

# Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health Positive Mental Health Toolkit



**Pan-Canadian  
Joint Consortium for School Health**  
Governments Working Across the Health and Education Sectors

# Acknowledgments

This toolkit was developed for the Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health by Dr. William Morrison and Dr. Patricia Peterson. While the views expressed herein are those of the authors, the JCSH wishes to acknowledge the many people who provided assistance by participating as key informants, critiquing early drafts, drawing attention to examples of good practice or sharing their personal knowledge. The authors hope that this document will encourage dialogue and action and result in improved outcomes for Canadian students.

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# Welcome!



Welcome to the Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health Positive Mental Health Toolkit.

This toolkit has been designed to promote positive school health practices and perspectives within the school environment. We hope that you find the toolkit both helpful and enjoyable. Please note that the bulk of the content, except where otherwise stated, was adapted from the Better Practices document which contains a full reference list. [Link to the Better Practices and Perspectives document.](#)

You can also download a [PDF version of this ebook, without videos.](#)

Use of the left-hand toolbar and several icons that appear in this toolkit will maximize its benefit for you. These include:



Icons indicate an attached document. Embedded and online versions respectively.



— Download an offline version of the toolkit



— Download a PDF version of the toolkit for printing or reference



— The toolkit can be viewed entirely in thumbnail for an overview



— Full screen mode for easier toolkit viewing (exited with esc key)



— Bookmarks and notes can be placed in the toolkit

# What to Expect from the Toolkit

This toolkit has been designed to promote Positive Mental Health perspectives and practices in the school context. It is important to note that Positive Mental Health does not simply represent another program or initiative to be added to the workload of staff or implemented through a rigid structure. Instead, the toolkit is meant to facilitate a shift in practice, and to set in motion a process for engaging school and community strengths in fostering the positive growth and development of children and youth.

This Positive Mental Health toolkit is derived from evidence-informed practices and is linked with a partner document entitled *Schools as a Setting for Promoting Positive Mental Health: Better Practices and Perspectives* (JCSH 2014). The references and citations indicated throughout the toolkit can be found in the Reference section at the end of the *Better Practices* document. These practices can be embedded into your everyday routines and implemented over time, at your own pace. They are founded in a strength-based approach that looks beyond simply addressing problems in the school community. Rather, this approach recognizes that both schools and students already have strengths and gifts that can be built upon and nurtured.



# What to Expect from the Toolkit

Adopting a Positive Mental Health approach will not only serve to strengthen student engagement and academic functioning, but also will pro-actively address key relationship concerns such as the prevention of bullying and oppositional behaviours and attitudes. The application of Positive Mental Health perspectives and practices contributes to the development of environments where individuals experiencing personal distress and challenges can find supportive connections, use and develop their strengths, and develop a greater sense of autonomy or self-determination.

It is not necessary that you implement all sections of the toolkit or that you complete them in the sequence they are presented. We encourage you to take the time to peruse the toolkit, including both its written and video components. By doing this you'll be able to identify and complete the sections that best fit your school needs and goals. In the future, you may later return to the toolkit to identify new priorities and areas for action.

We hope that you find the toolkit both useful and enjoyable!



# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Key Questions to Answer:

- ❖ What is Positive Mental Health?
- ❖ What are the main goals of Positive Mental Health promotion?
- ❖ What does the research say regarding Positive Mental Health?
- ❖ Why is school a critical setting to employ Positive Mental Health approaches?

# Positive Mental Health Defined



Mental health programs and services within the school, community and health settings have often focused on addressing concerns related to the psychological well-being of children and youth through the identification of risk-need factors, delivery of timely intervention and support services, and promotional efforts aimed at reducing potential stigma associated with mental health conditions. Traditionally, such approaches have emphasized the problems or challenges associated with existing or emerging mental health-related concerns in children and youth, and the approaches or interventions needed to remediate or address areas of risk and need (Terjesen, Jocofofsky, Froh & Digiuseppe, 2004; Morrison, Kirby, Losier & Allain, 2009).

## Positive Mental Health

The Public Health Agency of Canada describes Positive Mental Health as “the capacity of each and all of us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections and personal dignity”





# Positive Mental Health Defined

Recent better practice research across health and educational domains assert the importance of moving beyond a problem-focused approach to embrace a more positive view of mental health. This shift involves the recognition that children's and youths' state of psychological well-being is not only influenced by the absence of problems and risk-need concerns, but also is impacted by the existence of positive factors present within individuals and their social settings that contribute to positive growth and development. From this perspective, Positive Mental Health views and approaches underscore that Positive Mental Health is more than the absence of mental illness.

The emergence of Positive Mental Health perspectives has shifted the focus of educators and health professionals "from a preoccupation with repairing weakness to enhancement of positive qualities" (Clonan, Chafouleas, McDougal & Riley-Tillman, 2004, p. 101). Such qualities or factors may include investigation or application of positive individual traits, positive personal experiences and relationships, or enabling initiatives/programs that assist in enhancing the quality of life of children and youth, and prevent or reduce the risk of developing mental health-related concerns (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

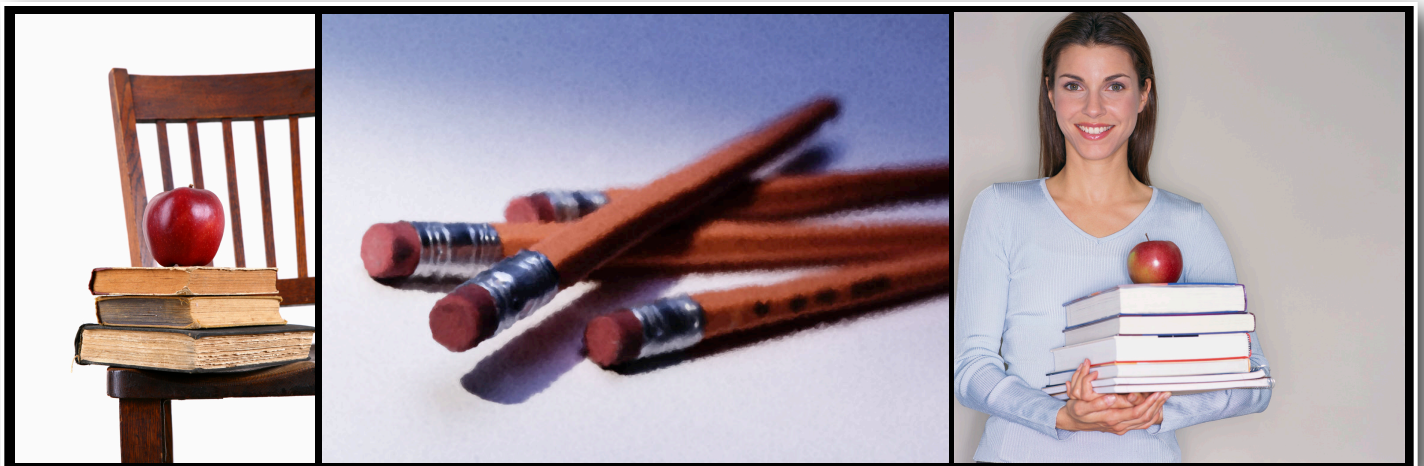


# School as a Critical Setting



According to Stewart, Sun, Patterson, Lemerle and Hardie (2004) the role of the school has been regarded both nationally and internationally as an important environment for promoting the psychological wellness and resilience of children and youth. Schools provide a “critical context for shaping children’s self-esteem, self-efficacy and sense of control over their lives” (p. 27). Given that children and youth spend more than six hours daily and

over 180 days a year in school, the educational context provides key opportunities for delivering activities and comprehensive initiatives related to Positive Mental Health. As children move into their early and later teen years, schools may play an even greater role than the home context in influencing youth, given the powerful influence that teacher support and peer networks have within the educational settings (Stewart, 2008; Stewart et al., 2004)



# School as a Critical Setting



Within the school context, Positive Mental Health promotion should focus on enhancing protective factors that contribute to the social-emotional growth of children and youth, and decreasing specific risk factors that impede psychosocial development.

### **Key Strategic Actions for Positive Mental Health promotion include:**

- \* Implementation of supportive public and school policies;
- \* Development of safe and caring environments within school and community settings;
- \* Provision of direct instruction for students on skills and strategies that enhance their coping and problem-solving capacities;
- \* Ensuring engagement and mobilization of community members in promoting protective factors; and
- \* Development of collaborative and integrated services and supports that share a common vision for Positive Mental Health promotion.



# Chapter 2: Components of Positive Mental Health

## Key Questions to Answer:

- ❖ What key terms are associated with Positive Mental Health?
- ❖ How can a Comprehensive School Health framework support Positive Mental Health approaches?
- ❖ What benefits for children and youth are correlated with Positive Mental Health?
- ❖ What are the key assumptions or values related to a Positive Mental Health approach?
- ❖ What do we need to know about Mental Fitness?

# Positive Mental Health Words and Concepts



# Positive Mental Health Words and Concepts



### Definitions

A full description of the following Positive Mental Health concepts is included in the Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium document, *Schools as a setting for promoting Positive Mental Health: Better practices and perspectives*.

### Protective Factors

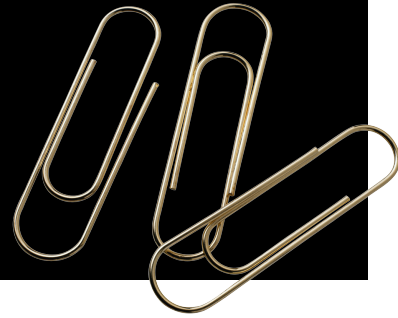
In contrast to risk factors that may pose challenges to the adaptation of children and youth, protective considerations have been defined as factors that contribute to positive development and resiliency. The enhancement of protective factors requires addressing developmental needs. In the preschool years, protective considerations include facilitating the development of nurturing family relationships and routines. Between the ages of six and twelve, meaningful educational experiences are protective factors

that contribute to the positive social and academic development of children and youth. During the later school years, development of pro-social attitudes and behaviours through positive interactions with others in the home, school and community setting become important protective considerations.

### Strength-based Perspectives

The emergence of positive psychology has contributed to increased focus on the identification, exploration and use of strengths in children and youth to foster Positive Mental Health outcomes within the school, home and community contexts. Strength or asset approaches view children and youth as having self-righting potential and innate strengths for resilient outcomes. From this perspective, problems are reframed as learning opportunities. The resolution of such challenges

# Positive Mental Health Words and Concepts (Cont.)



results in the development of positive strengths and resilience.

### **Connectedness**

Connectedness refers to perceptions regarding the nature of key relationships in the daily routines and activities of children and youth. Connectedness is closely linked with the basic needs of belonging or relatedness, and involves feeling close to and experiencing positive attachments with caregivers, peers and others within the home, school or community contexts.

### **Social-Emotional Learning**

Social-emotional learning is defined as the process through which children and youth develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills to:

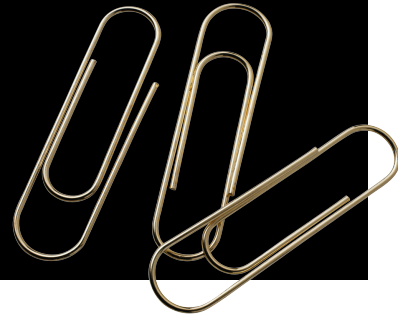
- Identify and manage emotions
- Set and pursue positive goals

- Communicate caring and concern for others
- Initiate and sustain positive relationships
- Make decisions that demonstrate respect for self and others
- Deal with interpersonal concerns and challenges effectively

### **Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy beliefs are the perceptions people hold regarding their ability to perform successfully in a particular situation. In other words, does a person perceive that they have the necessary skills to successfully complete a given task? Self-efficacy beliefs are shaped over time and impact many aspects of people's lives including their goals, their decision-making, and how much effort they will direct toward completing an activity, including their level of persistence when

# Positive Mental Health Words and Concepts



facing personal obstacles or challenges.

### **Autonomy Supportive**

Children and youth possess inner motivational resources that may be supported or impeded by conditions they experience in the classroom context. These resources include their inherent needs and growth propensities to proactively seek out and constructively engage learning opportunities and challenges in their current living and social contexts. According to Self Determination Theory, teachers who adopt autonomy-supportive approaches plan instructional strategies that engage and nurture these inner resources. In contrast, more controlling educational routines and interactions serve to impede or thwart the expression of students' inner motivations.

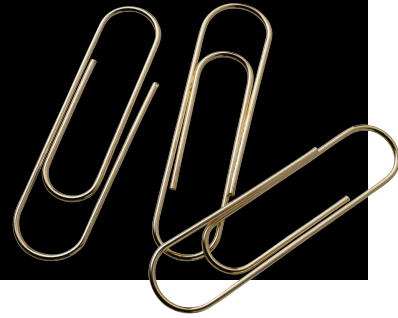
### **Resiliency**

Resiliency is defined as the demonstration of positive adaptation of children and youth despite challenges, obstacles or areas of risk that they may encounter in their social contexts and living circumstances:

- feel appreciated and valued for their individual gifts and strengths;
- have an understanding of how to set realistic expectations for themselves and others;
- possess positive problem-solving skills;
- apply productive coping strategies when they encounter areas of challenge or vulnerability;
- seek assistance from others when support is deemed necessary; and
- experience positive support and interactions from peers and adults.



# Positive Mental Health Words and Concepts



### **Positive Youth Development**

Positive youth development refers to ecological, asset or strength-based approaches that promote healthy child and youth development through supportive community environments and connections. An underlying function of a youth development program is the promotion of normal, healthy child and adolescent development. Positive youth development approaches focus on building relationships with caring adults within the community through engagement in challenging activities in which youth are active participants rather than solely recipients of services or supports. Such methods include structured programs that provide opportunities to explore, apply and build upon their strengths and capacities, as well as those assets in their immediate social environment and communities.

### **Mental Fitness**

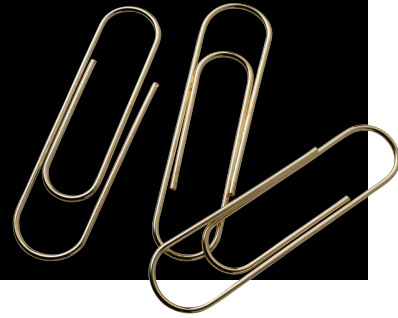
Mental fitness is defined as a state of psychological wellness that reflects people's self-perceptions (feeling and cognitions) regarding the fulfillment of three basic psychological need areas. These include the need for relatedness, competency and autonomy.

### **Acceptance and Understanding of Student Mental Health Needs**

The issue of stigma associated with mental illness in children and youth remains a challenge for educators, and must be targeted as an essential area of change in the design of positive learning environments. Within a health-promoting school, addressing mental health issues requires the design of policies and programs that are based on:

- Awareness of the mental health needs of student populations;

# Positive Mental Health Words and Concepts



- The will to advocate for change in attitudes and understanding; and
- Targeted solutions and results-focused program evaluation activities.

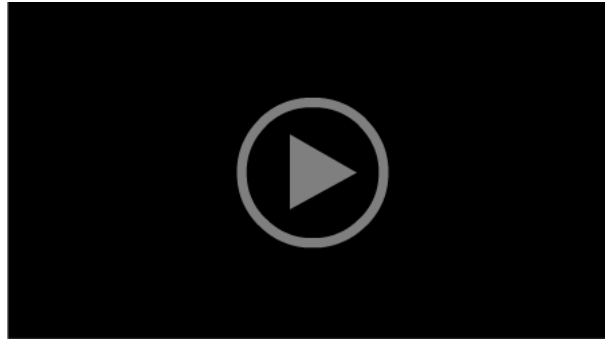
### **Diversity**

Pioneering work by Chickering and Gamson in the 1980's helped educators shift their focus from a systems-based to a student-centered approach to instruction and learning environments. In considering the essential needs of all students, programming has moved increasingly towards an

appreciation of diversity and the valuing of a broad spectrum of student strengths and learning styles.

In recent years, researchers have underscored the connection among culture, student learning and classroom communication. Both teachers and students benefit from a culturally enriched learning environment that ensures the voices of all students are acknowledged and valued, and classroom content and delivery approaches that are inclusive of diverse points of view and cultural contexts.

# The Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health Comprehensive School Health Framework



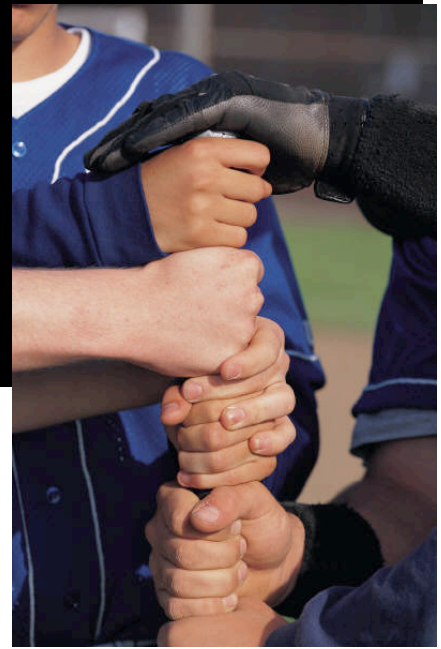
## Comprehensive School Health Framework: A Model for Positive Mental Health Promotion

The Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health Comprehensive School Health Framework has been recognized internationally as a better practice framework for supporting children and youth's academic development concurrently with addressing school health areas in an intentional, multifaceted and integrative manner. Comprehensive School Health:

- Affirms that physically and emotionally healthy children and youth are more likely to reach their academic potential
- Recognizes that the school setting has the potential to positively contribute to students' Positive Mental Health
- Promotes the belief that healthy lifestyle choices positively impact children's and youth's physical health and emotional well-being
- Integrates health into all aspects of school and learning
- Bridges health and education concerns and systems
- Requires the support and collaboration of families, community members, and services providers (JCSH, 2009)



# Comprehensive School Health Framework Basis of The Four Pillars

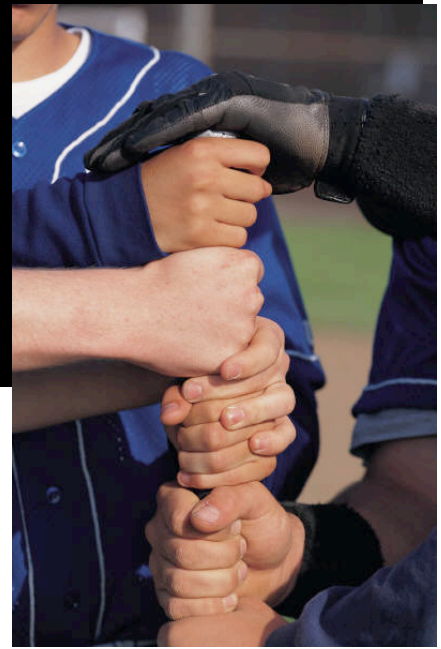


The Comprehensive School Health Framework involves a *whole school* approach that includes four inter-related pillars that provide the foundation for this model. They include:

- 1) ***Social and Physical Environment*** refers to the quality of the relationships among staff and students in the school, the emotional well-being of students, and the buildings, grounds, play space and equipment in and surrounding the school.
- 2) ***Teaching and Learning*** impacts PMH, and includes the resources, activities and provincial/territorial curriculum where students gain age-appropriate knowledge and experiences, helping to build the skills to improve their health and wellbeing.

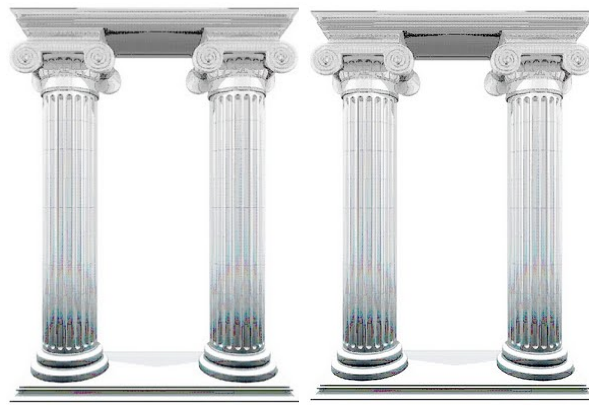


# Comprehensive School Health Framework Basis of The Four Pillars

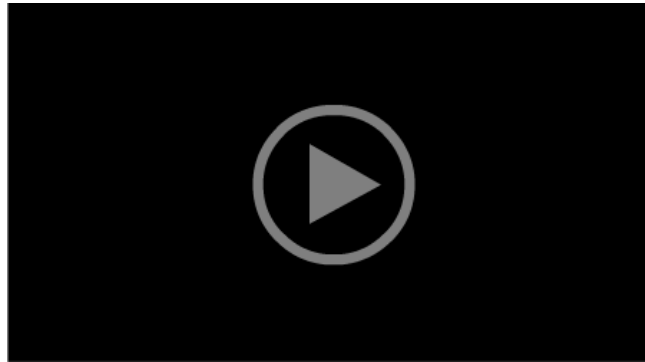


- 3) **Partnerships and Services** are an essential aspect of the facilitation of a Comprehensive School Health approach. When connections are established between a school, its students' families and surrounding community organizations, supportive working relationships are formed, enabling health, education and other sectors to work together to advance school health.
  
- 4) **Healthy School Policy** is the management practices, decision-making processes, rules, procedures and policies at all levels that promote health and wellbeing, and shape a respectful, welcoming and caring school environment.

The background for these pillars and the Comprehensive School Health Framework is elaborated upon in the Positive Mental Health powerpoint in Appendix C. **Link to Positive Mental Health powerpoint.**



# Correlates of Positive Mental Health



In the literature, Positive Mental Health approaches and practices have been positively correlated with healthy and enhanced physical and emotional developmental outcomes in children and youth. Applications of Positive Mental Health concepts have been associated with:

- \* Identification and effective **management of emotions**
- \* Promotion of **normal and healthy child and adolescent development**
- \* Exploration and use of children's and youths' **strengths and capacities**
- \* Development of **meaningful family, school and community relationships**

- \* Enhancement of **positive coping** and **problem-solving skills**
- \* Creation of **meaningful and positive learning environments**
- \* **Increased participation** in structured community recreational and leisure activities
- \* Enhanced respect and **appreciation for diversity** and individual differences

# Correlates of Positive Mental Health



- \* Increased **understanding and de-stigmatization** of mental health conditions
- \* Enhanced opportunities for children and youth to demonstrate age-appropriate **autonomy and choice**
- \* Heightened sensitivity to the needs of others and demonstration of **pro-social behaviours**
- \* **Increased involvement** in structured and unstructured physical activities
- \* **Reduction in high-risk behaviours**

- \* Enhanced **academic achievement** and **school attendance**
- \* **Decreased oppositional behaviour**
- \* Increased **academic confidence** and **engagement**

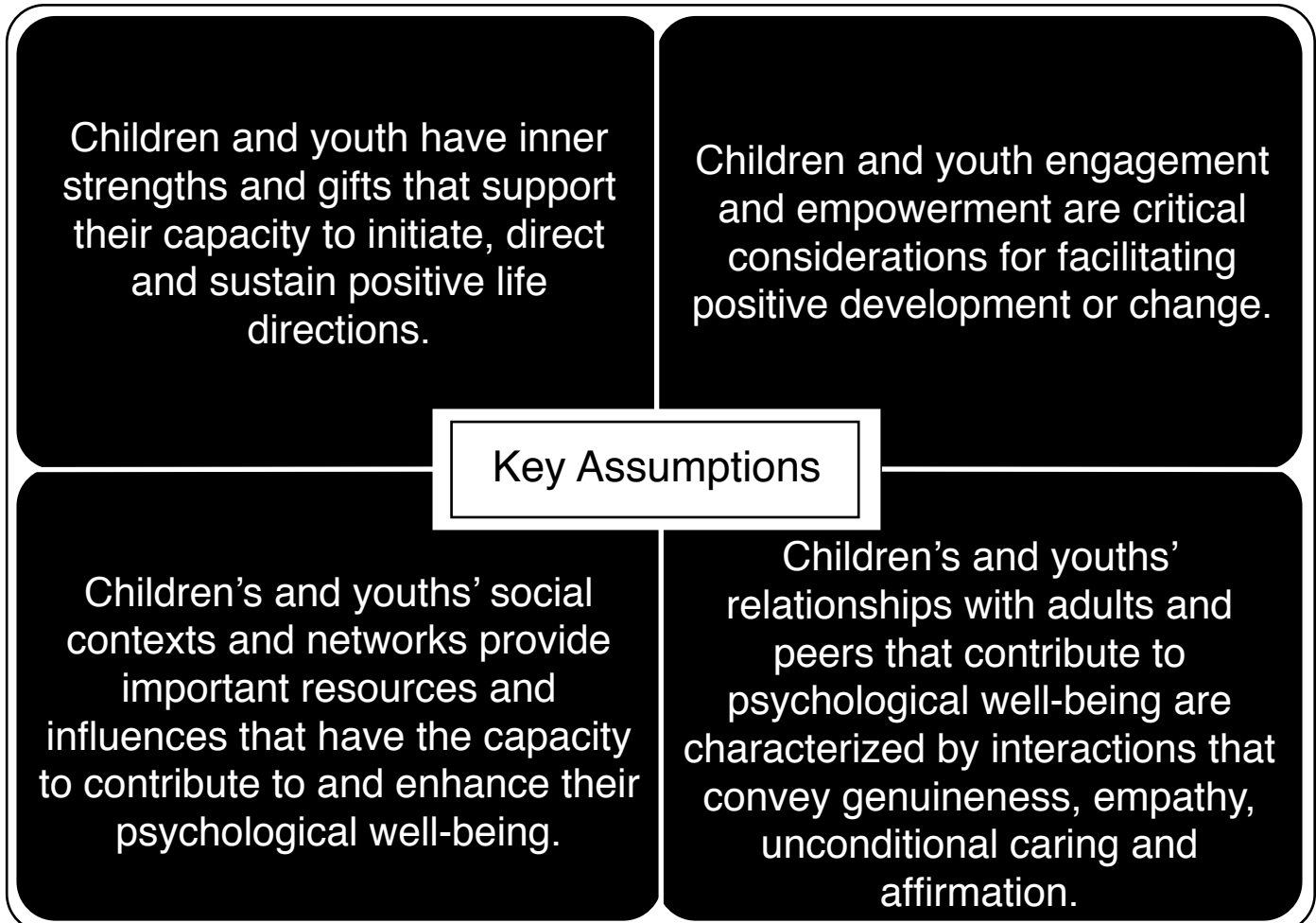


According to Deci and Ryan (2007), Positive Mental Health approaches and perspectives contribute to psychological wellness and increased readiness to pursue goals related to healthy lifestyle change and personal growth. From their perspective, individuals with Positive Mental Health are more likely to be self-determined; that is, “to think about and act on personal decisions to contribute to emotional and physical growth”

# Assumptions for Promoting Positive Mental Health



Positive Mental Health approaches in education and health share common assumptions or values related to how we view and foster the psychological well-being of children and youth. These include:





# Mental Fitness: A Way of Working Together



In promoting the use of Positive Mental Health perspective and practices, it is important to consider the way in which we work with others in bringing about positive change. Ideally, we should model a Positive Mental Health approach in the working relationships we initiate and build with others. Deci and Ryan (2007) assert that our interactions with others should either impede or facilitate the fulfillment of core psychological needs. These needs include relatedness, competency and autonomy. When these needs are met within individuals, people experience greater motivation and self determination in pursuing positive change. When these needs are met within relationships in the environment, places such as schools and communities become settings in which psychological wellness is fostered.

## Relatedness

Refers to our need for connection to and closeness with family, peers and other significant individuals.

Fulfillment of this need is met through interaction with others, our membership in groups and the support and encouragement we receive from others.

\* "I belong, I am part of a group and part of the school community."

\* "I feel included, encouraged and supported by others in the school community."

# Mental Fitness: A Way of Working Together



## Competency

Refers to our need for recognizing and using our personal gifts and strengths in achieving personal goals. Fulfillment of this need provides individuals with a sense of personal achievement and accomplishment. What mental fitness needs were being met in your relationships with others?

\* "I have strengths and gifts that are recognized by myself and others in the school community."

\* "When I use my strengths to meet my goals, I feel a sense of worth and accomplishment."

## Autonomy

Refers to our need for personal freedom to make choices or decisions that affect our lives. When this need is satisfied in conjunction with other need areas, freedom and choice are expressed in ways in which respect is demonstrated for self and others.

\* "I am able to make decisions about things that are important to me."

\* "I am hopeful because others support me in being an active participant in making choices."

# Mental Fitness: A Way of Working Together



Think about it...

Think about a time when you were most passionate, proud and excited about your work.

- \* What mental fitness needs were being met in your relationships with others?
- \* Why were these needs important to you?
- \* In what ways did these relationships make a positive difference in the way you felt about yourself and others?



# Mental Fitness: Promoting it in Others



How would you promote the fulfillment of these needs within your interactions with others in the school community?

Consider your:

- \* Attitudes
- \* Approach
- \* Conversation
- \* Skills
- \* Actions

Engagement and empowerment are critical considerations for facilitating positive development or change. People's relationships with others that contribute to psychological well-being are characterized by interactions that convey genuineness, empathy, unconditional caring and affirmation.

An easy acronym to follow in your daily conversations:

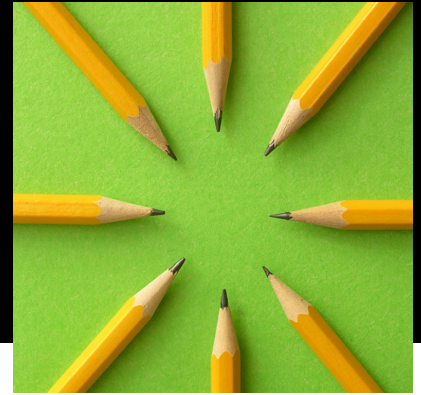
**OARS**

- \* **O**pen ended questions  
Encourage people to talk about what is important to them
- \* **A**ffirmations  
Statements that affirm other's strengths and recognize positive behaviours
- \* **R**eflective listening  
Paraphrase using different words to reflect discussion and emotions, checking you have heard accurately
- \* **S**ummarizing  
Summarizing at the close of a discussion or focus of the conversation

# Chapter 3: Putting it into Action

- ❖ What is the process for making positive changes in the school environment?
- ❖ What are the key indicators of Positive Mental Health in schools?
- ❖ What are the steps in implementing a Positive Mental Health promotion strategy?

# PMH Indicator Framework: Stages of Change

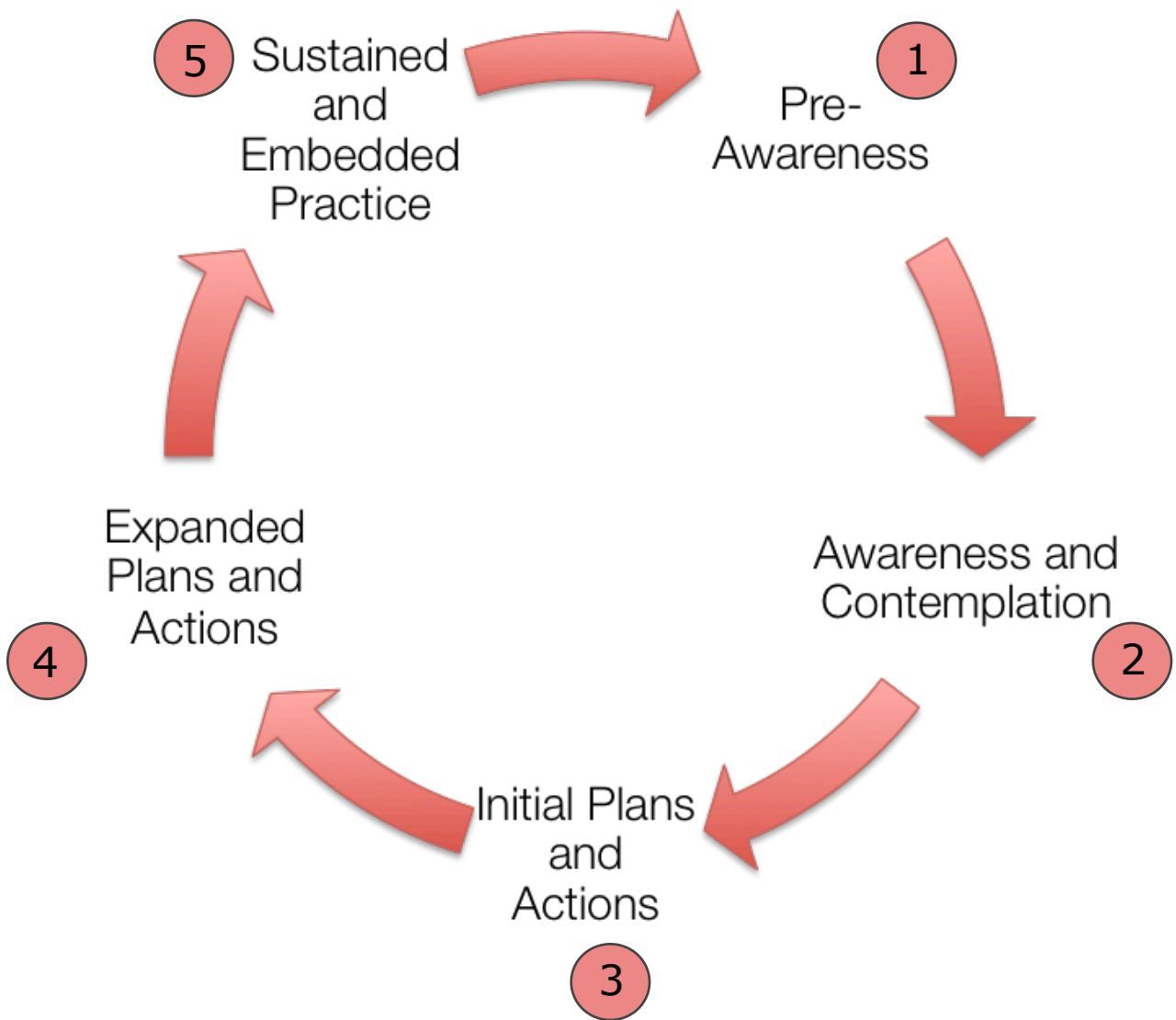
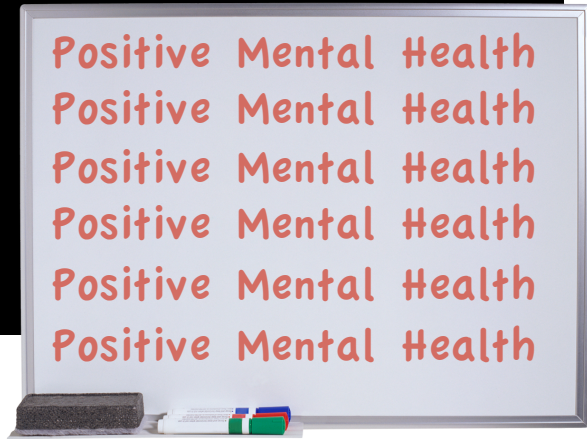


The Positive Mental Health Indicator Framework employs benchmarks based on Prochaska's Stages of Change model. It illustrates progression from awareness to action to embedding practices.

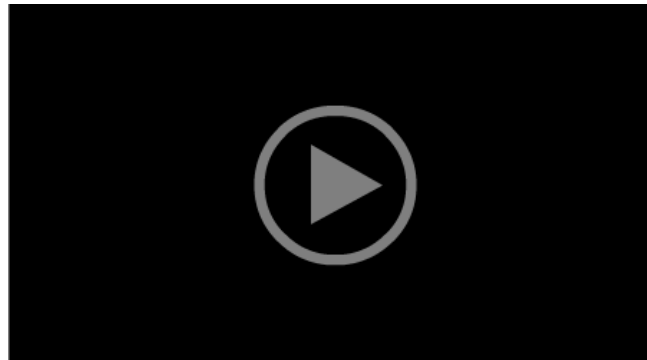
- 📌 The idea behind the Stages of Change model is that behaviour change does not happen in one step.
- 📌 Rather, people tend to progress through different stages on their way to successful change

- \* Pre-awareness - not yet acknowledging that there is a need for change
- \* Awareness and Contemplation - Acknowledging that there is an area of concern or need for change, but not yet ready or sure of wanting to make a change
- \* Capacity Building: Initial Plans and Actions - Getting ready to change, thinking about or making plans, increasing commitment
- \* Capacity Building: Expanded Plans and Actions - Implemented efforts directed at change, small step successes, securing support and encouragement
- \* Sustained and Embedded Practice - Persisting with positive changes

# PMH Indicator Framework: Stages of Change



# PMH Indicator Framework: Self Assessment



Document  
Link

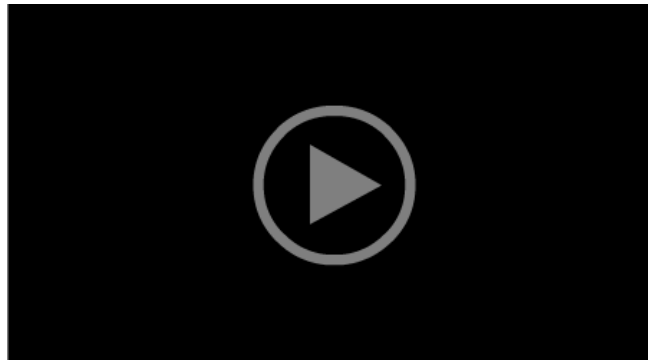
The Positive Mental Health Indicator Framework is to be used as a self-assessment of your school. Indicators are organized according to the four pillars of Comprehensive School Health and serve to probe the overall school environment for areas that are in need of change.

Your school's performance in each indicator of PMH is to be rated according to five benchmarks along a continuum of change, including:

- Pre-awareness
- Awareness and Contemplation
- Initial Plans and Actions
- Expanded Plans and Actions
- Sustained and Embedded Practices



# Indicator Planning Worksheet

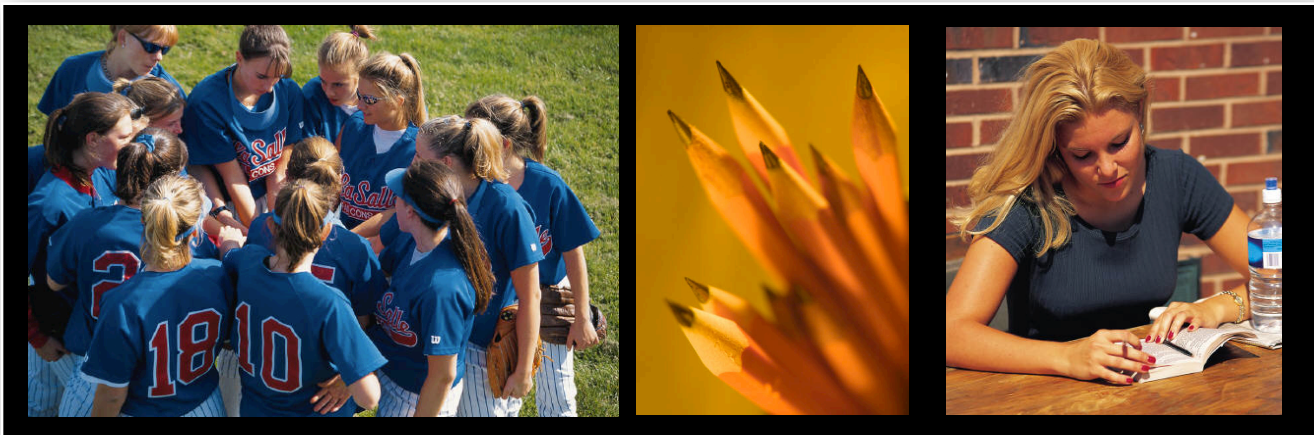


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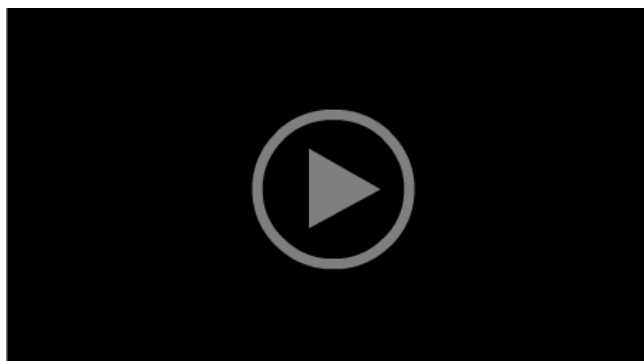
The following worksheet is to be used as a **self-assessment** of your school in conjunction with the Key Indicators of Positive Mental Health in Schools sheet. The indicators are organized according to the four pillars of Comprehensive School Health and serve to probe the overall school environment for areas that are in need of change.

Reflect on each indicator carefully and assess your **areas of strength** in the left hand column and **areas for development** in the right hand column.

The areas that you identify as being in need of development can be used later as priorities for jump starting your implementation plans for positive change.



# Steps to Implementation



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## Steps to Create School-Wide Change

The following steps can be used to guide your efforts at working towards promoting and embedding Positive Mental Health perspectives and practices within the school environment.

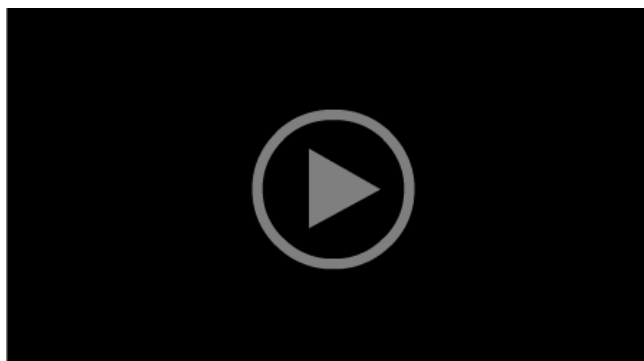
1

### Create a Positive Mental Health Team

Positive change begins with a single individual or small group of advocates within the school community and the development of an associated committee. This champion or group of champions can be any one of a number of people within the school community including administrators, teachers, students, parents, counsellors or support staff.



# Steps to Implementation



The associated committee may be a new committee within the school, created specially for the purpose of promoting Positive Mental Health, or a new role for an existing committee that engages in similar issues.

Whichever is the case for your school, it is important to connect with any related groups and involve as many people as possible in the process. These different groups may include:

- Students
- Administrators
- Teachers
- Parents
- School Counsellors
- Support staff (custodians, food service workers

- Public health staff (nurse, nutritionists, health promoters)
- Health agency volunteers
- Social service agencies
- Local businesses

The leader or chair of the working group does not need to be the same person as the champion or individual advocates. The leader should be someone who is in touch with a variety of people including parents, local groups and community agencies. The leader will be someone who is able to develop teamwork among the group and drive the group's activities forward.

# Steps to Implementation



2

## Engage Students as Leaders

Youth are a key part and underutilized resource of any implementation initiative in the school setting. Their input is essential to having an effective implementation and the adults involved need to recognize the effectiveness of youth as leaders. Student leaders are strong peer influences and can be an incredibly effective force when empowered, engaged and equipped with a vision for change. Having students and adults work together toward a common goal will create change faster than either group could accomplish alone. Youth need to be given a voice on the committee, and committee leaders need to avoid having students become token members; this can be done by involving enough students that they are comfortable in sharing their opinions.

3

## Use the Positive Mental Health Indicator Framework to Identify Priorities

Prior to making any plans for action, assess the Positive Mental Health needs and interests of the entire school community. Using the Positive Mental Health Indicators of Change and corresponding Indicator Worksheet, determine where your school stands at present and identify both areas of strength and areas where your school could use improvement. A survey can also be a helpful tool in assessing your school's current climate. Consider the views of various groups within

# Steps to Implementation



the school community including students, teachers, administrators and parents to ensure you are getting the whole picture.

Remember to avoid blaming other groups for current weaknesses. All issues are the responsibility of the school as a whole and this will avoid creating tension where there should instead be collaboration and partnerships.

Using the areas that you have identified on the indicator worksheet as being in need of development, select your first priority. Although a variety of issues may have been identified as areas needing attention, selecting just one area of focus can keep the group from being overwhelmed and losing momentum. Choose this priority as a group and consider starting with a more simple goal and working toward progressively more difficult issues as you are motivated by successes along the way.

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## 4 Create and Implement Your Plan

Using the sample-planning sheet, take the issue your team has identified as first priority and plan how you will improve it. Frame your first priority as a goal, then fill in the sample planning sheet as a team, assessing all the aspects of how you will go about achieving your goal.

- Pillar: This involves identifying which pillar of Comprehensive School Health on which your team is going to work (Social and Physical Environment, Teaching and Learning, Partnerships and Services, and Healthy School Policy)

# Steps to Implementation



- **Indicator:** This is the specific better practice that you are targeting as a priority area for change
- **Goal:** This is what you would like to see changed or developed related to your better practice indicator
- **Activities:** These are the means or actions that your team will implement to reach your goal
- **Measure of Success:** This outlines your methods for data collection and what you expect to find if your goal is reached
- **Timeline:** This is the expected scheduled for implementing your activities and measuring your success

When implementing your plan, be sure to involve as many different groups as possible - not only members of the Positive Mental Health committee. Be sure to inform other groups in the school about your planned activities to avoid duplication and ensure coordination and fluid communication. Overall, this helps disseminate and reinforce your message in the school community and reach a wider breadth of people.

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5

## **Evaluate Your Outcomes and Celebrate Your Successes**

Assessment of your outcomes will allow your group to evaluate the successes and challenges of your implementation and more objectively determine how things went. This should be looked at from a variety of angles including whether each activity met its objectives, whether your

# Steps to Implementation



measurable outcomes were reached, how each activity worked towards the overall goal, and how your team worked together as a group. There are a variety of questions your group should ask itself after the completion of a project, including:

- What was the central concern of your committee?
- Is your plan working?
- Did your activities run smoothly?
- Are you meeting your own measurable objectives?
- How much did it cost (both in time and money)?
- Were the benefits worth the total cost?
- Did it involve a good cross section of the school community?
- Was there any opposition from other groups?
- How was your project received by the broader school community?
- Did it bring about positive changes in the school? What were the changes?
- What would you do differently next time?
- Did your committee receive the support you expected?
- What were some of the major challenges you faced?

Celebrating and publicizing your own success is important to the goal of positive change. Your committee is more likely to maintain function if its members are having fun and it supplies evidence to your team that your activities are effective and beneficial to the school community. Even more importantly, celebration reinforces your team's messages across the school, increases the understanding of your goals and enhances the school-wide commitment to building a healthier school.

# Steps to Implementation



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## **Repeat the Process and Find New Ways to Improve**

Using the indicator sheet, reassess your school climate and identify your next priority for change. Implementation is more likely to be effective from an ongoing endeavor than a single project. Motivated by your successes from past implementations, your team can continue to make positive change within the school environment.

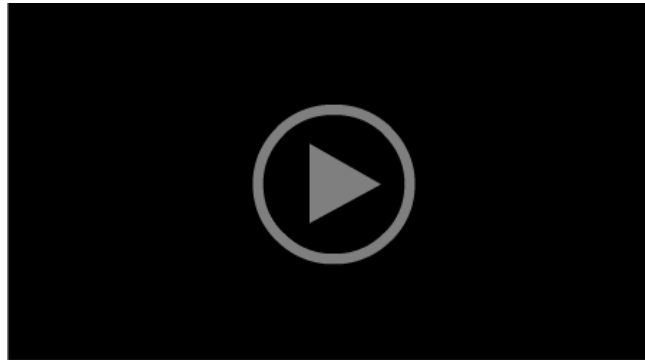


# Chapter 4: Resources

Key Questions to Answer:

- ❖ How can I track my process of implementing a Positive Mental Health approach in my school?
- ❖ What are some example actions I can undertake in my school for each of the Four Pillars?

# Sample Planning Tool



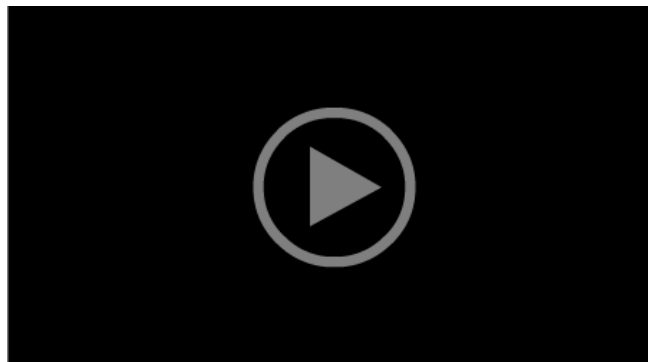
Referring to your indicator worksheet, pull out your prioritized “areas for development”. These will be your focus points for planning and implementation of activities.



# Sample Planning Tool

Responsibility				
Feedback/Evaluation Activities				
Actions and Timeline				
Goals				
Priority, Pillar and Indicator				

# Four Pillar Checklists



In the implementation of Positive Mental Health perspectives and actions, using recognized better practices and monitoring progress towards priority goals are important considerations. The following provides some useful ideas in the form of a checklist related to the promotion of Positive Mental Health. These are organized according to the four pillars of Comprehensive School Health:

- 1.Social and Physical Environment
- 2.Teaching and Learning
- 3.Partnerships and Services
- 4.Healthy School Policy

# Social and Physical Environment



## Physical Safety

- Signs are posted, exits are identified and illuminated, halls are clear to facilitate movement
- Emergency codes and procedures are posted in hallways and in classrooms
- Emergency procedures are reviewed on a regular basis with students
- All staff and students have a clear understanding regarding behavior expectations in the classroom, halls, lunch area and during special events such as assemblies
- Educational staff are assigned positions to monitor student movement at doors and hallways during times of arrival, departure, or class transitions
- Our school has meeting areas that are free from litter, damage and clutter. These areas facilitate movement and interactions among students and school personnel

## Emotional Safety

- Staff has learned and knows students' names. This is shown by the greeting of students each day
- Students who are identified as at-risk or needing additional support have a staff member assigned to them who will take additional initiative and make a positive connection
- Behavioral expectations are reviewed with students and expectations are clear
- Educational and school staff model respectful behavior towards students
- Reports of harassment, name-calling and bullying are responded to in a timely fashion

# Social and Physical Environment



- Cyber bullying is addressed through:
  - Information sessions with parents
  - Mentorship programs involving older students assisting younger peers in understanding
  - Creating clear school policies
  - Developing interactive sessions on appropriate technology use
- There is a presence of open, frequent and positive communication among students and school personnel
- Our school has implemented a school-wide bullying prevention program or curriculum that addresses the social and emotional development of children and youth.
- Data is collected from students, families and school staff members in order to provide feedback about areas of individual or social concern

## **School and Classroom Climates**

- Schools make efforts to engage students socially, academically and intellectually
- Opportunities are created for all students to participate in academic and non-academic activities
- Measures are taken to assess educators' and parents' understanding of how students feel about school life
- Students are invited to develop messages promoting acceptance and appreciation of student diversity through various media or communication methods
- Learning activities are designed to draw on students' learning styles or preferences
- Students are assisted in expressing their views and perspectives on how they learn best
- Classroom discussions are organized to encourage students to share and convey respect for diverse perspectives

# Social and Physical Environment



- The classroom is an inviting space with regular opportunities for dialogue among students, family members and community members

### Use of Physical Spaces

- Spaces are designed for use by individuals with a wide range of physical abilities and characteristics
- Students and staff members can access all facilities and maneuver within them
- Students and staff members are provided with options for accessing school equipment and software
- Processes are in place to address accommodation requests by individuals for whom the design of the space does not automatically provide access
- Schools identify specific goals related to diversity and inclusion and practices for ensuring welcoming, accessible and inclusive experiences for everyone using the space.
- Periodic evaluations of school spaces are undertaken by diverse groups of users leading to modifications based on their feedback.

# Teaching and Learning



## Fostering Autonomy

- Perspectives that are shared or expressed by students are validated by staff
- The value and rationale of given routines are explained to students
- Students' interests, preferences and strengths are linked with learning content and instructional activities
- Opportunities are created for students to design their own approaches to working
- Activities are provided for students to talk about learning with their peers
- Seating arrangements and learning are organized to promote interactions with working with concrete materials, rather than passive watching and listening
- Instances of progress and accomplishment are praised

## Differentiating Study Plans

- Independent study projects on particular areas of interest are developed
- Students are linked with school or community mentors who have specialized knowledge or skills related to areas of student interest
- Opportunities are provided for students to demonstrate or celebrate areas of strength or interest (via special events, performances, presentations, etc.)
- Special lessons, field trips or initiatives are created that incorporate theme areas relevant to important student relationships, accomplishments or goals

## Planning Considerations

- Learning objectives are clearly identified and learning intent is linked to given learning activities via creation of a concept map



# Teaching and Learning



- Staff are explicit about what is expected of students in terms of their participation in learning activities and offer avenues of support that can be engaged as needed.
- Staff ensure that assessment and evaluation content appropriately reflect key learning objectives and employ a variety of assessment methods
- Staff provide students with essential materials that they need to participate in and complete learning activities both during and outside of class time

## **Instructional Practices**

- Staff communicate to students their interest in the learning process, their support for individual learning and their openness to help students with concerns
- Structured learning approaches are organized that include signals for beginnings, check points for assessing learning outcomes and closure points for summary of essential learning content.
- Sufficient time and opportunities are built into learning routines for clarifying or re-teaching concepts
- Assessments are done often and adapt to students' prior knowledge, experience and learning preferences.
- Staff assist students in developing independent learning skills that they can apply to new situations or areas of personal inquiry
- Interactive approaches are used that are accessible to all students providing time for student-to-student interactions and student-to-teacher interactions about learning
- Approaches exist to facilitate differentiated teaching and evaluation

# Teaching and Learning



### **Strength-Based Approaches**

- Time for activities or things students like to do are built into learning routines
- Learning incorporates important people and relationships in students' home, school or community
- Staff create activities and experiences that provide students with a sense of accomplishment
- Choices, dreams of aspirations students have for the present or future are incorporated into the classroom.

### **Increasing understanding of cultural diversity**

- Teachers present more than singular perspectives on classroom discussion topics and include perspectives from individuals with varied backgrounds and experiences
- Students and family members are invited to act as resources of knowledge for sharing culturally relevant traditions and practices
- Multicultural literature is used as a resource for understanding key perspectives
- Learning opportunities are provided for communication and learning new languages within the classroom
- Students, families and community leaders are invited to share cultural traditions, values or beliefs as part of a classroom or school wide celebration
- In-service cultural sensitivity training is provided for education and health system professionals

### **Targeted Social Skills**

- Interesting and novel introductions to social skills instruction is provided through the use of stories

# Teaching and Learning



- Social stories from literature include themes and topics that can be applied to a wide range of social skills including initiating conversations, making friends, playing together and sharing
- Examples of successful social competencies in action and models from which students can recall and practice key social skill steps are provided through stories.
- Characters and situations are read from stories which may be related to students' own feelings and perspectives.

## **Targeted Learning support**

- Staff create links between learning themes or activities and areas of student relevance or interest
- Staff identify obstacles to learning and work with students to identify solutions
- Targeted tutorial support is provided for identified specific learning gaps
- Teachers take steps to work with students and support them over the long term
- Teachers seek to enhance student confidence through short term successes
- Teachers take steps to understand students' concerns in order to reduce potential sources of anxiety and build relationships within the school setting

## **Social Emotional Learning Development**

- Educators use cooperative learning and problem-solving methods
- Students have the opportunity for direct instruction and practice of social skills associated with daily routines and activities

# Teaching and Learning



- Student peer helpers are trained to supportively engage one-on-one to draw out the strengths and potential of others
- Peer led learning mentorship opportunities with secondary students are organized for modeling interpersonal skills with small groups
- Peer mediation and conflict resolution strategies are applied
- School-wide social emotional learning programs are implemented
- Student-services and health specialists are invited to collaborate with teachers in the design and implementation of “caring for self and others” components.

# Partnerships and Services



### Building Partnerships

- Positive news phone calls are made to parents in order to share something positive that has been noticed or observed about a student with their family
- Periodic Postcards: At the start of the year students are invited to write their addresses on postcards. When there is positive news to share about a student a note can be written and then dropped in school mail.
- Occasional emails are sent to parents or caregivers in order to maintain communication in regards to their children's progress and functioning
- Weekly or biweekly newsletters are published in order to provide a positive way for families to become aware of classroom events and activities with which their children are involved.
- Students are encouraged to fill out and bring home daily or weekly "exit passes" which are about a half page of prompts such as: "Today I was proud that".
- Students take *Weekly Learning Portfolios* which contain samples of their work and accomplishments to share with their families. After reviewing folders, parents are invited to record their comments on a form
- Forums are held in which children can exchange perspectives with caring adults on issues and themes that affect their lives in the school, home, and community settings
- Children are invited to provide input in decision-making, problem-solving and action-taking activities within school groups, youth clubs, non-government agencies and volunteer organizations in the community

# Partnerships and Services



- Children are provided with opportunities to demonstrate leadership skills through participation in joint-community action groups, advisory committees or training events
- Parents or guardians are encouraged to participate within the school context
- Meetings are held to share common areas of concern or to develop coordinated approaches that address the needs of individual students, groups of students, or the school environment
- Common approaches are adopted for engaging student and family strengths in the development of collaborative service plans

# Healthy School Policy



## **Leadership Support**

- High academic standards and expectations are promoted
- Every student in the school is paired with an adult who will take time to know and care for that student
- Key stakeholders are met with in order to promote PMH perspectives and practices
- School rules and policies are fair and equitable

## **Inclusion Policies**

- Student participation in community volunteer organizations is promoted by our school
- Learning opportunities to learn about, appreciate and celebrate differences among people are available
- Opportunities to develop the social skills of sharing, cooperating, communicating and resolving conflicts constructively are available
- Opportunities are provided for students to participate fully in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities which will enhance their overall development

## **Discipline Policies that Restore and Reconnect**

- Individual problem solving is carried out following a cool-down period
- Points of connection or common areas are found in order to develop rapport and a working relationship with students who have emotional or behavioral issues
- Restitution or restorative approaches are used to keep students engaged within the educational context
- Behavioral contracts are developed that include straightforward steps students can achieve

# Healthy School Policy



- Solution-focused or motivational interviews are used to identify plans for resolving areas of difficulty or challenge
- Mentorship or supportive relationships between key school personnel or community volunteers are organized
- School champions are identified who will advocate for specific students and assist them in solving challenging situations related to school rules or routines
- Students are invited to take part in the setting of expectations and consequences when developing behavior plans

## **Teacher Education and Professional Development Policies**

- There is a clear understanding of the specific role that all teachers have in the promotion of Positive Mental Health and the subsequent prevention of mental health issues
- Teachers possess the skills to design and carry out instructional approaches aimed at creating positive classroom environments, promoting healthy peer relationships and enhancing students' self-concept
- Teachers possess curriculum expertise to create learning activities that link students' strengths with academic content to enhance their engagement and motivation for learning

## **Timely Assessment and Early Response Policies**

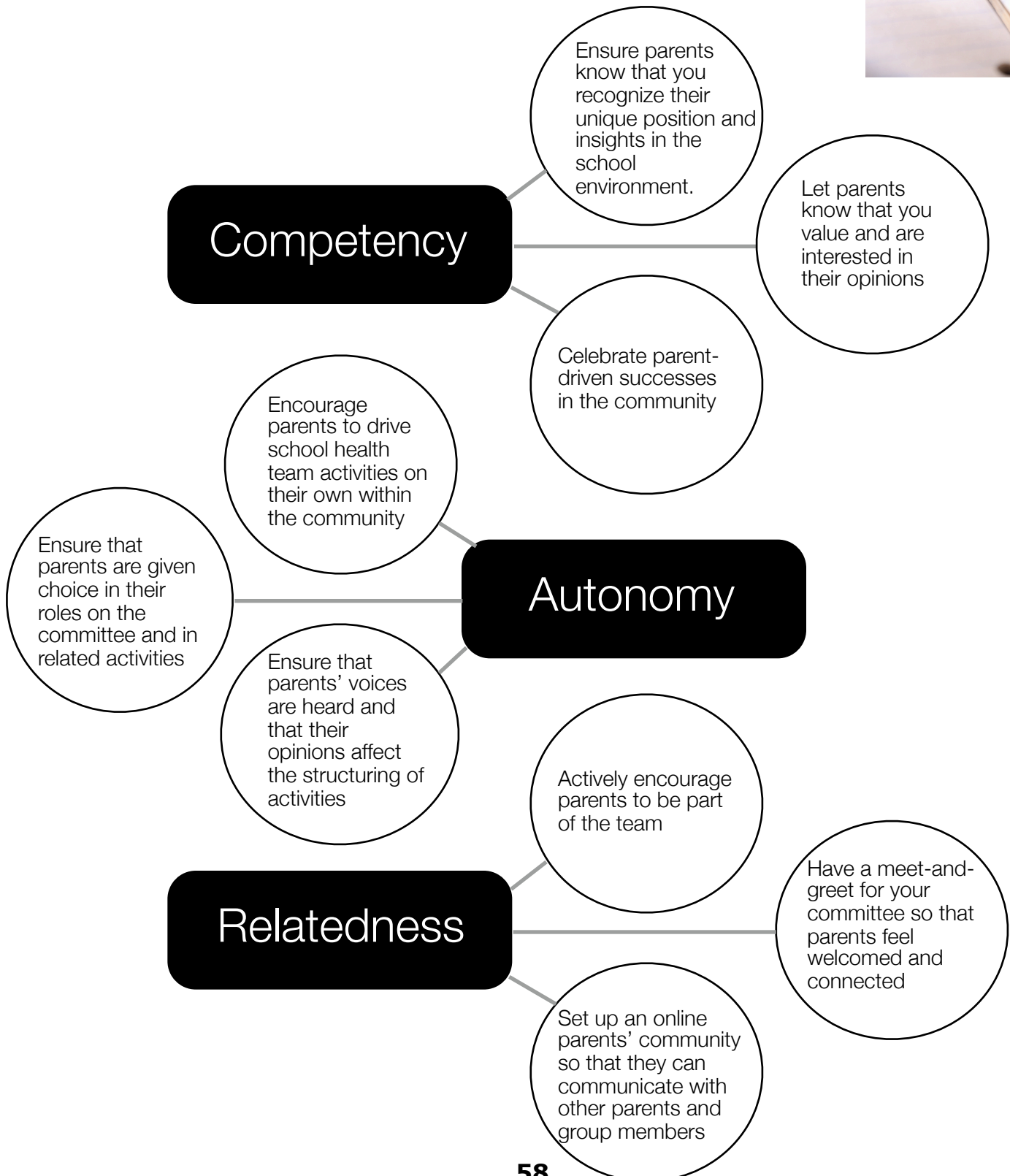
- A team-based student service approach is utilized within our school
- Parents or guardians are engaged in problem solving procedures
- There are established school-based processes for screening or assessing student needs
- There are protocols at our school for referral to partnership agencies to access additional support for students of their families



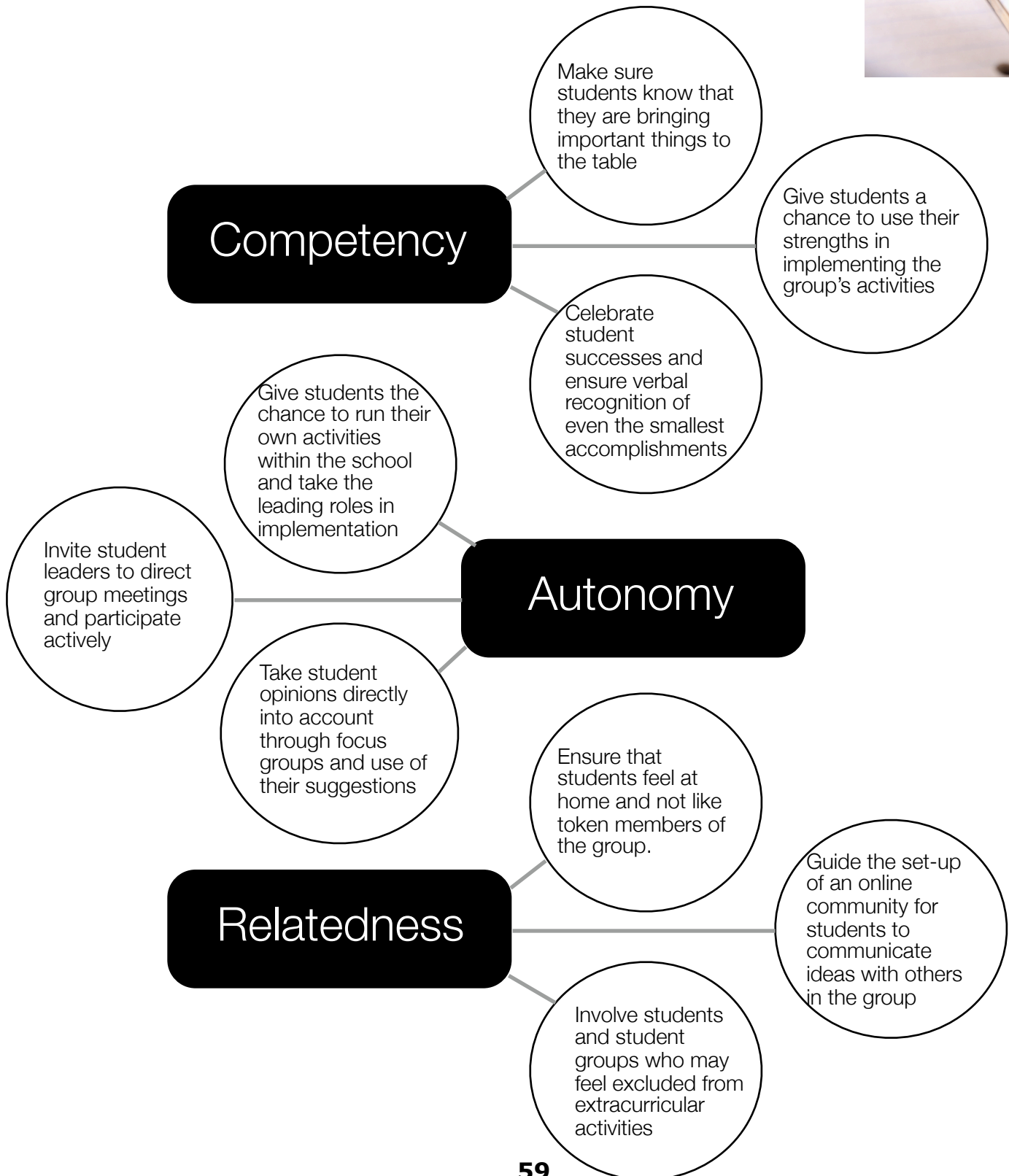
# Appendices

- ❖ A. Authentic Parent Engagement
- ❖ B. Authentic Student Engagement
- ❖ C. Positive Mental Health Presentation
- ❖ D. “Positive Mental Health for Everyone” Brochure

# A. Authentic Parent Engagement



# B. Authentic Student Engagement



## C. Positive Mental Health Presentation

The link below opens a presentation that you may use with school health stakeholders. It highlights the rationale for Positive Mental Health approaches in schools, provides a background for Comprehensive School Health, and introduces the Indicators of Positive Mental Health framework.

<http://www.wmaproducts.com/jcshfulltoolkit/files/media/download/offline3.pdf>

Click here to download the powerpoint presentation:

## D. Positive Mental Health for Everyone Brochure

The link below opens a brochure entitled “Positive Mental Health for Everyone”, which can be printed out and distributed to parents and community stakeholders. The brochure outlines the basic principles of Positive Mental Health and describes the three Positive Mental Health needs of competency, autonomy and relatedness. It concludes by giving some tips and suggestions for promoting better Positive Mental Health in the self and others. Material is presented in a clear manner accessible to a wide audience.

<http://www.wmaproducts.com/jcshfulltoolkit/files/media/download/offline4.pdf>

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