

REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON  
SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND  
MENTAL HEALTH  
Recommendations to the Superintendent of Schools

March 2019



# Report of the NVSD Joint Committee on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Mental Health

## Summary of Process and Recommendations

### Preamble

*We would like to thank the Coast Salish people, specifically the Squamish Nation and Tsleil Waututh Nation, whose traditional territory North Vancouver School District resides on, and where the work of the committee took place. We value the opportunity to learn, live and share educational experiences on this traditional territory.*

In accordance with the Goals of Public Schooling in British Columbia and, in particular, the Goal of Human and Social Development, the North Vancouver School District is committed to a continuum of Social Emotional Learning. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is one of the North Vancouver School District’s educational priorities and an essential Pillar of Educational Practice.



The North Vancouver School District (NVSD) Continuum of SEL includes:

- creating a Sense of Belonging for students
- teaching of Pro-Social Skills
- encouraging Positive Mental Health awareness
- building an Integrated Service Approach to Mental Health.



---

Recent research and data helps tell the story of the “why”: Why is Sense of Belonging integral to student success? Why address SEL in schools? Why talk about Positive Mental Health in schools?

- A Sense of Belonging leads to higher academic achievement and high academic achievement leads to greater social acceptance and sense of belonging (Wentzel, 1998)
- A 2011 meta-analysis of 213 studies<sup>1</sup> involving school-based, universal SEL programs including over 270,000 students in K-12 revealed:
  - ❖ Science links SEL to Student Gains:
    - Social-emotional skills
    - Improved attitudes about self, others, and school
    - Positive classroom behaviour
  - ❖ 11 percentile-point gain on standardized achievement tests and,
  - ❖ Reduced Risks for Failure:
    - Conduct problems
    - Emotional Distress
- Estimates are between 1:5 to 1:8 children and youth will experience a mental illness (CMHA 2017)
- After family and friends, school staff were the most likely people that youth reach out to for help (AHS, McCreary, 2013)

Each level of the SEL Continuum is beneficial to students, however, a comprehensive focus is best to meet the needs of all students and staff. The development of a strategic, intentional and systemic action plan across the continuum is needed.

To this end, the NVSD established an employee Joint Representative Committee, including members of CUPE Local 389 Support Staff, the North Vancouver Teachers’ Association, and school- and district-based administrators, to shape initial actions. This report will outline the engagement process taken by this group, as well as present the Committee’s final recommendations to the Superintendent of Schools.

---

<sup>1</sup> Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D. & Schelling K.B. (2011). [The impact of enhancing students’ social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions.](#) *Child Development*, 82(1): 405–432.



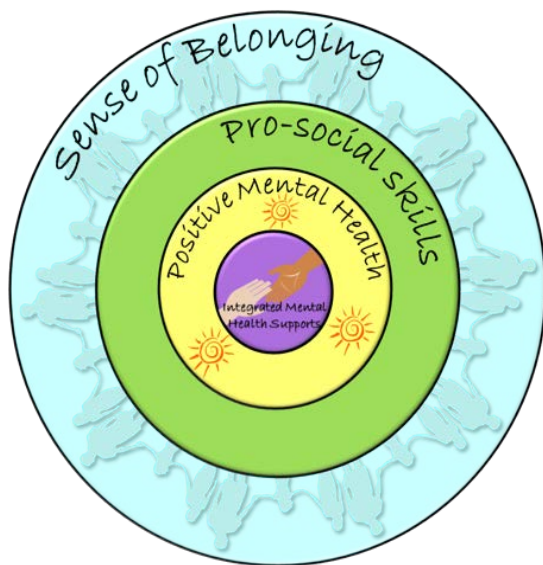
## Process

### 1. Composition of the Committee

- CUPE Representation
- NVTA Representation
- School Based Administrators (NOVA)
- District Administrators
- Chair (District Principal of Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health)

### 2. Role of Committee

- As stated in the September 2018 “Terms of Reference for the NVSD Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health Committee”, the role of this committee is to:
  1. Recommend to the Superintendent actions and resources to support the continuum of SEL and Mental Health;
  2. Provide recommendations to the Superintendent for implementation of SEL and Mental Health Continuum within and across all partner groups, including communication and shared understanding, engagement, and professional and personal development



North Vancouver School District Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health Continuum



Collaboration for Academic Social Emotional Learning (CASEL) Framework



### 3. Meeting Schedule and Summary

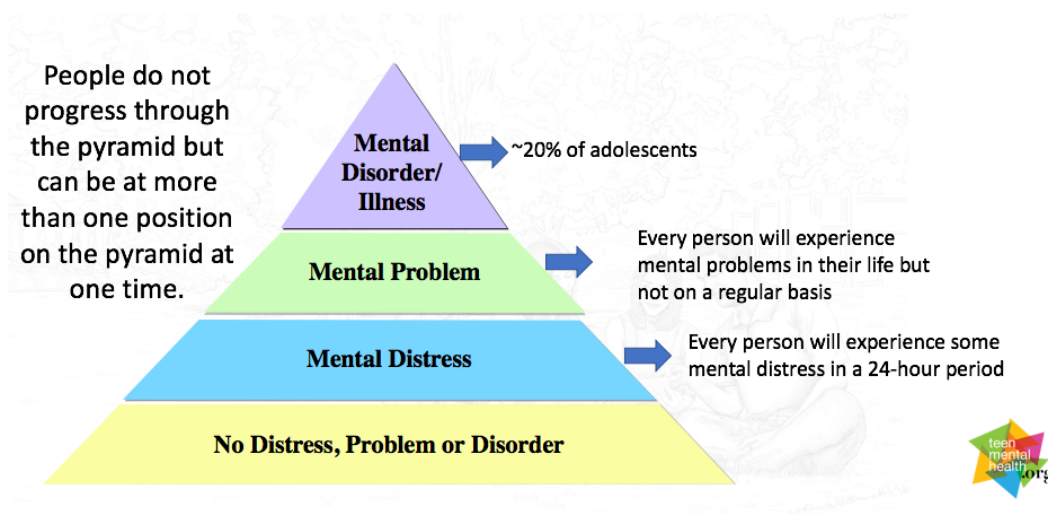
The Committee met six times between November 2018 and February 2019.

1. Meeting 1 – November 16, 2018
  - Introduced members of group
  - Reviewed role of committee
  - Reviewed Draft Framework for NVSD Continuum of SEL and Mental Health
  - Reviewed role that Sense of Belonging plays in educational environments
  - Reviewed the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) Framework of SEL
2. Meeting 2 – December 6, 2018
  - Drafted definition of Sense of Belonging for NVSD
  - Drafted recommendations for future consideration by NVSD in support of fostering sense of belonging for students, parents, staff, and community
  - Began process of considering what our represented stakeholder groups would need to “Know, Understand, and Do”, as well as any resources to support this
3. Meeting 3 – January 18, 2019
  - Guest Presenter – Dr. Kim Schonert-Reichl, Professor at UBC Faculty of Education, and Executive Director of the Human Early Learning Partnership (at UBC)
  - Presented on current research and best practice in the implementation of SEL in schools
  - Continued focus on what our represented stakeholder groups would need to “Know, Understand, and Do” in regards to SEL at the District, School, Classroom and individual student levels, as well as any resources to support this
  - Began refining these “Know, Understand, Do, and Resources” into thematic areas, leading to recommendations
4. Between Meeting 3 and 4, the Chair of the Joint Committee, with permission from group, collated all data from the exercises in meetings 2 and 3 and worded them as recommendations. These draft recommendations were brought back to meeting 4 for discussion and refinement
5. Meeting 4 – February 1, 2019
  - Reviewed, edited, and made suggestions to the draft recommendations collated by the Chair
  - Reviewed the Positive Mental Health component of NVSD Framework



- Made recommendations from the Joint Committee in regards to Positive Mental Health
- Tentatively agreed upon organization of recommendations
- Delegated to the Chair the role of finalizing draft recommendations

## Mental Health Pyramid



### 6. Meeting 5 – February 14, 2019

- Reviewed Draft Version of Recommendations
- Worked in mixed stakeholder groupings to offer feedback on document
- Reached consensus on final version of recommendations document
- The Chair made final revisions to document and sent out for final approval from the committee.

### Presidents Council Dinner – February 26, 2019

- Executive, and members of the North Vancouver Teachers Association (NVTa), Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), North Vancouver Administrators (NOVA), North Vancouver Parent Advisory Council (NVPAC), as well as NVSD School Trustees and North Vancouver School District Executive team gathered over dinner.
- The topic for the evening centered on Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health, and used the work of the Joint Committee as a discussion guide.
- The feedback offered during this session is very much aligned with the work of the Joint Committee, and is included in this report as Appendix D.



---

## **Summary of Recommendations**

The recommendations of the Joint Committee address areas of shared values, understanding and language, system organization, professional development and resourcing.

The Committee has chosen to organize the recommendations in two parts. The first addresses the requirement under the Committee's Terms of Reference to recommend to the Superintendent actions and resources to support the continuum of SEL and Mental Health, and to provide recommendations for implementation of the NVSD model of SEL and Mental Health continuum.

Within these recommendations, the Committee has identified the creation and resourcing of a "District Multi-Disciplinary SEL Implementation Team". The Committee has developed a secondary set of recommendations to guide the work of this Team should the Superintendent choose to create it.

### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SUPERINTENDENT:**

**The Joint Committee on Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health recommends to the Superintendent of Schools of the North Vancouver School District that the school district:**

1. Endorse a district-wide value and definition of Sense of Belonging.
  - a. A Sense of Belonging is essential to student learning, and is nurtured through positive, supportive, trusting, relationships which create and sustain communities that are:
    - i. Inclusive
    - ii. Physically and emotionally safe
    - iii. Respectful
  - b. Consider Student, Educator (New Hires), and Community Engagement
2. Create and resource a District Multi-Disciplinary SEL Implementation Team to support:
  - a. Implementation of recommendations made by Joint Committee
  - b. Screening of research/evidenced-based and developmentally appropriate programs and resources
  - c. Communication of these supports and best practices to all stakeholders, particularly those asked to implement programs
  - d. School-based SEL contacts/teams (flow of information and shared understanding)
  - e. Continued development of the FOS model as a focus for support



- 
- f. Employee mentorship in the areas of SEL, building a sense of belonging, and mental health literacy
  - g. Exploration of potential key district and school data sets that can inform practice and next steps (e.g., Middle Years Development Index, McCreary Adolescent Health Survey, etc.)
  - h. Professional development, in-service, and employee training opportunities in areas such as:
    - i. Trauma Informed Practice
    - ii. Social Emotional Learning
    - iii. Mental Health Literacy
    - iv. Teacher Wellness
    - v. Other areas as they arise and connect to the NVSD SEL and Mental Health Framework
3. Create a District “SEL and Mental Health Hub”, as a web-based platform that
- a. Is accessible to:
    - i. District Staff
    - ii. Community Partners
    - iii. Parents
    - iv. Students
  - b. Defines resources for school district
    - i. Community partners
    - ii. In-schools toolkits
    - iii. School Based Resource Teams
    - iv. Family wellness
4. Connect concepts of student-focussed SEL continuum to employee SEL and Mental Health by engaging with Human Resources and the school district’s Wellness Strategy to:
- a. Collate research on connection between staff wellness and classroom/student wellness
  - b. Support staff retreats to intentionally build staff sense of belonging and focussed on SEL and wellness
  - c. Consider piloting low cost, after school programming for staff, in support of wellness (yoga, woodwork, cooking, art, music, dance, etc.)
  - d. Provide “CARE for Teachers” training offered by SELBC
5. Endorse the NVSD SEL and Mental Health Framework and encourage connections between it and the school planning processes.





---

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION TEAM:

The second set of recommendations are directed to the District Multi-Disciplinary Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health Implementation Team that was identified in the second recommendation made to the Superintendent.

**The Joint Committee on Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health recommends to the District Multi-Disciplinary Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health Implementation Team that the team work to:**

1. Connect the concept of Sense of Belonging, Social Emotional Learning, and Mental Health Literacy with the other district priorities, in particular
  - a. Indigenous Education
  - b. Complex Learners
  - c. Modernizing Curriculum
  - d. Careers
2. Engage all levels and stakeholders of the NVSD in shared essential understandings and language of SEL and Mental Health, including:
  - a. CASEL Framework (Visible in schools)
  - b. RTI across all CASEL domains
  - c. Development of learning communities (instructional rounds) with focus on SEL
  - d. Acknowledgement of SEL as an official pillar of education, as important a component and consideration for teaching as curriculum, instruction, and assessment
3. Engage ALL employees in reflecting and clarifying how their roles can support connections between students and adults
4. Explore alignment/misalignment between NVSD Sense of Belonging definition and recommendations, and
  - a. Codes of conduct
  - b. SBRT discussions
  - c. Discipline practices and communications
  - d. School Action Plans
  - e. Staff Meetings
5. Explore and report back on systemic, intentional, school, and classroom-wide strategies to monitor, and build student connections to adults in the building by:
  - a. Piloting research/evidenced-based programs/practices at primary, intermediate, and secondary levels

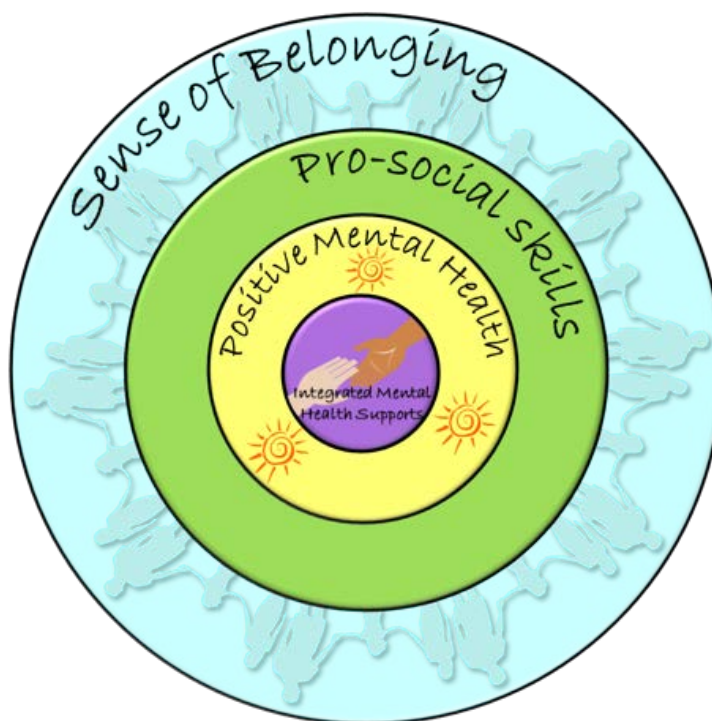


- 
- b. Creating mechanisms to scan/assess student connectedness to adults and school and then intentionally target those that are lacking
      - c. Connecting SBRT discussions to Sense of Belonging and the CASEL Framework
        - i. Who are the relational/connective staff in our building that can support and mentor?
    6. Support and provide professional development, in-service, and employee training opportunities, with the intention that all employees understand and implement Trauma Informed Practice, including, but not limited to:
      - a. Common language and understanding
        - i. What is trauma?
        - ii. How to mitigate impact of trauma?
        - iii. How to minimize re-traumatization?
        - iv. Support for Universal, Targeted, and Intensive
      - b. Build understanding of how sense of belonging and being trauma informed intersect
      - c. Collection of resources best able to help build common understanding
        - i. Fostering Resilient Learners
        - ii. Resilience Film
        - iii. Brain Story
        - iv. UBC Teach Mental Health MOOC
        - v. UKERU
    7. Encourage the creation of school-based SEL Teams to support:
      - a. School-based training and implementation
      - b. School-wide initiatives in support of healthy SEL
      - c. Ensure universal staff development and targeted in-service, mentoring, and support for new and emerging staff
      - d. The connection of SEL to primary, intermediate, and secondary curriculum
    8. Acknowledge and continue the work that has already occurred (and is still occurring) in the area of Mental Health Literacy implementation, working towards consistency in all secondary schools.
    9. Assess baseline data in this area and monitor growth over time
    10. Ensure that NVSD messaging in regards to policy, codes of conduct, school planning, evaluations, and discipline practices is consistent with the SEL and Mental Health Framework.



A note of thanks goes to those members of the North Vancouver School District who shared their expertise, time, thoughts, and reflections in their role as members of the Joint Committee on Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health. These members are:

Jeremy Church	Committee Chair, NVSD Administration
Hermilla Gallagher	CUPE Local 389
Yvette Mercier	CUPE Local 389
Carol Nordby	CUPE Local 389
Mary Fletcher	North Vancouver Teachers' Association
Kat Robb	North Vancouver Teachers' Association
Regan Rankin	North Vancouver Teachers' Association
Meagan Stoker	North Vancouver Teachers' Association
Lucas King	NVSD Administration (NOVA)
Leslie McGuire	NVSD Administration (NOVA)
Sandra Singh	NVSD Administration (NOVA)
Chanin Smyth	NVSD Administration (NOVA)
Brad Baker	NVSD Administration
Melanie Learoyd	NVSD Administration
Pius Ryan	NVSD Senior Executive





## APPENDIX A



### Terms of Reference for

### NVSD Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health Committee

The North Vancouver School District is committed to a continuum of Social Emotional Learning (SEL), integral to human well-being and development. The continuum includes creating a Sense of Belonging, teaching/modeling Social Emotional Skills, Positive Mental Health awareness, and an Integrated Service Approach to Mental Health. Each area of SEL support is beneficial on its own, but the development of strategic action across the continuum provides a comprehensive focus and best meets the needs of all.

In order to support Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health in our schools, an intentional and systemic approach is essential. This approach includes shared language regarding SEL and Mental Health, shared understanding of best practice and current research, development of a framework for the continuum of SEL and Mental Health for NVSD, and collaborative design of actionable items, across all partner groups.

The Superintendent of Schools will establish a Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health Committee consisting of four representatives each from CUPE, NVTA and NOVA and school district personnel as required. Other persons with specialized skills may be appointed to the Committee from time to time and/or for specific purposes. The Superintendent or designate will be the chairperson. The terms of reference of the Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health Committee shall be:

- Review current research and best practice in the fields of SEL and Mental Health, as they pertain to school settings;
- Recommend to the Superintendent actions and resources to support the continuum of SEL and Mental Health;
- Provide recommendations to the Superintendent for implementation of SEL and Mental Health Continuum within and across all partner groups, including:
  - Communication and shared understanding
  - Engagement
  - Professional and personal development

The committee chairperson shall schedule meetings of the Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health Committee no fewer than four times during the school year.

Created on September 19, 2018



---

## APPENDIX B

### Resources and Support Strategies for Further Consideration of the District SEL and Mental Health Implementation Team

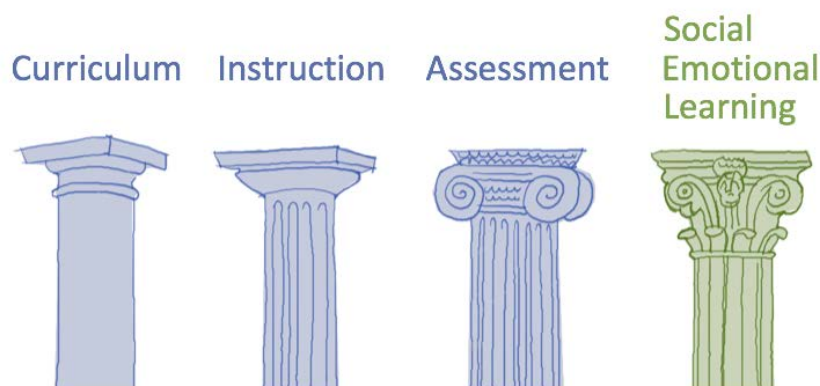
- A. Invite all staff to staff meetings
- B. Determine a mechanism to have materials and language engaged with in all facets of the school district, including corporate support areas such as Facilities, ICT, HR, etc.
- C. Create a framework for reflecting, and tracking, individual students
  - i. Identify one adult
  - ii. Systematize connections
    - 1. 2x10 (2-minute connection with each student, not about school or behaviour, but outside of school interests, 10 times per year)
- D. Support/establish a focus on Dr. Ross Greene's work on Collaborative Problem Solving as a system to maintain connection through hard conversations and challenging behaviour
  - i. Posters in hallways and classrooms
  - ii. Communication plan to families, and community
- E. Work towards common language and understanding of mental health, and mental illnesses, by communicating about and providing education on this topic amongst:
  - i. All staff
  - ii. Parents
  - iii. Students
  - iv. FOS Model
  - v. SBRT
  - vi. Community Partners
  - vii. Make use of UBC Teach Mental Health MOOC for universal in-service



## APPENDIX C

### NVSD PILLARS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

## Pillars of Educational Practice



### Curriculum

Curriculum outlines the core domains of knowledge and defines what students are expected to know, understand, and do during a particular course of study.

### Instruction

Instruction includes proactively planning and carrying out varied approaches to content, process and product in response to student differences in readiness, interest and learning needs.

### Assessment

Assessment is the systematic process of gathering information in order to make appropriate educational decisions that support student improvement. Assessment is progressive, ranging from informal to more standardized, formal assessments, which lead to evaluation.

### Social Emotional Learning

Social Emotional Development promotes healthy social and emotional development for all students at the classroom, school-wide and district levels, intentionally teaching acceptance of responsibility, honesty, integrity, appreciation of individual differences and caring about others.



---

## APPENDIX D

### NVSD Continuum of Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health

Presidents Council Dinner Feedback  
Tuesday, February 26, 2019

#### What Might We Recommend the School District Pay Attention To/Support in regards to Sense of Belonging?

- Common Language (example to not use the term “staff” when mean only teachers)
- Importance of first contact (office staff, kindergarten teacher, crossing guard, custodian, etc.)
- Meaningful consultation and communication with individuals
- Setting up buddy systems for teachers, EAs, students, everyone
- Reaching out
- Have multiple options/outlets for students to join
- Emphasizing the importance of connection
- Be intentional about connections, atmosphere, and culture of acceptance
- Share current research around best practice
- SEL common language on Curriculum Implementation Day
- Universal, Targeted, Intensive needs to students (acknowledging and seeking out the different needs of students - sense of belonging)
- Taking the time to “know” the needs
- Intentional Connections/Sense of Belonging in Secondary

#### What Might We Recommend the School District Pay Attention To/Support in regards to Social Emotional Learning:

- Words Matter (be intentional with type of language used – modelling)
  - Develop clear, consistent language
  - Building that knowledge in the community
- Show the value of learning this topic (get “buy-in”). Concern that some high school students might be reluctant about “another” thing added to curriculum
- Be sensitive to introverted (shy) students who won’t want to be forced to share or be more vocal
- Existing or new structures to discuss SEL and students e.g. Collaboration time, staff meetings
- Compassion and understanding
- Has everyone been taught the skills?
  - Focused Pro-D? A 2-year plan (eg. collaboration or staff meeting)
- Self-reflection and feedback (non-evaluative)



- 
- Understanding culture of emotion
  - Celebrate diversity, sensitivity to different contexts
  - Self-awareness, self-regulation, pro-social skills
  - Embed in 'business' of school district
  - "Champion" to support, look for opportunities to support others, ask questions of (create a team? District and school-based)
  - Celebrate and share all the great things we are doing (Appreciative Inquiry) – creating connections
  - FOS model – utilize this structure to leverage consistency

### What Might We Recommend the School District Pay Attention To/Support in regards to Positive Mental Health?

- Have smaller version of Kutcher mental health literacy course available for all staff and parents
- Have mental health/literacy course for intermediate age students
- Understanding terminology – not pathologizing feelings (staff/student understanding language impact)
- Acknowledge/become comfortable with feelings (highs and lows) – we don't have time to "fix"
- Recognition of what mental health looks like for all (inclusive of needs/disabilities)
- Develop understanding of 'normal' stress
- Have spaces to pause and reflect – time and space
- Common approach across system
  - Use common language
- Talk about mental illness
- Build in wellness breaks
- Setting a tone across the organization
- Grade 8? Could it already be done in Grade 8 Health classes?
- Earlier Elementary grades too – when does the "language" start?
- Grade 9 and Grade 10 seems well-structured for information getting to students
- Age appropriate language for earlier students that sets a foundation and can be built upon for older students
- Clearly state intent...this is why we embrace outdoor experiences for positive mental health
- Digital time vs outside education and Ops time
- Utilizing our counsellors to support
- Implementation team – to support, meaningful mentorship, utilizing existing structures – FOS, at all the schools, Coordinator