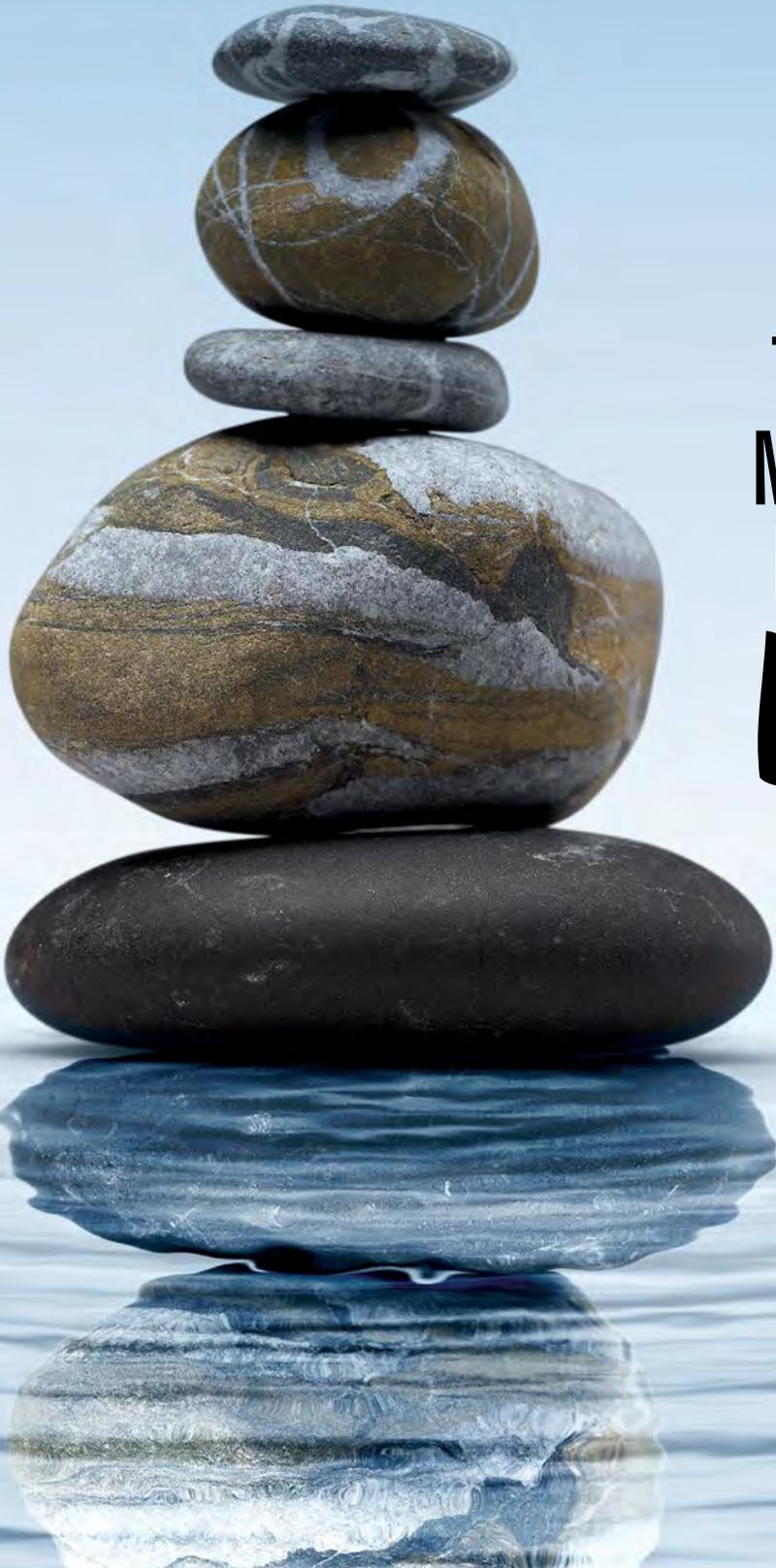


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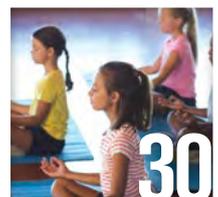
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DENNIS THEOBALD

WELLNESS: A CONTESTED TERM THAT'S HERE TO STAY

The word "wellness" first makes an appearance in the English language in the 17th century, but its popular use can be traced back to the early 1960s and the publication of a collection of papers by American statistician Halbert Dunn under the title *High-Level Wellness*. In the decades following, the legitimacy of this word, both linguistically and conceptually, was questioned by the harrumphing guardians of the language, even as the word came into more common use across a variety of media and in a variety of contexts. Today, though, wellness is a ubiquitous organizing principle, value, metric and objective embraced by organizations and individuals alike.

With such a recent provenance and broad application, it should not be surprising that wellness remains a contested term. In his article "Being Well in Canadian Schools" which appears in this edition of the *ATA Magazine*, my colleague Phil McRae points out that wellness, in the

context of the education system, is a "usefully ambiguous notion," rather like "21st-century learning" and "personalization." He does not intend this to be a compliment.

Indeed, as he and J-C Couture observe, the very ambiguity of the term wellness creates much opportunity for mischief on the part of the usual suspects—those agencies and private interests wanting to dump yet another accountability on top of teachers and schools with the inevitable goal of measuring, marketing and ranking wellness as an indicator of success.

In her article "Battling Myths and Breaking Down Barriers," Jen Janzen similarly illustrates how the promise of wellness is used to market all manner of modern-day snake oil. In our desperate pursuit of wellness, it seems we are all too willing to open our wallets and close our minds to critical analysis, all in the hope of finding a magical short-cut to better results.

But while McRae, Couture and Janzen sound cautionary notes about the potential to advance decidedly unhealthy policies, programs and products using the rhetoric of wellness, they also acknowledge that the term does invite a broader consideration about what is important in the lives of students, teachers and the public and, furthermore, that there are proven strategies to improving our individual and collective well-being. It is precisely this broader consideration that is reflected in the remaining content of this issue.

For example, Chris Fenlon-MacDonald of Ever Active Schools focuses on "connectedness" across the school community as a determinant of wellness that is at least as important to student well-being as physical activity, mental health and healthy eating. Wellness, he argues, is fostered when the school environment builds relationships of trust and caring so that students believe they are valued and supported as individuals and as learners by their peers and the adult staff.

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Shelley Magnusson writes about the Association's partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association to promote Healthy Minds, Bright Futures, a program to raise awareness among teachers, students and the public about the importance of mental health. As with so many issues, the Association was early on the scene when it identified the impact that various mental illnesses and disorders were having on students, particularly those in junior and senior high schools, and chose to make this cause the focus of its social responsibility program. It is gratifying to see that where Alberta teachers led, so many more community groups and corporations have followed.

Of course, wellness in a school setting cannot ignore teacher wellness. In this issue, I am delighted to include an article by Kelli Littlechilds, the chief executive officer of the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan. The majority of teachers will be familiar with the ASEBP as their benefits provider, but what they may not realize is the greater role the plan is playing in advancing workplace and employee wellness as a Canadian and North American leader in promoting comprehensive wellness through innovative, cost-effective and collaborative approaches. As a not-for-profit cooperative venture of the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Alberta School Boards Association,

the ASEBP focus on wellness makes business sense as well as human sense.

I would be remiss if I did not include in this edition of Editor's Notebook a special note to the one person whom I can guarantee will have read all the way down the page to this point. Gordon Thomas, having become executive secretary of the Alberta Teachers' Association in 2003, decided in 2009 to take on the role of editor of the *ATA Magazine*. After nine years as editor, and more than 33 years of service to the Association, Gordon has retired but has explicitly threatened to continue monitoring this publication closely. Best wishes my friend, and be well.





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PHIL
MCRAE



THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF BEING WELL IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS

Wellness in Canadian schools is a focal point of conversation for educators working on kindergarten to Grade 12 (K–12) education programming and policy. While these conversations center primarily on social and emotional outcomes, various dimensions of wellness are currently being nuanced, such as financial literacy, healthy eating, physical fitness, technology addiction and vocal hygiene.

Wellness consideration in schools and communities is gaining momentum due to a large body of data that points to a dramatic rise in the reported cases of anxiety and depression in children and youth, including increases in suicidal ideation. This, in turn, is creating even greater stressors and concerns among the teaching profession and for those who care for children and youth on a daily basis. Most recently, there is a renewed focus across Canada to move beyond student wellness to that of understanding and supporting teacher and school leader wellness (see Environmental Scan of activity that accompanies this article).

However, the primary focus for wellness programming and policy is the significant role public education plays in the lives of Canadian children, where our schools are seen as a major influencer and lever of change to improve both individual and societal wellness. The J. W. McConnell Family Foundation, one of Canada's largest philanthropic foundations, is funding the development of a national program called WellAhead with the rationale that "given the amount of time young people spend in school, this setting presents a unique opportunity to support and promote well-being" (www.wellahead.ca).

Yet finding boundaries within the definition of "well-being" has become difficult. "Wellness" in educational discourse

appears to be on an evolutionary track similar to that of other usefully ambiguous notions like "21st-century learning," "personalization" or "inclusion" in that well-being now spans the many interconnected dimensions of social, emotional, mental, physical, cognitive and workplace (e.g. violence) wellness.

As J-C Couture details in the Research Roundup of this edition of the *Magazine*, "Who Will Own Student Wellness?", there is a rush to both define and fill this ambiguous space by public and private interests around the world. For example, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which helps governments design and implement strategic policies, has two new initiatives focused on measuring and responding to childhood well-being.

The first is the OECD *International Early Learning and Child Well-Being Study*, which intends to test five-year-olds on tablet computers in order to measure four domains: 1) literacy/language, 2) numeracy/mathematics, 3) self-regulation and 4) social/emotional skills (including trust and empathy). The other is a future-focused competency framework known as OECD 2030 that plans to assess different cultural value orientations around the world in order to support individual and societal well-being.

While both of these initiatives appear on the surface to have laudable goals, careful consideration must be taken before Canadian schools adopt either of these international benchmarking tests.

In terms of OECD 2030, there is concern that this will be making culturally and contextually sensitive comparisons (and perhaps judgments) on different national values as

they relate to well-being. Meanwhile, the *International Early Learning and Child Well-Being Study* is being heavily criticized by academic and early learning organizations across many nations. As early childhood professor Helge Wasmuth states, “Don’t even get me started on the collection of child-based data on a global scale without the consent of children, parents, or practitioners. Or with assessing five-year-olds on a tablet. How flawed and meaningless are the results? How do you assess trust and empathy, or the complexities of learning and development?” (Wasmuth 2017).

In the private sector, technology companies have been racing to capture a market for the monitoring, managing and real-time reporting of student behaviour, with a specific goal of altering class well-being through digitally-tracked behaviour modification tools. One particular behaviour management tool, ClassDojo, is now firmly entrenched in 90 per cent of K–8 schools in the United States (<https://www.classdojo.com/>). This company sells, maintains and monitors software that tracks students’ behaviour in the classroom and allocates negative or positive points (dojos), based on the observed behaviour.



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Among the critics of ClassDojo is the renowned blogger and teacher Joe Bower, who points out that, “ClassDojo reduces children to punitive measures where the misbehaviour is seen as nothing more than an inconvenience to the teacher that needs to be snuffed out. ClassDojo judges and labels students by ranking and sorting them and distracts even well-intentioned adults from providing children with the feedback and the guidance they need to learn” (Bower 2014).

If we are to truly take stock of the wellness of our students, in all its manifest forms, certainly the human dimension of positive teacher–student relationships will become central to the practice, as opposed to the application of a mechanistic or Pavlovian behaviourist software program. This is a cautionary tale for digital assessments writ large, as educational psychologist Gerald W. Bracey, research columnist for the *Phi Delta Kappan* education journal, points out, “there is a growing technology of testing that permits us now to do in nanoseconds things that we shouldn’t be doing at all” (Matthews 2004).

The wellness of children, youth and indeed adults, requires many sustained, resourced, thoughtful and strategic actions if we are to collectively address individual and societal well-being.

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Phil McRae, PhD, is an executive staff officer with the Alberta Teachers’ Association and adjunct professor within the faculty of education at the University of Alberta.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Several initiatives across the country are actively trying to address well-being in all of its growing complexity.

Alberta Education—Kindergarten to Grade 12 Wellness Education

“Government ministries, schools, families and communities work collaboratively to create and maintain a culture of wellness in school communities. The vision of wellness education in Alberta is for students to be educated, informed and contributing members of society and to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to be well in every sense of the word—emotionally, intellectually, physically, socially and spiritually.”

www.education.alberta.ca/wellness-education

Alberta Teachers’ Association—Can We Talk?

“Alberta’s teachers are concerned about the well-being of children and youth, and understand that to educate children properly, their physical and mental health needs must be met. That’s why the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) and the Alberta Division of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) are partnering to promote the mental health of children and youth. The Healthy Minds, Bright Futures program aims to increase awareness of the mental health needs of children and to decrease the stigmatization often associated with mental illness.”

www.canwetalk.ca

Growing Up Digital (GUD) Alberta—Alberta Teachers’ Association, Harvard Medical School, University of Alberta

“Growing Up Digital (GUD) Alberta is a longitudinal research project of the Alberta Teachers’ Association, Harvard Medical School and the University of Alberta that is exploring the scope of physical, mental and social consequences of digital technologies on children and youth in areas of exercise, homework, identity formation, distraction, cognition, learning, nutrition, and sleep quality and quantity.”

www.teachers.ab.ca/Public%20Education/Education%20Research/Pages/Promise-and-Peril-2016.aspx

Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF)

Canadian Forum on Public Education and Annual General Meeting, July 13–15, 2016

Public Education: Wellness in Our Schools

“Across Canada, educators have told us student mental health is their number one concern and they have emphasized that schools need to have more community support and additional resources to help students facing challenges. While the Canadian Forum on Public Education provides an overview and generates deep discussions on wellness in Canadian schools from a variety of perspectives within the education community, the Annual General Meeting provides the political framework in which CTF Member organizations can debate and adopt policy that becomes the springboard for action and advocacy at the national level.”

<http://www.ctf-fce.ca/en/Pages/Events/AGM-2016.aspx>

WellAhead—J. W. McConnell Family Foundation

“WellAhead is a philanthropic initiative that aims to improve child and youth mental health by integrating social and emotional well-being into K–12 education. We believe that all young people deserve to be in school environments that support their well-being. For that to happen, we need to move beyond one-off efforts: all teachers and schools need to have the capacity and conditions to take on this role in a sustainable fashion.

The task: Develop a philanthropic strategy in the area of child and youth mental health.

The opportunity: Schools as a universal setting for mental health promotion and prevention.

The challenge: Moving towards an integrated approach to well-being in K–12 education.”

www.wellahead.ca/

Manitoba Teachers’ Society—Balance, Mind Body Spirit Program

“Recognizing that there are many factors that help to make up an individual’s overall wellness, the Manitoba Teachers’ Society Balance, Mind Body Spirit, encompasses many different dimensions of wellness in the available programming with diverse programming ranging from physical fitness to financial literacy. Commitment to education takes a lot of energy and with that need for energy there is a need to ensure our members take care of themselves. Through Balance we recognize this need and can provide resources and education to assist our members in finding their individual path to healthy living.”

www.mbteach.org/mtscms/2016/05/22/balance-wellness-program/

Canadian Education Association (CEA)

EdCan Network Symposium, October 5–6, 2017

Educator Well-being: A Key to Student Success

“A symposium for education leaders tasked with embedding wellness throughout their school communities. The EdCan Network is concerned that the steep hike in reported cases of student anxiety and suicidal ideation is creating stress and emotional exhaustion among teachers. Schools aren’t mental health treatment facilities—principals and teachers cannot be expected to shoulder the entire burden. They can, however, be an important part of the solution.”

<https://www.edcan.ca/event/well-being-a-key-to-success/>

Ever Active Schools Alberta—Staff Wellness Ideas

“Ever Active Schools develops a number of resources that support wellness education and comprehensive school health (CSH).”

<https://everactive.org/staff-wellness-1/>



CHRIS
FENLON-MACDONALD

WELL-BEING THROUGH CONNECTEDNESS

The well-being of children and youth is becoming increasingly important in the school landscape of Alberta. Students' needs are noticeably more diverse as noted by teachers with years of classroom experience who are acutely aware of these recent changes.

How do educators support the complex nature of student well-being—including mental well-being—in a scenario that is characterized by diverse and unique needs? One important way to achieve this goal is to foster a sense of school connectedness. School connectedness is “the belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals” (JCSH 2017, 4). It is one way to support the academic and health outcomes of students in our school communities, including their positive mental well-being (Public Health Agency of Canada 2012).

What can teachers do to support the feeling of school connectedness? A great start is to understand that school connectedness includes the relationships that students have with their peers and with the adults who work within a physically and emotionally safe school community (Blum 2005).

Equipped with this understanding, teachers can then intentionally focus their efforts to support each of these areas. The following ideas for supportive actions are not exhaustive and, in some cases, require little effort. Other approaches may need a larger, more coordinated effort with health-promotion partners, school councils and other important stakeholders.

The first type of relationship, which is likely central to the idea of school connectedness, is the student-adult relationship. These relationships can be largely affected by the context of the school. For example, a student in Grade 3 can usually develop a deeper relationship with a homeroom teacher and perhaps interact with fewer adults in a day compared to a sibling in Grade 9 who is transitioning between several classrooms on the same day.

An excellent way to see which students may be lacking a significant connection to adults in a school is to conduct an activity called “school of fish.” Start with student involvement by having students illustrate “who they are” on a template of a fish or puzzle piece. This concept may work better in smaller settings and perhaps can be done in grade groupings or subject disciplines. Next, display the student work and have adults initial only the pieces with which they feel they have a significant connection, for example, those where they know the student’s family and/or siblings, the activities the student enjoys outside of school hours or the student’s future career aspirations. This process will quickly identify those students who may be lacking a connection to adults in the school and offer a starting point for more intentional relationship building.

The second type of relationship is the connection that students have with their peers. Students’ health outcomes and educational achievements are positively or negatively influenced by their peer group (Centre for Disease Control 2009). The amount of time that students spend with their peers and the influence that peers may have on their day-to-day routines will be different in elementary, middle and



photo: Stock

high schools. But it is important for students of all ages to experience a sense of independence and autonomy within their school day. With this comes opportunities to interact with friends and, ideally, belong to a positive peer group.

As years go by, students discover that their friends become trusted sources of information. With this in mind, we can teach students the importance of quality friendships over quantity, often a challenging but important theme to explore. A further emphasis on social and emotional skill development can support students in this task by seeking opportunities within the curriculum to highlight and practice these concepts.

Finally, schools can support school connectedness by fostering physically and emotionally safe environments. There are two areas where it may be advisable to begin: students transitioning between schools and Internet/digital media safety.

Investing time in students who are transitioning to and from your school can support students' emotional needs and settle the uncertainties associated with these moves. This is an especially delicate time for students who may have become accustomed to the same peer group in one school and find

themselves in larger, more diverse classrooms where they are expected to quickly become more independent.

In addition to supporting students in their first and last few months at a school, the day-to-day interaction with the Internet is an important consideration. In an era with emerging digital technologies and equally diverse social media platforms, students will continue to interact with the Internet both out of interest and necessity.

It may be difficult to see the tangible elements of school connectedness come to light in the early days, but the impact of making this a priority is worthwhile and long-lasting. Students will benefit greatly from a healthy connection to adults in their schools. And the positive influences of a quality peer group reach beyond the walls of a school. They have the power to amplify a safe, caring and healthy school community, and in time, students' overall well-being and success in school will be evidence of your efforts.

The complete document from which the excerpts in this article are drawn can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/CurriculumLitReview>.



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Chris Fenlon-MacDonald is the provincial education coordinator for Ever Active Schools, a provincial initiative that supports wellness in Alberta school communities.

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BATTLING MYTHS AND BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

Phony health claims and deeply-rooted beliefs difficult to debunk

Tony Nickonchuk was a Grade 11 student when he picked up a bottle of cayenne powder capsules in his local pharmacy. Self-conscious about his weight, the 17-year-old was exploring the herbal section of the pharmacy looking for “a magic bullet.” He took the cayenne powder capsules for a month, but he didn’t lose any weight. In fact, the pills had only one noticeable effect—a terrible case of heartburn!

Nickonchuk, now a pharmacist practicing in Peace River, no longer seeks miracle cures. But he knows that many intelligent people fall for health claims on a wide spectrum of health matters with no scientific backing. From ways to treat lice to the efficacy of homeopathic medicine, false information pervades advertising.

GET YOUR CURE FOR EVERYTHING HERE!

Once relegated to theatrical headlines on the fronts of magazines, dramatic health claims are everywhere. Dr. Oz peddles raspberry ketones for weight loss, while actress-turned-entrepreneur Gwyneth Paltrow sells water bottles with crystals inside claiming that they will increase one’s positive energy. Social media is awash with articles pointing to studies that bolster spurious health claims:

Apple cider vinegar cures throat cancer.

Detoxify your liver with coconut oil.

Get flat abs in three days with these five easy exercises.

Purple cabbage improves cognitive decline.

Nickonchuk is concerned about the implications of what he calls a “mistrust or misunderstanding of scientific evidence,” especially when it comes to skepticism about vaccines.

We’ve seen diseases that were a thing of the past for a very long time reappear due to beliefs based on fraudulent claims that have been extensively disproven,” he says, but, “once ingrained, these mistaken notions are difficult to refute.”

“Research shows that merely pointing out to parents that the science behind vaccines is sound and [that] there is no concrete link with autism does not change their position,” he says. “In fact, sometimes it strengthens it.”

And Nickonchuk has plenty of scientific evidence to support the effectiveness of vaccines. Since the introduction of a routine vaccination for diphtheria, only one case per 10 million people per year has occurred. Pre-vaccine statistics indicate there were 85 annual cases per 100,000 people. The incidence of tetanus was reduced from 21 cases per 10 million people to one case per 10 million people and mumps declined to one case per 100,000 people from a previous high of 250 per 100,000 people.

“These diseases are not minor,” Nickonchuk points out, adding that “diphtheria has a fatality rate of up to 20 per cent in young children and older adults. The tetanus mortality rate is a little more than 10 per cent and while mumps is not often fatal, it can cause long-term problems like deafness and, if contracted in early pregnancy, miscarriage.”

“These are serious diseases, with serious consequences. But because we live in an age where you can find information to support any position imaginable, it is very hard to fight the misperception that vaccines are dangerous,” Nickonchuk says.

LESSONS IN FOOD

Devon Guy is a diabetes educator and community health promoter practicing on Tsuu T'ina Nation, a First Nations community southwest of Calgary. Guy has been working closely with Tsuu T'ina elementary and middle schools to develop the Guja Nutrition Program ("guja" is Tsuu T'ina for "good"), a food literacy initiative for students and teachers.

The Guja Nutrition Program employs a holistic approach that places more emphasis on the students' relationship with food than their physical size. The health promotion team keeps it culturally relevant, focusing on balance and self-sufficiency. Depending on their age, the students might have discussions about where food comes from or take hands-on cooking classes.

One of the lessons in the Guja Nutrition Program discusses everyday foods versus "sometimes foods" which are okay in moderation. Teachers and students talk about popular food and where it comes from, whether it's nature, farm or factory. "As students get older, we can discuss what happens to food when it goes to a factory, what gets added to it and what gets taken away," Guy says.

One of the most prevalent myths is that going gluten free is

a good choice for nonceliacs. "There can be a lot of healthy options that contain gluten," Guy says, "and if we try to replace all the gluten-containing food with gluten-free food, sometimes we get more sugar and fat."

A prevailing misconception is that the nutrition content claims on processed food mean the food is healthy. Yes, the cereal is called Chocolatey Chocolate, but there's a label right on the front of the package that states the sugary food is made with whole grains. And that yogurt with the low-fat label is a healthy choice, right? But it's actually higher in sugar than its fuller-fat predecessor. Flip over the package to read the ingredients and you are met with a string of multisyllabic words that seem to bear little resemblance to the actual food it is claiming to be.

"Labelling can be a very effective marketing tool," she says.

One of the most important elements of the Tsuu T'ina program is inspiring teachers to use nonedible rewards for classroom incentives and, beyond that, to understand that teachers are important role models. Guy encourages teachers to eat together and to keep an eye on their own meal choices.

"Kids are really perceptive about what adults are doing," Guy says.

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What else can teachers do to encourage students to think critically? Nickonchuk says it starts with teaching students how to find reliable health information.

“Health stories in the news are done poorly just as often as they are done well,” he says. It’s also valuable for students to see teachers walk through the process of finding answers using reliable sources.

“It is okay to not know things; that is how we learn. The most valuable lesson teachers can teach, and no less so in science and medicine, is how to learn something you don’t know on your own.”

MADE TO MEASURE

The weight loss industry loves measurements—waist circumference, weight loss and muscle-to-fat ratios are common standards of success. But the changes Guy is looking for lie in behaviour and how people think about food. It’s not the kind of change that will dramatically shift waistline size in the short-term but, she says, changing relationships with food will have far-reaching implications for boosting long-term health and preventing disease.

In her three years at Tsuu T’ina, Guy is seeing signs of progress. Two years ago, the school cafeterias stopped serving sweetened drinks at lunch. The only beverage option? Water.

“That was huge,” she says. School cafeterias also offer a vegetable with every lunch meal.

“We see a lot of kids being open to trying new things, we see a big increase in their level of self-confidence when it comes to working in the kitchen. That was really impactful for us—seeing the kids so proud of what they had made and so excited to go home and show their family what they had learned in cooking class.”

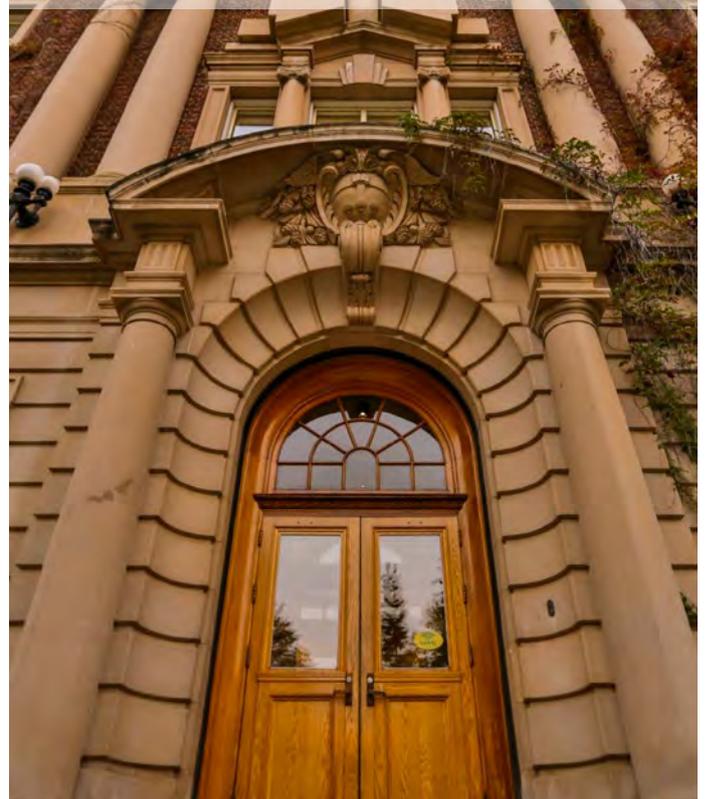
If Nickonchuk could go back in time to visit that self-conscious 17-year-old browsing the herbal section of the pharmacy, he would remind young Tony that there are no magic bullets.

“If something seems too good to be true, it probably is,” he says. “Weight loss has not been and likely never will be solved by pills, and the only weight herbal remedies make you lose is the weight in your wallet.”

Jen Janzen is a news writer and public relations officer with the Alberta Teachers’ Association.

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MORE THAN JUST A SLOGAN

Healthy Minds, Bright Futures program
aims to address students' needs

In 2009, the Alberta Teachers' Association's entered into a partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association as a commitment to the mental health of Alberta students. This partnership now bears the name Healthy Minds, Bright Futures. Its aim is to promote children's mental health, increase awareness of children's mental health needs and decrease the stigmatization that is often associated with mental illness.

In 2010, Global Alberta joined as a full partner to provide a television campaign designed to build awareness for the Healthy Minds, Bright Futures initiative with the long-term goal of helping parents, children and the community understand and recognize the importance of student mental health and the role of teachers.

Working closely with CMHA, the ATA developed a new reference booklet, *Creating a Compassionate Classroom* (available in French and English) that has proven to be a valuable resource for teachers in the classroom. Teachers understand that children and youth bring with them to school many serious mental health disorders that must not be ignored. Teachers also understand that they are not mental health experts; they are experts on kids. For children to be properly educated, teachers require appropriate supports and students need teachers who are equipped to meet their mental health conditions.

Of deep concern, teachers are reporting that not only are the number of students experiencing mental health issues increasing, so too are the incidences of young children who are suffering. According to statistics available from both

Alberta Health and Statistics Canada, only one in five students who require mental health support is receiving the help they need. Coupled with the fact that mental disorders in youth are ranked as the second highest hospital care expenditure in Canada, the gravity of the issue becomes apparent.

Estimates portray a picture that indicates that 15 to 20 per cent of Canadian youth are affected by a mental illness or disorder—the single most disabling group of disorders worldwide. Approximately five per cent of male youth and 12 per cent of female youth aged 12 to 19 have experienced a major depressive episode and the total number of 12- to 19-year-olds in Canada who are at risk for developing depression is a staggering 3.2 million.

Mental illness is increasingly threatening the lives of our children, with Canada's youth suicide rate the third highest in the industrialized world. In fact, suicide is among the leading causes of death in 15- to 24-year-old Canadians, second only to accidents. Teenagers and young adults have the highest rates of hospital admissions due to attempted suicide, and Alberta's suicide rate is two to three per cent higher than the national average.

Schizophrenia is youth's greatest disabler as it strikes most often in the 16- to 30-year-old age group, affecting an estimated one person in 100. In recent years, mental health practitioners have noticed that schizophrenia is presenting at much younger ages, including some children as young as six or seven years of age. As well, students with anxiety disorders such as obsessive compulsive disorder,



photo: Stock



WE LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING YOU!



The Alberta Retired Teachers' Association is attending all ten Teachers' Conventions across the province this year, as well as participating in pre-retirement seminars offered by the ATA. If you are thinking about retirement, connecting with us at these events is an excellent opportunity to learn more about the resources we have available to guide you in your retirement.



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phobias, post-traumatic stress or eating disorders, students who are identified with neurodevelopmental disorders, and students who are self-harming are all part of the landscape of the “average” Alberta classroom.

Schools are uniquely placed to address students' mental health problems. Schools are where students' mental health can be addressed as part of a wider spectrum of health curricula, much as is currently undertaken with physical health and nutrition. The stigma surrounding mental illness is one of the biggest barriers to students asking for help. By normalizing discussions about mental health, teachers can help to lessen the social stigma attached to mental illness.

As part of its efforts to eliminate the stigma associated with mental health, the Alberta Teachers' Association encourages all schools to participate in the Hats On! for Mental Health day. Held each year on the first Wednesday of May (this year on May 2, 2018), the day is a great way to introduce the subject of mental health to students, reduce the stigma associated with it and encourage students to ask questions about mental health. Early identification of mental health problems, followed by effective intervention, is critically important.

Since teachers are not mental health professionals and many have not received any professional development focussed on student mental health, it is important to recognize they cannot tackle student mental health alone—they need resources and support. At the same time, there is an extreme shortage of qualified human resource personnel, such as social workers, guidance counsellors, nurses, educational assistants, psychologists and psychiatrists to work directly with students in schools. The gap in services is even more severe in rural and northern communities.

These challenges can be met only by a strong commitment from all members of the educational community to work together to fully realize the partnership's aim—to meaningfully address the needs of students living with mental health illness—and to put in place pathways for the Healthy Minds, Bright Futures initiative to succeed.

More information on resources and lesson plans for teachers is available at www.canwetalk.ca.

An executive staff officer with the Alberta Teachers' Association, Shelley Magnusson oversees the Association's partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association and Global Alberta.

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STANDING APART

A unique approach to health benefits

As the chief executive officer of the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP), I often get asked what makes this organization unique. It's a fair question, at a time when many companies claim to be leading the charge for one group/service/campaign or another. With more than 30 years with ASEBP, I can safely say that what we do here is not so much leading the charge but rather forging a new path, with a mandate made entirely unique by the individuals and industry we serve.

For a little bit of background, the ASEBP was established in 1968 as a not-for-profit health and welfare trust by both the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) and the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). The plan was designed to provide comprehensive and customized health benefits to school jurisdiction employees across Alberta and to set up the sector for success in the long term.

While a great deal has changed over the years, the constant has been our focus on balancing the shifting wellness needs of covered members with the health of the plan. We've been fortunate that, over the years, our trustee group has consistently embraced this focus and has refined it to the point that our plan is now designed and delivered with an emphasis on wellness and resilience rather than simply providing benefits when members are unwell.

SETTING THE STAGE

In order to ensure that we are set up to successfully execute our vision, we worked with the trustees to formally capture our commitment to health in the ASEBP Health and Benefits Charter. The charter serves as a cornerstone for how we make decisions related to plan design and health resource allocation, positioning us to navigate choppy waters while staying the course. We use it as an essential reference for decision making and as an important reminder of our commitment to the health and well-being of both covered members and the plan.

Fundamental in the charter is the notion that health is a shared responsibility amongst the ASEBP trustees, the ASBA, the ATA, participating employers, covered members and their dependants. If we're all invested in achieving our collective wellness goals—from a systemic to an individual level and everything in between—the future health of the plan, sector and everyone impacted by them looks bright indeed.

In addition, a recent refresh of the ASEBP's mission, vision and values statements saw health and wellness pushed even further to the forefront. Now, all of our

THE BIG FIVE—ASEBP'S VISION STATEMENTS

1. To strengthen our capacity to address individual and organizational health and wellness across the Alberta public education sector.
2. To position our health benefits and services as the leading-edge choice for Alberta's public education sector and clearly distinct from traditional insurance and supplementary health-care providers.
3. To implement innovative initiatives that support Alberta public education sector employers and employees as they work jointly toward individual and organizational health.
4. To provide Alberta's public education sector with a return on benefit plan investments in the form of improved employee health and wellness that contribute to healthy school communities.
5. To ensure ASEBP benefit offerings align with and support the needs of covered members and their dependants at different junctures along their lifelong health journeys, including health promotion, disease prevention, early intervention and disability and disease management.

vision statements include a reference to health—whether that be covered member and dependant health, the health of the plan or Alberta’s public education sector as a whole.

This important work has given ASEBP a leg up on our journey and, at the same time, reinforced a valuable lesson around health—we’re all in this together.

COLLABORATION IS KEY

With foundational supports like the Charter and a well-articulated vision, shaping the Plan to focus on the many facets of health and wellness becomes simpler. From refining our benefit offerings so they offer comprehensive health support for covered members, to setting up the Plan for long-term sustainability, wellness is a critical component of our overall success.

One interesting way we’ve been able to stay ahead in the area of wellness is through our Health and Benefits Advisory Panel. Formed in 2014, the panel consists of a few select senior ASEBP employees, as well as key external partners with extensive expertise in our benefit plan, health and financial management. This knowledge trifecta has produced creative recommendations for plan management that take a broader view on our policies rather than simple cost containment—a focus of many other health benefit or insurance providers. Learning from the successes of this

panel, we’re currently in the process of creating a similar group to look specifically at strategies and tools that can help us promote and protect the oral health of our members, while carefully managing dental plan costs now and into the future.

As we believe that health is a shared responsibility, and not something that any one person or organization can achieve on its own, we know that sharing and leveraging resources with other public education stakeholders helps our covered members attain optimal health. To this end, we’ve created a division dedicated to engaging with external groups, building strategic partnerships and collaborating with like-minded organizations from across the province and beyond—all with an eye to ensure covered members and the Plan have access to the resources they need to be well over the long term.

HEALTHY SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

Over the years, the nature of our health supports and how they’re delivered have transformed alongside the changing needs of the sector. Most recently, in response to our knowledge growth in the area of health promotion, we began to carefully adjust our model to ensure covered members and employer groups understood that their benefits were not exclusive to illness or specific diseases.

Our Health Promotion Services team, armed with tools and important connections to the broader comprehensive school health community, use evidence-based research to engage and collaborate with school jurisdictions and associations in support of workplace wellness. We expect this tailored, community-grounded support for our employer groups will help them discover solutions that meet their unique needs, level of readiness and capacity for change—and ultimately better serve the multi-dimensional wellness needs of their staff and ASEBP’s covered members.

To bolster this work, in 2015 we launched The Sandbox—a space for healthy school employee workplaces—with partners in Alberta’s Comprehensive School Health arena (Alberta Health Services, Alberta Healthy School Community Wellness Fund, APPLE Schools, Be Fit For Life Network and Ever Active Schools). The Sandbox is designed to help workplace wellness champions spark ideas, find resources and connect with like-minded individuals who share their passion for school employee health and wellness. We’ve been thrilled to watch the evolution of this site and we’re so happy to see it filling an important need within Alberta’s school communities.

A HEALTHY FUTURE

With a health-focused structure and supports throughout the organization to realize our vision, I am confident that ASEBP is well positioned to continue helping covered members realize their wellness goals and for the Plan to remain fine-tuned and financially stable for years to come.

Kelli Littlechilds is the chief executive officer of the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan.

JOY IN NATURE

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For a complete listing of events, consult the Conference Calendar or contact Barnett House. Telephone: 780-447-9400 in Edmonton or 1-800-232-7208 from elsewhere in Alberta. This information is also posted on the Alberta Teachers' Association website (www.teachers.ab.ca). Prior to attending a conference or workshop please contact the sponsoring organization to confirm dates, location and contacts.

MARCH 1-2

GREATER EDMONTON TEACHERS' CONVENTION, Shaw Conference Centre, Edmonton. Sponsors: The Greater Edmonton Teachers' Convention Association and the provincial ATA. Website: www.getca.com. Contact: Dan Grassick, executive staff officer. Telephone: 780-447-9487; e-mail: dan.grassick@ata.ab.ca OR Barb Bossert, administrative officer. Telephone: 780-447-9461; e-mail: barb.bossert@ata.ab.ca.

MARCH 8-9

CENTRAL EAST ALBERTA TEACHERS' CONVENTION, Shaw Conference Centre, Edmonton. Sponsors: The Central East Alberta Teachers' Convention Association and the provincial ATA. Website: www.ceatca.teachers.ab.ca. Contact: Dan Grassick, executive staff officer. Telephone: 780-447-9487; e-mail: dan.grassick@ata.ab.ca OR Barb Bossert, administrative officer. Telephone: 780-447-9461; e-mail: barb.bossert@ata.ab.ca.

MARCH 8-9

MIGHTY PEACE TEACHERS' CONVENTION, Grande Prairie Composite High School, Grande Prairie. Sponsors: The Mighty Peace Teachers' Convention Association and the provincial ATA. Website: mptca.teachers.ab.ca. Contact: Dan Grassick, executive staff officer. Telephone: 780-447-9487; e-mail: dan.grassick@ata.ab.ca OR Barb Bossert, administrative officer. Telephone: 780-447-9461; e-mail: barb.bossert@ata.ab.ca.

MARCH 12-16

SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS APPRECIATION WEEK. Sponsor: the provincial ATA. Contact: Keith Hadden, executive staff officer, SARO; telephone: 403-265-2672; e-mail: keith.hadden@ata.ab.ca OR Doreen Link, administrative officer, SARO; telephone: 403-265-2672; e-mail: doreen.link@ata.ab.ca.

APRIL 5

EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL EVENT, Fantasyland Hotel, Edmonton. Theme: Shaping our Classrooms of Tomorrow—Be It, See It, Print It: VR,

Drones and 3D Technologies. Sponsors: Educational Technology Council and the provincial ATA. Website: <https://event-wizard.com/beitseeitprintit/0/welcome>. Contact: Ryan Layton, president; e-mail: ryan.layton@eips.ca.

APRIL 15-18

COUNCIL FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE, uLead 2018, Banff Springs Hotel, Banff. Sponsors: Council for School Leadership/ the provincial ATA. Website: ulead.ca/uLead.html. Contact: Jeff Johnson, conference director; e-mail: leadershipfor21c@me.com.

APRIL 26-28

MIDDLE YEARS COUNCIL CONFERENCE, Banff Park Lodge, Banff. Theme: Teach Like a Pirate. Sponsors: The Middle Years Council and the provincial ATA. Website: www.ata-myc.com. Contact: Tom Stones, conference director; e-mail: tstones@cesd73.ca.

MAY 3-5

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION COUNCIL CONFERENCE, Mount Royal University, Calgary. Theme: Finding Balance. Sponsors: Health and Physical Education Council and the provincial ATA. Website: www.hpec.ab.ca. Contact: Sonia Sheehan, conference codirector; e-mail: sonia.sheehan@ffca-calgary.com OR Dwayne Sheehan, conference codirector; e-mail: dpsheehan@mtroyal.ca.

MAY 4-5

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS COUNCIL CONFERENCE, Edmonton. Theme: Making Meaning. Sponsors: The English Language Arts Council and the provincial ATA. Website: <https://event-wizard.com/MAKINGMEANING/0/register/>. Contact: Tannis Niziol, conference director; e-mail: tannis.niziol@ecsd.ca.



SANDRA ANDERSON

FROM THE BOOKSHELVES

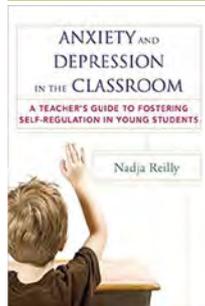
LIBRARY HAS RESOURCES TO PROMOTE TEACHER AND STUDENT WELLNESS

To complement the theme of mental and physical health in this issue, we are highlighting recent additions to the Association's library that focus on teacher and student mental health.

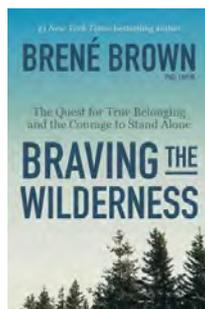
If you would like to borrow any of these titles or something on a different topic, please remember that the library pays for shipping both ways, so there is never any cost for using our collection.

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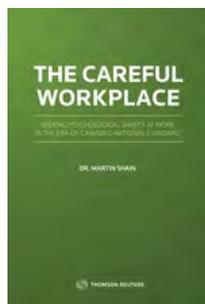
BOOKS



Anxiety and Depression in the Classroom: A Teacher's Guide to Fostering Self-Regulation in Young Students
Reilly, N. 2015. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company (371.713 R362)
Focusing on developing emotional wellness in the classroom, author Nadja Reilly connects research with practical applications for teachers who are supporting students with anxiety and depression.

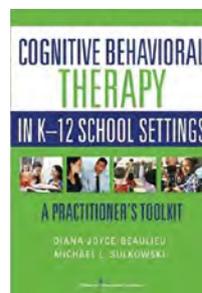


Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone
Brown, B. 2017. New York, NY: Random House (370 B877)
Author Brené Brown examines the persistent need for community in an age of disconnection. Brown discusses the results of her field research and describes ways to set boundaries, while maintaining meaningful connections with others.



The Careful Workplace: Seeking Psychological Safety at Work in the Era of Canada's National Standard
Shain, M. 2016. Toronto, ON: Thomson Reuters (158.7 S526)
This practical guide outlines recent change to the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) standard on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace. It explores the legal and human aspects of employee

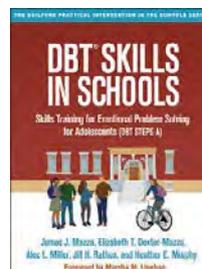
relations and is an excellent resource for supervisors and administrators.



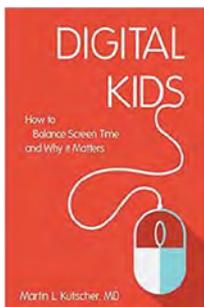
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in K-12 School Settings: A Practitioner's Toolkit
Joyce-Beaulieu, D. 2015. Springer Publishing Company (618.92891 J89)
Recent research supports the effectiveness of Cognitive Based Therapy (CBT) for use with children. Joyce-Beaulieu provides a developmentally-appropriate adaptation of this useful therapy for school counsellors to integrate into their daily practice with troubled students.



Crying in Cupboards: What Happens When Teachers Are Bullied?
Bricheno, P., and M. Thornton. 2016. Croydon, UK: CPI Group (UK) Ltd (373.18 B849)
Bullying occurs in almost every workplace and has a detrimental effect on the worker and on the organization as a whole. When staff retention falls, the reputation of schools and school districts as desirable employers diminishes. This book gives voice to the stories of bullied teachers and offers suggestions for administrators and union officials in combatting this insidious problem.

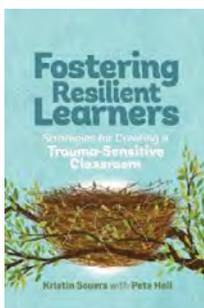


DBT Skills in Schools: Skills Training for Emotional Problem Solving for Adolescents (DBT STEPS-A)
Mazza, J. J. et al. 2016. New York, NY: The Guilford Press (616.89142 M477)
Dialectic Behaviour Therapy (DBT) is an effective tool for assisting teens to cope with emotional stress and to develop improved decision-making skills. Thirty lesson plans, with handouts and tests, are provided for teachers to use with adolescents of all ages.



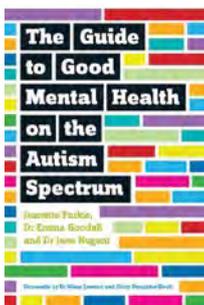
Digital Kids: How to Balance Screen Time and Why It Matters
Kutscher, M. L. 2017. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers (616.85 K97)

Daily Internet use has become the norm in our society. But research demonstrates that too much Internet use negatively impacts our social and emotional lives. Practical ways to promote healthy Internet use and curb excessive use are discussed. Of particular interest to teachers is the impact of laptops and digital reading in the classroom.



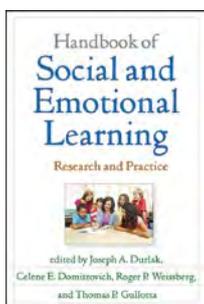
Fostering Resilient Learners: Strategies for Creating a Trauma-Sensitive Classroom
Souers, K., and P. A. Hall. 2016. Alexandria, VA: ASCD (371.94 S719)

Childhood trauma affects the developing brain and, if no intervention occurs, it can have lasting effects into adulthood. Teachers have an opportunity to help children develop resilience and to reverse damage to the brain caused by traumatic stress. The authors describe concrete interventions that teachers can use to help children in their classrooms to develop into healthy adults.



The Guide to Good Mental Health on the Autism Spectrum
Purkis, J., E. Goodall and J. Nugent. 2016. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers (616.85882 P985)

Written for people with autism, this book is also helpful for those who work with people with autism. Insights into mental health issues for those on the autism spectrum are elucidated.



Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning: Research and Practice
Durlak, J. A. (ed.) et al. 2016. New York, NY: Guilford Press (370.1534 D962)

The authors describe the theoretical foundations of social and emotional learning (SEL). They offer practical advice for implementing programs to foster the development of social and emotional learning in students of all grade levels.



Keep the Fire Burning: Avoiding Teacher Burnout: Tips & Strategies from Real Teachers
Davis, K. et al. 2013. San Bernardino, CA: The Educator's Room (371.10019 D262)

Staying passionate about teaching is difficult when demands on your time are overwhelming. Seven teachers document their attempts to use different strategies for keeping themselves mentally healthy at work. The aim of this book is to help teachers find ways to reach a better work life balance.

Practical Guide to Psychological Health & Safety in the Workplace
Dyck, D. E. G. 2015. Markham, ON: LexisNexis. (158.7 D994)
Historically, occupational health and safety (OHS) has focused on the physical safety of employees. But the new Canadian Standard on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace requires OHS to address psychological health

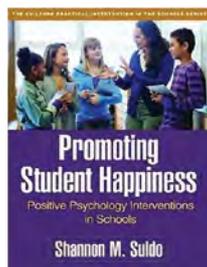
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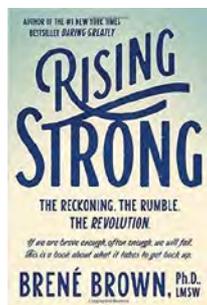
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and safety as well. This book will help administrators and others involved in OHS to learn how to implement and assess these measures.



Promoting Student Happiness: Positive Psychology Interventions in Schools

Suldo, S. M. 2016. New York, NY: Guilford Press (371.713 S949)
 Making the point that happiness is at the core of mental health, Suldo reviews several assessment tools. Strategies for school counsellors are outlined that will promote better resiliency and mental health in students and schools.



Rising Strong: The Reckoning, The Rumble, The Revolution

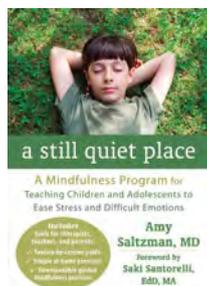
Brown, Brené. 2015. New York, NY: Spiegel & Grau (158 B877 2015)
 The author is well known for her books about developing resilience. In this book, Brown explains the role of persistence in resilience and the bravery needed when vulnerable. A significant finding of her research is that successful artists, leaders and

clergy are all able to ‘lean’ into their discomfort, to take risks and to fail without perceiving themselves as failures.



Say Goodbye to Survival Mode: 9 Simple Strategies to Stress Less, Sleep More, and Restore Your Passion for Life

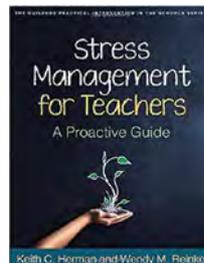
Paine, C. 2014. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc (248.843 P144)
 Many women feel overwhelmed by the constant demands of work and family life. Simple strategies to better manage time, establish priorities and boundaries and be realistic about goals are given, including examples from Paine’s own life.



A Still Quiet Place: A Mindfulness Program for Teaching Children and Adolescents to Ease Stress and Difficult Emotions

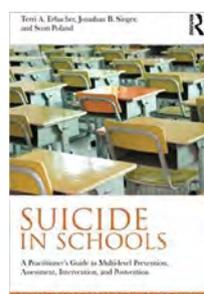
Saltzman, A. 2014. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications (155.4 S176)
 Classroom teachers can deliver this eight-week mindfulness program to help students develop their capacity to communicate well, regulate emotions

and act with compassion. Exercises focus on elementary and junior high students but can also be adapted for older teens.



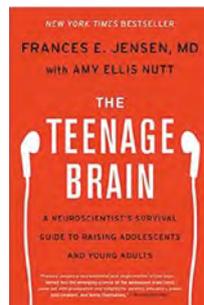
Stress Management for Teachers: A Proactive Guide

Herman, K. C., and W. M. Reinke. 2015. New York, NY: Guilford Press (371.10019 H551)
 The guide is intended to assist teachers in developing their own problem-solving and coping skills. Included are individual and group exercises that can be useful professional development tools.



Suicide in Schools: A Practitioner's Guide to Multi-Level Prevention, Assessment, Intervention, and Postvention

Erbacher T. A. et al. New York, NY: Routledge (371.7 E65)
 One of the most difficult things teachers will ever face in schools is the death of a student by suicide. This book provides multi-level guides to deal with suicide. The authors discuss prevention programs, assessment of at-risk youth and interventions, as well as the more difficult tasks of supporting students and staff following a death by suicide. Step-by-step guides and reproducible handouts are included.



The Teenage Brain: A Neuroscientist's Survival Guide to Raising Adolescents and Young Adults

Jensen, F. E. 2016. Toronto, ON: HarperCollins Canada (155.5 J51)
 In the last decade, neurologists have discovered that the teenage brain is not as fully developed as once thought. Research indicates that the brain continues to develop into the early 20s. Dr. Jensen explores the myths of

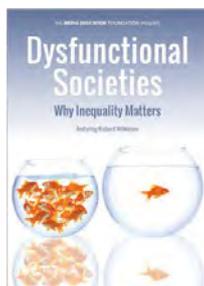
adolescence and brings a science-based understanding to explaining difficult teen behaviour.



Well Aware: Developing Resilient, Active, and Flourishing Students

Carney, P. 2014. Don Mills, ON: Pearson Canada (616.89 C289)
 Addressing mental wellness as a priority for everyone, rather than as a concern for those who are unwell, Carney suggests actions teachers can take to build resilience and effective life skills in all students.

DVDS

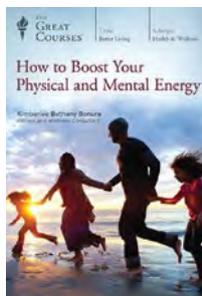


Dysfunctional Societies: Why Inequality Matters

Jhally, S. et al. 2015. Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation. (AV DYS)

This eye-opening documentary investigates how the United States measures up against the rest of the world in life expectancy, violence, health, mental illness and incarceration. It makes a credible

argument that economic inequalities are the key drivers of the decreasing wellness of the U.S. population.



How to Boost Your Physical and Mental Energy
Bonura, K. 2015. Chantilly, VA: Teaching Co. 372 min. (AV HOW 2)

This 12-part course is broken into digestible 30-minute lessons. Using natural methods, the course focuses on doing things that boost your energy throughout the day and noticing the things that deplete it.



Keeping the Wisdom and Sharing Our Gifts
Boyd, E. 2013. Alexandria, VA: Microtraining Associates. 35 min. (AV BOY)

In this presentation, Elizabeth Boyd borrows from international humanitarian guidelines to empower communities in their response to disasters. She explores how teachers can use an indigenous approach to mental health that will develop students' gifts as leaders.

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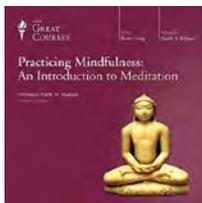
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Practicing Mindfulness: An Introduction to Meditation

Muesse, M. W. 2011. Chantilly, VA: Teaching Co. 744 min. (AV PRA)
This 24-part course introduces the basics of meditation and how to apply the philosophy of mindfulness to all aspects of our lives.



Timebomb: The Cost of Dropping Out

Mattos, M. 2017. Toronto, ON: Solution Tree. 10 min. (AV TIM)
This bold video presents, in a powerful way, the negative lifelong consequences of dropping out of school—a great motivational video for teachers to use with students in their classrooms.



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Alpha 1S Humanoid Robot

A fairly sturdy pre-assembled robot that can be programmed through the free app on a smartphone or tablet. Alpha can perform kung-fu, dance and yoga, as well as tell stories. This robot has a big “wow” factor and will inspire student programmers of all ages.



Bee-Bot

Kindly donated to the library by Alberta Technology Leaders in Education (ATLE), the Bee-Bot is a sturdy robot designed for use by young children. The Bee-Bot reinforces children’s literacy and numeracy knowledge aided by colourful educational floor mats.



Circuit Scribe Ultimate Kit

This kit for students eight years of age and older, also donated by ATLE, extends physical circuits to paper by using an electronic ink. A useful workbook helps students to start thinking about the endless possibilities for object design.



StikBot Zanimation Studio

When this donation from ATLE arrived, library staff knew it needed to order two more! This inexpensive green screen studio comes with three figures, two props and a tripod for a camera or smartphone. Designed for creators of stop motion animation, the free app allows students to add any background they want to the green screen area of their animated shots.

FRENCH BOOKS/LIVRES EN FRANÇAIS



Enseigner l'éducation musicale à l'école primaire

Schoen, Pierre-Jean. 2016. Paris, FRA : Dunod (372.87 S365)

L'enseignement de l'éducation musicale est fréquemment redouté par les enseignants du primaire. Pourtant, l'éducation musicale à l'école n'a rien à voir avec l'enseignement spécialisé dispensé dans les conservatoires et les

écoles de musique par des professeurs experts. Il s'agit plutôt pour l'enseignant de mener des situations pédagogiques où les élèves vont développer leurs habiletés musicales à travers des démarches ouvertes à tous. Cet ouvrage propose des outils présentés de façon visuelle et accompagnés d'exemples d'application en classe pour aider l'enseignant à conduire des séances variées, adaptées à chaque cycle.



Les premiers pas en atelier d'écriture

Calkins, Lucy et Amanda Hartman. 2017. Montréal, QC : Chenelière Éducation (372.6049 C155)

Qu'est-ce qu'un atelier d'écriture efficace? Les auteures tentent de répondre à cette question au fil

des activités et ateliers présentés dans cet ouvrage, qui permettront aux élèves de cinq et six ans de faire leurs premiers pas dans l'univers de l'atelier d'écriture. Les enseignants y trouveront un processus explicite d'écriture de textes narratifs et informatifs, incluant des gabarits d'écriture, des exemples de tableaux d'ancrage, des listes de vérification ainsi que des tableaux de progression des apprentissages.

La rétroaction au cœur de la classe : pour favoriser les apprentissages, les habiletés sociales et le développement des élèves

McCallum, Deborah. 2017. Montréal, QC : Chenelière Éducation (371.1022 M122)

La rétroaction peut se présenter telle une tâche de plus à ajouter à celles que les enseignants doivent déjà accomplir en classe. Elle constitue toutefois une part essentielle des processus d'enseignement et d'apprentissage. « Rétroaction » ne doit pas forcément être synonyme d'« évaluation ». Ce livre aborde la rétroaction dans une perspective globale, grâce à des stratégies et à des activités faciles à mettre en place afin d'outiller les élèves de 6 à 12 ans à recevoir et à donner des commentaires constructifs permettant d'améliorer leurs apprentissages et leurs comportements.



Les tableaux d'ancrage : des référentiels dynamiques pour maximiser l'apprentissage

Martinelli, Marjorie et Kristine Mraz. 2017. Montréal, QC : Chenelière Éducation (372.6 M385)

Qu'ils soient conçus par des enseignants ou des entreprises, les tableaux d'ancrage sont partout et font partie intégrante de la classe. Toutefois, le

tableau d'ancrage ne peut venir avant les besoins de l'enfant; il faut faire participer les élèves à la création des tableaux et les amener à interagir avec eux dans l'environnement de la classe. Cet ouvrage propose une démarche claire, illustrée de nombreux exemples, pour créer des tableaux d'ancrage qui aideront les élèves à se rappeler le point d'enseignement et à devenir plus autonomes.



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THE BODY CONTESTED

Physical education changes with the times

The human body is a site for mighty contests of philosophy, medicine, the enforcement of laws, the waging of wars, the beautiful and the grotesque, human rights, politics, the conduct of a society, morality and mores, cultural expression and, of course, contemporary notions of health and wellness.

The central preoccupation of history, theology, art, the humanities and the sciences has been the body and its relationships to other bodies, its occupation of space, its functions, and its ideal form and function. The foregoing list of monumental human concerns might, at first reading, feel remote to the average school physical education curriculum or perennial game of dodgeball, but wherever the body takes precedence, it will remain the prize over which centres of power and authority will contend.

Peters (2004) expresses the problematic nature of the body in education this way: “The body has recently become a desideratum for a range of disparate studies in the arts, humanities and the sciences for a philosophical rescue operation that aims—against the dualisms bedeviling modern philosophy elevating the mind at the expense of the body—to rehabilitate the body as a site for reason, perception, knowledge and learning” (p. 13). Our contemporary philosophical and curricular convulsions over physical education’s role in promoting the wellness of students is an inheritance from ideas that ossified in the United Kingdom in the mid-19th century.

In 1847, philosopher, merchant and progressive social reformer Charles Bray (1811–1894) undertook to place “within the reach of all, at the cheapest possible rate, and in the shortest possible form” the value of what was generally described as “Physiology and Education” being the

“most important and the least understood” (p. 3) aspect of educating children. Bray’s goal is one we would subscribe to today, 170 years later, simply to achieve health, strength and happiness among what he described as the “working classes.” Today we speak of “wellness,” a term loosely conveying notions of physical vitality, mental health, achievement of personal potential, work–life balance and an expectation of longevity.

Advocacy for wellness is hardly a modern construction. In the United States, Bray’s contemporary, Dr. John Harvey Kellogg (yes, *that* Kellogg), was an early advocate of wellness, which he viewed as the natural result of proper diet and exercise. For Bray and Kellogg and their acolytes, the headwaters of wellness were to be found in the body and the most important aspect of education was physical education. Health, insisted Bray (1847), was “the greatest blessing we can enjoy; without it all other blessings are comparatively useless” (p. 4). Teaching a student to read, write and do sums is of little use if moral education is lacking or if the body is unhealthy. Bray insisted that health and wellness were fundamental as much to the success of a society as to that of the individual.

“This kind of education,” Bray wrote, “will make a healthy and a temperate, an honest and industrious, a moral and intelligent individual” (p. 8) who will contribute positively to society primarily through the pursuit of healthful living and exercise. Indeed, the neglect of exercise courted melancholia, depression, neuroses, and low activity suggesting that those not engaged in regular exercise were apt to be a burden to their society. Longer lives could be achieved through exercise but also, and most importantly, a heightened quality of life would impart a “much better chance of enjoying our threescore years and ten” (p. 23).



photo: Stock

TIN SOLDIER APPROACHES TO PHYSICAL EDUCATION

In his examination of pedagogy for young boys, Moss (2001), provides a powerful description of what has become known as the “tin soldier” approach to exercising the body:

Marching and military drills were taught in schools across Canada by the early 20th century, and were often explained as effective ways to teach obedience, discipline and respect for law and order. This emphasis on drill and martial training increased in 1909–10 with the foundation of the Strathcona Trust, a fund established by Canada’s then high commissioner to Britain to promote physical training and create military cadet corps in schools across the country. (p. 96)

Drilling and obedience were also used to instill a sense of disciplined masculinity in non-British populations throughout the empire, including Canada. In 1909, Ontario minister of education George Ross maintained that “no other form of drill so effectively develops a manliness of form and bearing, as well as physical force and independence” (Alexander 2017). Although girls, too, were subjected to tin soldier methods, drills were less intense and were aimed at achieving different healthful outcomes that were deemed appropriate for young women, emphasizing proper breathing, flexibility and balance rather than endurance and strength.

The matter of physical education was overtly political and imbricated with the prevailing ethos of empire. As Morton (1978) reports, Minister of Militia and Defense Sir Frederick Borden (1896–1911) spoke of physical training as of “inestimable value to the welfare of our race in its effect upon future generations” (p. 62). By 1909, the chief inspector of Toronto’s public schools celebrated military-style physical training as essential to imparting discipline and loyalty to non-British immigrant children. The approach was applied to Canada’s Indigenous people in the same manner in residential and public schools throughout the nation (Fisher 2011, 92).

THE BODY IN MOTION—MOVEMENT STUDIES

During the Second World War, the fitness of bodies became a national concern addressed by federal legislation—the *National Fitness Act of Canada*—enacted in 1943 by the Liberal government of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King. As Canada emerged from the war, physical education pursued a new direction that gradually rejected the narrow range of activity and militaristic methods of the tin soldier approach. A new approach, that of “movement studies,” gained in influence.

Movement studies is not easily defined and has itself been a bone of contention among historians of physical education. In general, human movement studies is a body of knowledge that draws on aesthetics, physical education and the social sciences. It might include social dance, for example, or movement conducted in free play or games.

Movement studies stood in sharp contrast to the biomechanical drills imported to Canada beginning in 1911 and continuing through the post-war period as enshrined in the widely used British *Syllabus of Physical Training for Schools* (1909, 1911 and 1933). The syllabus emphasized posture, hygiene, health and folk dances. Movement study proponents pointed to the syllabus as a deterrent to student engagement. They argued that its emphasis on boys’ physical training was at odds with more progressive pedagogical practices. In retrospect, as Vertinsky and Gils (2017) write, the syllabus perpetuated “the values of the patriarchy, deprived girls’ physical education of material resources and ignored child-centered education” (p. 458).

Educators such as Arthur Lamb, director of the McGill School of Physical Education, advocated for education through the body rather than of the body. They argued the potential benefits of education through the physical, beyond drills in a gymnasium three periods a week. In such advocacy, Lamb was joined by Maury Van Vliet (founding professor of the University of Alberta’s Department of Physical Education), and Jesse Feiring Williams, whose influence was brought to Canada from the United States. Williams (1942) famously wrote that the “cultivation of the body for the body’s sake can never be justified” (p. 255).

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On this new frontier of education through the body came the pioneering efforts of British female “games mistresses” many of whom brought progressive movement studies and child-centered teaching for both girls and boys with them to Canada in the 1950s.

“By telling children what to do and not how to do it, the method stimulated self-guided movement discovery and, it was believed, provided those kinaesthetic experiences that would ease children’s transition into learning more specific skill-and-sport-based movements at the secondary and/or high school stage” (Vertinsky and Gils 2017, p. 460–461).

The syllabus was shelved in favour of two important and influential texts that were newly available in Canada: *Moving and Growing: Physical Education in the Primary School Part 1* (1952) and *Planning the Program; Physical Education in the Primary School Part 2* (1953). Alberta was early to embrace rigorous and academic programs for physical education teachers. Van Vliet had established the Department of Physical Education at the University of Alberta in 1945. Education and pedagogical professional training had only been moved to the university from the normal schools a mere three years earlier in the spring of 1942. Van Vliet’s academic department grew quickly in the immediate post-war period, becoming the School of Physical Education in 1954 and finally evolving into a faculty in 1964.

But political and military influences on physical education, then as now, are never far from the planning and execution of curriculum. In 1957 the cultural shock of Sputnik—suggesting perhaps the military, engineering and scientific supremacy of the Soviet regime—fuelled a new moral panic over national strength, ingenuity, readiness and ability to compete in all arenas and on all levels.

Movement studies’ progress was called to an abrupt halt in the face of what Montez De Oca (2007) calls the “muscle gap” (p. 123), a fierce anxiety of a society at risk through a lack of physical prowess and power.

Canada’s generally disappointing results at the 1952 and 1956 Olympics once again raised governmental concerns over youth fitness. Once again the federal government, this time lead by Prime Minister John Diefenbaker’s Conservatives, brought its influence to bear through *An Act to Encourage Fitness and Amateur Sport* (1961). From that time to the present day, a federal cabinet post has existed under all federal governments and has overseen federal funds to encourage, support, advocate for and preside over physical activity programs nationwide.

It is no coincidence, then, that the history of the Health and Physical Education Council (HPEC) of the Alberta Teachers’ Association begins in early 1961 during this intensified interest and professionalization of the speciality. The arrival of specialist councils in 1960–1961 had a significant impact on the delivery of professional practice

among Alberta teachers. Newly organized and newly funded councils were producing high-quality publications and research, offering inservices and conferences, and raising awareness of educational specialities, including physical education.

The HPEC’s constant objective, first enshrined in its constitution of 1962, ensured the council would remain open to advances in pedagogy and professional practice and to “improve instruction in health and physical education by increasing members’ knowledge and understanding in these fields” (HPEC 1962, 1).

From the earliest days of the first conferences, the HPEC strove to expand the perspectives of health and physical education teachers in Alberta. “Fitness for Modern Living” was the keynote address of the inaugural conference in 1962. The following year, the conference included addresses on relaxation, how to include physically challenged students in gym class, developmental considerations and the psychological impact of “phys-ed.” Teachers adopted and supported national fitness and physical education programs such as the ParticipACTION initiative.

The ParticipACTION Project, founded in 1973 and funded by Health Canada, had a straightforward goal: to bring



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Canadians into the fitness fold. To achieve this end, the program would progress in stages. The initial messaging of the program focused on several key messages with a common theme: make Canadians aware of their poor fitness and how to make beneficial lifestyle changes. The media campaign relied upon humour to get the message across. Canadians' televisions were replete with "couch potatoes," 60-year-old Swedes and other brilliant radio content. A decade later, ParticipACTION was a feature on the Canadian public policy landscape. Canadians were told, "Don't Just Think About It—Do it!"

Now that Canadians were aware of their fitness challenges they needed tools and resources to move from thinking about healthy living to trying new ways to incorporate exercise. In 1989 Canadians were introduced to "Body Break," a television campaign demonstrating simple activities that could be incorporated into their daily lives. Between 1991 and 1995 ParticipACTION was about eating well and physical activity.

ParticipACTION initiatives found their way into schools' physical education curricula by mandating a series of physical fitness achievement tests that rewarded participants with gold, silver, bronze or red badges signifying their fitness level. A national focus on health and wellness achieved primarily through physical activity and sport persists as part federal government policy and part national consciousness. Its most recent manifestation, the Own the Podium initiative, seeks to ensure Canada's elite athletes remain competitive in international meets, most significantly, the Olympics. Founded officially in 2005, Own the Podium

necessarily do drills, but we do count "reps," count steps with FitBits, seek out electronic monitors for blood pressure, blood sugar, heart rate and generally continue the tradition of physical activity driven by metrics. Our tin soldier is still with us, but disguised by a thin veneer of personal goals aimed at reaching new levels of achievement.

This microsurveillance of our exercise and health is now part of regular medical preventative care and, in many ways, has the effect of heightening a sense of personal responsibility for our health and well-being. Of course, FitBits are luxury items for many Canadians. Poverty continues to prevent one in six Alberta children from having a stable home environment, reliable meals, healthful nutrition or safe places to play and exercise. The means to achieve and maintain physical health are, for many, luxuries themselves.

Has this new technology-driven movement towards exercise as preventative medicine influenced modern physical education pedagogy and curricula? The answers will vary among phys-ed teachers provincewide. Nevertheless, the pattern of attitudes towards exercise as prescription and preventative medicine is impossible to ignore. Consider, as one example, the discourse in recent years on the subject of childhood obesity (a serious concern), guidelines on minimum daily doses of physical activity for children and the need to intervene now to avoid serious disease and pathology in later life.

In this contemporary moment, Vertinsky and Gils (2017) remind us that health professionals have been successful in prescribing exercise as preventative medicine. This trend, together with digital health tools, suggests phys-ed classes

When we consider phys-ed through the lens of wellness, it's clear that Alberta physical education specialists are among students' most important developmental leaders.

had a mission to coordinate funding and training programs to achieve dominance at the 2010 Olympic Winter Games to be held on home turf in Vancouver. Today, Own the Podium is a federally funded not-for-profit organization dedicated to delivering as many Olympic and Paralympic medals as possible.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AS MEDICAL PRESCRIPTION

If we return to Bray's treatise and advice on health and exercise, we will detect the seeds of what today is a fully-evolved philosophy of exercise as medical prescription. Beginning in the last quarter of the 20th century, the cultural pursuit of longer and healthier lives through diet and exercise found evidence-based scientific support from the medical profession. We have returned to an approach made popular and advocated 170 years ago. True, we don't

are poised to return to what Gard (2015) describes as a "performative, dull, repetitive, stressful, intellectually narrow and ethically dubious experience for students" (p. 840). However, when we consider phys-ed through the lens of wellness, it's clear that Alberta physical education specialists are among students' most important developmental leaders, mentors and coaches as they seek to contribute to the education of the whole student. As educator Sir Ken Robinson reminds us, "The arts, sciences, humanities, physical education, languages and maths all have equal and central contributions to make to a student's education" (Shepherd 2009).

Maggie Shane is the archives manager for the Alberta Teachers' Association.

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Throughout the existing body of organizational management and behaviour research literature, the terms “health,” “wellness” and “well-being” remain highly contested and ambiguous and have too often been co-opted by commercial interests (Davies 2015). Two widely known experts in the field argue in their controversial book, *The Wellness Syndrome*, that the current fixation on health and wellness reflects a deeper ideological shift in our culture that is grounded in the problematic neoliberal assumption that the individual is an autonomous agent who through the sheer power of free will can overcome any and all obstacles to happiness (Cederström and Spicer 2015).

For education policymakers and researchers, the alchemy of the terms *student health*, *wellness* and *well-being* have taken multiple meanings driven by a wide-ranging set of imperatives and research approaches ranging from an instrumental focus on improving productivity such as student achievement and test scores to more humanitarian and spiritual impulses driven by an ethic of care for students as intrinsically worthwhile human beings (Graham, Powell, Thomas and Anderson 2016; Clandinin 2007; Michalos 2014).

Here in Canada, as in our other jurisdictions, the growing marketing of data architectures that has spawned “data dashboards” and “data walls” in schools is increasingly

reporting and/or accountability purposes (People for Education 2013).¹

Reflecting on this rising tide across OECD jurisdictions, including Canada, Shanker (2014) has raised cautions regarding efforts to address student wellness through metrics and data architectures while failing to address the all-too-obvious sources of systemic distress for children and youth that include growing precarity, including food insecurity and environmental degradation.

Central to the emerging policy milieu of student wellness is the growing influence of international large-scale assessments (ILSAs) and global learning metrics (GLMs) that are increasingly shaping the reform agendas of governments and elite policy brokers. The growing data architectures of the OECD members are being used to legitimize a variety of often contradictory and paradoxical “educational policy reform agendas” as education ministers attempt to improve their rankings, or “rank up” their jurisdiction’s status globally (Fischman, Topper and Silova 2017, p. 10).

While ILSAs and GLMs such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) are taking on more credence in the media and public debates about the comparative quality of education, the irony remains that

Central to the emerging policy milieu of student wellness is the growing influence of international large-scale assessments.

mobilized by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and corporate players such as Pearson and a growing cadre of consultants and software vendors. Here in Canada this includes the development of instruments to survey student engagement, including social and emotional development, that have been suggested as opportunities for new elements of school performance

the flood of data that such tests generate is used to support a myriad of often contradictory policy initiatives here in Canada and abroad (Fischman, Topper and Silova 2017, p. 13). Increasingly, ranking up among OECD education ministries leads to less than rigorous analysis of the metrics, shifting instead to a preoccupation with rankings and competitive comparison (Sorensen 2017).

¹ For an example of one of the earliest forays into this effort see the Canadian Education Association’s 2009 report, *What Did You Do in School Today? Transforming Classrooms through Social, Academic and Intellectual Engagement*.

WHO WILL OWN STUDENT WELLNESS?

Whoever gets to name the future, owns the future.
—Hal Niedzviecki²

As with all public policy deliberations, just who gets to define and frame the definitions of student wellness and well-being will shape and determine future strategies both here at home in Alberta schools and across the OECD. Wellness and well-being are at risk of being subsumed under the aegis of the OECD that has occupied the policy space with its growing interest in measuring the cognitive, psychological, social, physical and material well-being of students (Borgonovi and Pál 2016, p. 22). Interventions by the OECD in applying international benchmarking and metrics to well-being are evidence of the globalizing of education policy in the past decade (Fazal and Lingard 2013; Fischman, Topper and Silova 2017).

The OECD's growing investment in expanding its measures of social capital, including student health and well-being, include measuring trust in people, measuring health inequalities and measuring trust in institutions, all focused on tidy well-being metrics and quick policies fixes. More recently, building on the OECD *Framework for Measuring Well-Being and Progress*, the OECD will potentially feed the media's default position of focusing on comparisons and a political impulse for a "ranking up" agenda. For the education sector struggling to keep pace with this measurement imperative, one risk is embracing the marketing of commercial off-the-shelf products used to measure student wellness and social emotional learning, as has been documented in Australia (Hogan, Sellar and Lingard 2015; Lewis and Hogan 2016).

Since 2007, the deployment of the language of competencies as the foundation for policy reform across the OECD has reflected the humanist neo-liberal framing of the student as a competitive global citizen-in-waiting. This trend has given legitimacy to the framing of teaching and learning as a means of infusing "skills, behaviours, attitudes, motivations, values and understandings" (Hipkins, Boyd and Joyce, 2005, p. 1) that "point to a more familiar cognitive and individualist framing" (Hipkins and Boyd 2011, p. 71).

The unfortunate result of the OECD *Framework for Measuring Well-Being and Progress* is that the focus on individual competencies and attributes of students has given rise to a new generation of data infrastructures that constructs students in

a deficit model, potentially lacking the psycho-social qualities needed to succeed, framed by a narrow definition of a productive political economy and civil society. This will give rise to an unarticulated but compelling driver of educational policy and practices: framing and reporting gaps in wellness and well-being as a form of student incompetency. This policy shift is already being mobilized through the inclusion of indicators of "global competence" in the 2018 administration of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) using both cognitive testing measures as well as data collected through self-reporting of "students' awareness of global issues and cultures, skills (both cognitive and social) and attitudes, as well as information from schools and teachers on activities to promote global competence" (OECD, p. 21). This latest effort reflects the longstanding concerns regarding PISA including methodological challenges and the stringing together of inferences regarding what constitutes literacy and numeracy skills, never mind the emergent and ephemeral construct of the OECD's Global Competence Framework (Fernandez-Cano, 2016).

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² Niedzviecki coined this invocation drawn from the question "Who owns the future?" related to the work on futures thinking first popularized by Jared Lanier. See Maslin, J. 2013. "Fighting Words Against Big Data 'Who Owns the Future?'" *New York Times*, May 5. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/06/books/who-owns-the-future-by-jaron-lanier.html>.

As a growing body of researchers is pointing out, paramount among the many difficulties of deploying large-scale metrics based on whole nation and large-scale data sets of various student outcomes—including attributes such as competencies—is that it risks student wellness and well-being, introducing “psychopathological descriptors to locate whatever it is they are describing as deficits exclusively within people” rather than the result of the broader socio-political contexts of the lives of young people as human beings (Wasson 2015, p. 37).

As well, there are numerous ethical issues around surveying students regarding their psychological states that are increasingly being raised by teacher federation leaders and psychometricians. Furthermore, Ferguson and Power (2014) acknowledge that measures used to assess current wellness programs have been primarily tied to academic outcomes and school engagement. Yet little evidence currently supports that these programs actually translate into healthy adult lifestyles. In their view, all school relationships are central when establishing safe social and physical school environments. Policy and community partnerships should be focused on the broad outcomes of a healthy life not the primary pursuit of academic attainment.

Rose Hipkins (2004), chief researcher with the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, concludes from the New Zealand experience that while a focus on key competencies has been helpful for leveraging curriculum change, in a later analysis she sees that wide gaps persist between what

competencies curriculum discourse among its members, including Alberta, into student well-being will inevitably shift into another form of deficit thinking about the attributes and capacities of students. For example, it should not be lost on Alberta teachers that the enthusiasm for gathering up yet more data within the constellation of ILSAs and GLMs continues unabated here in Alberta, as made evident with the decision to continue to participate in a growing array of international assessments. These include the OECD’s PISA, Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) and the Alberta Indigenous Student Achievement Gap Study. It also includes IEA’s Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

BOUNDARY CROSSING WITH STUDENTS LEADING THE CONVERSATION

In one of the most comprehensive reviews of pan-Canadian mental health policies and strategies, Ott, Hibbert, Rodger and Leschildet (2017) identify the dominant narratives that currently shape policies and practices and conclude by advising “system leaders to adopt a sociomaterial perspective” (p. 21) in order to advance student well-being initiatives. Drawing on evidence of growing work intensification of Canadian teachers (Froese-Germain and Riel 2012), the authors caution that student mental health should be understood as yet one more imposed priority and policy initiative for schools that are already stretched for time, money and resources, further concluding “schools cannot be settings that promote mental fitness for students if they are not

“Schools cannot be settings that promote mental fitness for students if they are not psychologically healthy settings for educators.”

students report about their mental health and their sense of confidence and connectedness compared to the focus on key curriculum competencies (Hipkins 2012). Simply overlaying key competencies such as “managing self” and “relating to others” over top of the complex psycho-social issues students face is problematic. In the New Zealand case, not only was there is no connection between the humanistic concern for the well-being of students and the neo-liberal agenda advanced by the OECD’s vision of the purposes of school, the econometric model of schooling driven by that organization was often at odds with the ways school performance metrics are taken up by education ministries across the globe.

The growing risk is that the shoehorning of the OECD

psychologically healthy settings for educators” (p. 14). Here in Alberta the considerable psychological challenges faced by teachers and school leaders has also been well-documented (Duxbury and Higgins 2013).

To support teacher wellness in robust communities of practice the authors offer a policy framework with five categories: cosmopolitanism, compatibility, available resources, access to information and knowledge, and processes (Ott, Hibbert, Rodger and Leschildet 2017, pp. 21–22). For Alberta teachers and the Association’s current research efforts, of these five elements, of particular import is cosmopolitanism: the degree to which organizations are networked externally and promote boundary-spanning roles of their staff. From the Association’s

perspective, drawing from this element should encourage policymakers and practitioners to ask questions such as, how are schools connected and networked to organizations and their communities? Do schools promote boundary-spanning roles that bring teachers and students together with the expertise of other communities globally? In what ways does the current focus on narrow definitions of success in school continue to act as barriers to equity and the aspirations of the Association’s roadmap for positive change outlined in *A Great School For All* (Alberta Teachers’ Association 2012, p. 21).

Of course, addressing these questions also invites us to consider the broader boundary-crossing questions about the role of students in their education and, more importantly, helping them to define their future in society. While many education policy initiatives claim to value student voice and their concerns about their place in the world, seldom are these concerns ever addressed. (Gillet-Swan 2017) Or as Wallin (in press) asks, for young people, what might well-being and being in the world mean in the age of the Anthropocene, where there is “no longer any more room for nature” because up to 50 per cent of all animal species are projected to face extinction by midcentury?

Thomas and Robertson (2012) call for a broader systems view of the complex ecologies that shape student wellness strategies by moving beyond “policies such as surveillance measures” that focus on individual deficits and pathologies of students to “policy efforts to empower students to challenge and change both their own lives and the world in which they live” (p. 138). While bringing teachers together in communities of practice to interrogate the local contexts related to mental health and well-being, teacher organizations need to support school efforts to cross the boundaries beyond the school site to engage the critical influences that shape the psycho-social condition of children and youth.

Taking up a boundary-crossing cosmopolitan approach to educational development is the core of the Association’s international research program that is also shared by other organizations and government agencies. Inspired by the proven benefits of networks of schools as a catalyst for educational development demonstrated by the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement, in 2011 the Association embarked on the Finland Alberta (FINAL) partnership and later, the Norway-Alberta-Ontario (NORCAN) and this past two years the New Zealand partnership. By bringing together students, teachers and school leaders, these internationalization efforts continue to be an important step in educational development (Hargreaves and Shirley 2013, p. 13). Students taking co-ownership of their well-being and their place in the larger global society will continue to be a

key rationale for supporting schools as the catalyst of change in these partnerships as described a theme issue of the *ATA Magazine* (Alberta Teachers’ Association 2016).

As with any policy aspiration, the focus on wellness is an expression of all educational policy making to achieve “visions of education and the imaginary futures that nations seek to make reality” (Zhao and Gearin 2018). The pursuit by the OECD and other global policy players to mobilize particular indicators and measures of wellness and well-being to generate data infrastructures will only amplify the culture of competitive comparison. This realization is shared by other teacher organizations in our partnership network, as articulated by R. Grottvik, a political advisor to the Norwegian Union of Education, in a conversation with the author on November 22, 2017:

The current political response to challenges in the education system always seems to be to use more resources to develop more fine grained comparable

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measurements of “outcomes,” instead of investing more resources to enhance teaching practitioners’ ability to help their students. Why not more comparable measurements of the investments governments make to resolve the challenges?

Teacher organizations will need to continue to help shift policy priorities if the psycho-social condition of youth is to be addressed. As well as our international partnerships that mobilize the voice of youth, there are promising examples in the field that can be part of the work ahead. In Alberta exemplary work is underway in building community-based networks with school jurisdictions and ministries as well as the Association’s Healthy Minds, Bright Futures partnership with the Alberta division of the Canadian Mental Health Association. Ontario is drawing on the expertise of Dennis Shirley and Andy Hargreaves to build a consortium of schools that are focusing on professional collaboration to engage whole-school development around student achievement, student well-being, equity and public confidence.³ Also, community mobilization in organizations such as People for Education (2013), while acknowledging the risks of contributing to the culture of competitive comparison, has undertaken important work in exploring possibilities for measures of social and emotional learning linked to defining broader indicators of school success.

With its international partners, the Association will continue to pursue alternatives to the education ministries’ default focus of ranking up on global metrics of wellness as a substitute for engaging with citizens and communities addressing the systemic influences shaping the psycho-social development of children and youth. The political imperative ahead for teaching organizations globally remains a compelling one that ought to mobilize the moral basis of what the teaching as a profession is about:

It is our privileged and political work in the intimate contexts of young people’s lives that constructs our work as a counter-tool to make visible and speakable so much that is rendered invisible and unspeakable. (Wasson 2014, p. 51).

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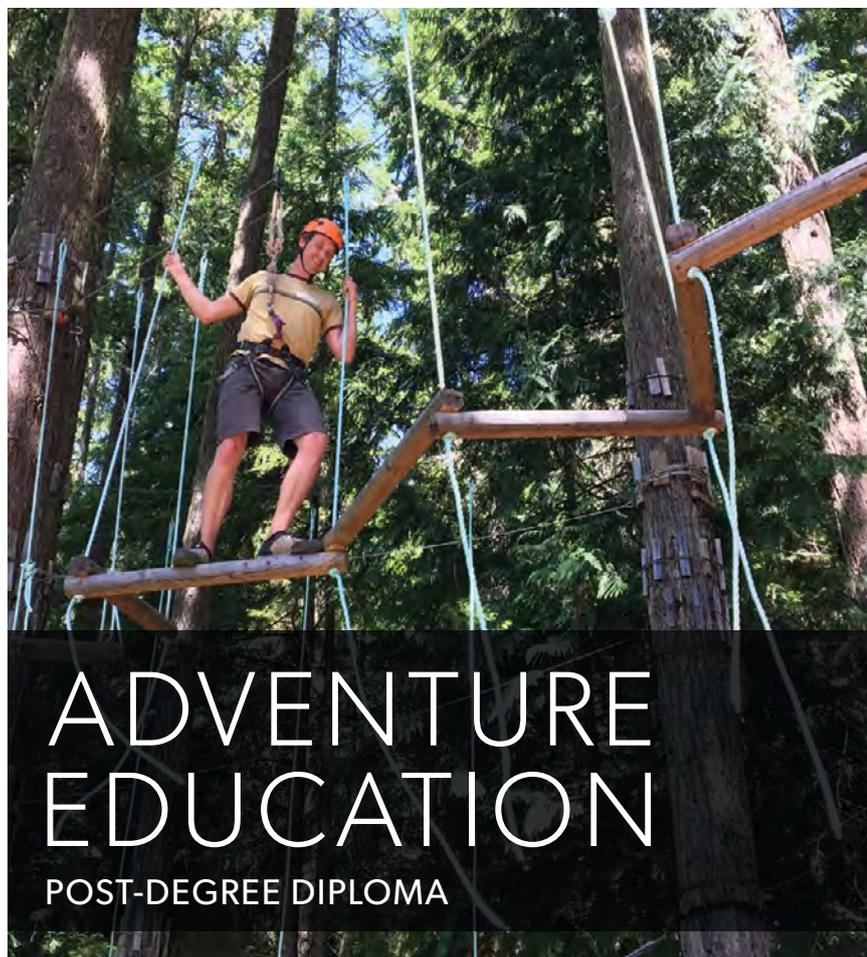
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DENNIS
THEOBALD

THE ATA AND THE PURSUIT OF WELLNESS

As illustrated throughout this edition of the *ATA Magazine*, wellness is much more than the absence of illness. The concept is holistic and comprehensive and includes dimensions of physical, emotional, psychological, social, environmental, economic and spiritual well-being. Based on this understanding, achieving wellness is a critical objective of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

Consider, for example, the core functions of our Teacher Welfare program area, starting with collective bargaining. The process that is currently underway in many bargaining units and is about to begin again at the central table, is all about wellness. In some instances the link is immediate and obvious—improving leaves and benefits to better accommodate the health needs of members and their families directly supports teacher wellness. The effort to improve teacher compensation too has a wellness component, ensuring that teachers will have economic security and be able to sustain their standard of living, both of which are important determinants of wellness.

Increasingly though, collective bargaining has emphasized creating conditions of professional practice and providing the time, resources and supports that teachers need to do their very best work with students. In a profession that is so intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally demanding, being empowered and successful in the classroom is central to achieving sustainable work-life balance.

Similarly, enhancing the capacity and agency of teachers with respect to their learning and growth is a theme that runs through the Association's various professional development programs. Providing opportunities for teachers to

learn together—whether as part of a school or locally enabled learning community, as a specialist council, at convention or at one of many focused learning opportunities supporting Association programs—helps to create professional connectedness, which in turn contributes to career renewal, longevity and satisfaction.

The work of the Association's Member Services program area involves assisting members in matters of employment, managing conflicts, supporting healthy relationships and upholding appropriate standards of professional conduct and practice, all of which are essential to maintaining the school as a healthy workplace. Even in those rare instances when the profession must sanction its members for violations of the Code of Professional Conduct or intervene in instances when members are failing to meet practice standards, it does so with the greater objective of ensuring the individual and collective wellness of our colleagues, students and the school community.

Concern regarding various dimensions of wellness drives the research, external relations and advocacy interests of the Association. Recently, *Growing Up Digital (GUD)*, the Association's effort to better understand the impact of technology on the physical, social and psychological wellness of teachers, students and families, has received international attention and recognition. But GUD is not a thematic exception; most of our research work is about documenting conditions affecting teacher and student wellness and identifying approaches to enhancing wellness. In its work with government and with other education partners, Association

representatives are constantly reminding their counterparts of the potential effects that their latest bright ideas may have on the wellness of front-line teachers and of the need to put into place appropriate resources and supports.

Teachers understand that wellness is indivisible—it does not begin and end at the school door. This understanding is reflected in the Association's efforts to promote diversity, equity and human rights, in our partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association to destigmatize mental health issues and in our support for Public Interest Alberta's initiatives to promote services and spaces that enhance the lives of all Albertans.

As is apparent in all these examples, the activities and objects of the Alberta Teachers' Association are about promoting the wellness of its member teachers. But there is a greater altruism that underlies this. Teacher wellness contributes directly to student wellness, and the wellness of both are linked inextricably to the wellness of the larger community. The truth can be simply expressed: what is good for the health and wellness of teachers is good for the health and wellness of everyone.

As I step into my new role as executive secretary, I am acutely aware of current and continuing challenges to member wellness and the work that lies ahead for us all. I see it as my primary responsibility to support the Association's elected leaders and my staff colleagues across the organization in their continuing efforts to promote teacher wellness in all its various dimensions. It is also my responsibility to attend to the wellness of those who are doing this important work—our capacity to help members be well is only as good as our own wellness.



GREG
JEFFERY

■ FROM THE PRESIDENT ■

WELLNESS TAKES TIME

As I was pondering what direction to take this column, I was reading the other articles that had been written for this issue and noted that many of them are focused on student wellness. Now this should not be surprising in a publication of the Alberta Teachers' Association, but my first thought was, what about us? For a classroom to thrive it needs all of its population to be healthy—physically, mentally and spiritually. So while I acknowledge that student wellness is a large focus of the Association, this column is all about us teachers!

What is the primary element in teacher wellness? In my mind it is time, as this element plays a crucial role in both physical and mental health.

On the physical side, wellness does not happen immediately, but rather physical health is a continuous work in progress. As we age it

will argue that our job is much easier when we have the energy and the stamina to get the most out of each and every day.

Time is also a critical component of mental health. In fact, I believe that a lack of available time is the greatest factor negatively influencing the mental health of teachers. We often talk about relationships as being fundamental to teaching—we need to build relationships with our students in order to be effective in the classroom—but the classroom is not the only place where teachers need to form relationships in order to be at their best. Family and friends are also important aspects of a healthy work-life balance. When work takes away the time needed to tend to these essential connections, mental health erodes—all work and no play make Jane or John an unhealthy person. This is one of the reasons that time

the hall. My experiences have shown me that there is far less strife and stress in a staff room when the people there have opportunities to interact with each other in more relaxed settings, whether that's getting together on Fridays after school or maybe using some school-based in-service time for team-building activities. When a staff gets along well the students can feel it and also benefit.

It all takes time. Collectively and individually we need to work toward carving out more time so we all can be well. On that note, now that this article is finished, I think I'll head home and spend some time with my family. It's a start.

When work takes away the time needed to tend to these essential connections, mental health erodes—all work and no play make Jane or John an unhealthy person.

seems to take longer and longer to achieve particular results whether that be weight loss (tell me about it) or the elimination of habits that are detrimental to one's overall well-being. (A word of advice to the younger members of our profession—good physical health is easier to maintain than it is to regain later in life. That being said, if regaining health is the only option, then it should be pursued.) No one

was such an important part of our last central table agreement. More personal time for teachers means healthier teachers, which means more effective instruction for Alberta students.

It's also important that teaching colleagues have time to relate to each other as people rather than simply viewing each other as fellow adult humans in the room down

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