

Discipline Policies that Restore and Reconnect

Discipline policies that reinforce positive mental health approaches provide alternative methods for addressing student behaviour issues. Such policies support practices that seek to maintain school engagement with students and reconnect them to meaningful academic routines and activities. Restorative response policies might include:

* Carrying out individual problem-solving situations with students following a cooldown period
* Finding points of connection or common areas that could be used to develop rapport and a working relationship with students who have emotional or behavioural issues
* Using restitution or restorative approaches to keep students engaged with the school
* Developing behavioural contracts that include straightforward steps that are achievable by students
* Applying solution-focused or motivational interviewing approaches to identify plans for resolving areas of difficulty or challenge
* Organizing mentorship or supportive relationships with key school personnel or community volunteers

Shared Policies that Ensure System Collaboration

Comprehensive well-being approaches require the establishment of policy and practice guidelines that support the provision of coordinated programs and services. Strategies for enhancing awareness of existing school and community capacity may include:

* Developing regional or community resource directories outlining positive mental health programs for children, youth and families
* Organizing community fairs and open houses where health and educational stakeholders and service providers can promote their services and exchange program information
* Implementing community-wide planning sessions to strengthen collaborative efforts and develop strategies that address policy gaps or concerns

Over time, the outcomes of collaborative and integrative practices may also create

opportunities for the establishment of common policies for accessing services and

supports, and for working together in a more integrative fashion. These may include

common policies related to program referrals and service access, shared approaches

for the provision of school-wide well-being promotion or early intervention efforts, common protocols for the exchange of information, and collaborative mechanisms for identifying and addressing gaps in services for children, youth or their families.