



Building Healthy Relationships through a Comprehensive School Health Approach

Healthy Relationships Grants

In 2012, the Wellness Fund initiated a grant to support projects for grade 7-12 students to make healthy choices and build healthy relationships while addressing responsible sexual behaviour.

Healthy relationships are a key component of a healthy school community and help to develop a sense of belonging and create connectedness.

Relationships with peers, family and teachers are key sources of either support or stress in students' lives at school (*Murray-Harvey & Slee, 2010*).

Approach

Wellness Fund projects have begun to recognise that healthy relationships are pivotal in schools and are a key component of a healthy school community; this is especially true among students considered to be at-risk and without other positive adult interaction.

Resiliency to high risk behaviours can be fostered through an attachment to a caring adult, independence and competency, high aspirations and effective schools (*Dryfoos, 1997*).

Many issues identified by schools have a relationship element and one of the principal ways to address these issues is to consider relationships between students and adults, and among students themselves.

Student Advocacy

Every child needs an advocate, someone at school who consistently provides encouragement and whom they can turn to for advice. Studies suggest that in a typical Alberta school 25% of students are disengaged.

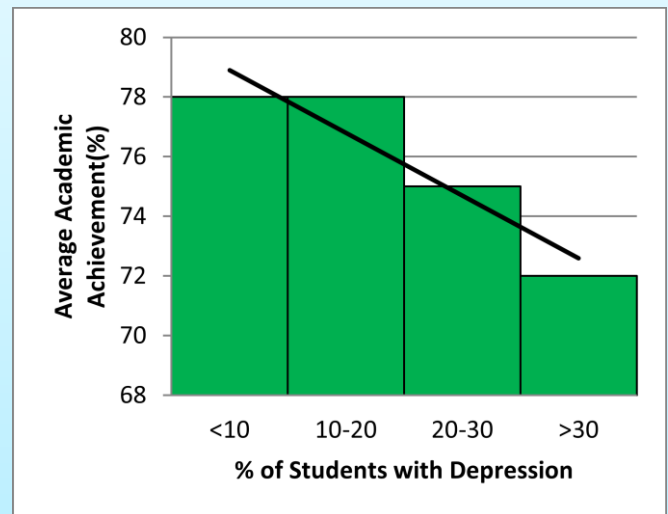
You can't get engagement without a relationship!

Engage all students by providing them with an opportunity to gain greater control over decisions that affect them and create a culture where all students are encouraged to voice their opinion to build a meaningful learning environment.

To date, 44 projects have been awarded healthy relationship grants. Over 50% of healthy relationship projects included students in identifying areas to address. The main areas of focus were as follows:

- Responsible sexual behaviour
- Positive Mental Health
- Addictions
- Self-esteem
- Personal boundaries
- Bullying prevention

Depression and Academic Achievement



What is Measured:

Percentage of students with moderate or high levels of depression

What it Means:

When percentage of students in school experiencing depression increases, academic achievement decreases.



Social & Emotional Learning

Promoting healthy relationships starts with adults, who are responsible for creating positive learning environments for all students. Children and youth need to be taught healthy relationship skills in a climate which models positive relationships.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has identified five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective and behavioural competencies.

www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/core-competencies



Self-awareness starts with us - Model and act in ways that promote healthy behaviours and relationships among children and youth

Self-Management - create a welcoming classroom environment for all through:

- Appropriate tone, actions, facial expressions and body language
- Not misusing power to respond to behaviours
- Explicit teaching and advice

Social awareness - empathize with the perspective of others from diverse backgrounds and cultures

Relationship skills - establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups

Responsible decision making -

through constructive and respectful choices about personal behaviour and social interactions



Strategies to Consider

Provide Professional learning opportunities and resources such as <https://youthrelationships.org/> *The Fourth R*. Utilise peer education or mentorship strategies. Consider cross-curricular approaches to encompass healthy relationships into your teaching environment through:

- Play writing and drama productions
- ICT media campaigns and public service announcements
- Language arts and CALM
- Biology and CALM
- Art exploring body image

By linking to the curriculum, healthy relationships will not become an add-on but will support students in developing lifelong skills.

Areas that can be addressed through a Healthy Relationship focus

- Self-esteem
- Connectedness, sense of belonging for all
- Impact of technology, cyber bullying, sexting
- Anxiety-recognising, supporting, preventing
- Addictions
- Setting boundaries
- Relationship violence
- Sexual health and well-being, LGBTQ
- Inclusiveness

For more information, please contact:

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