

COSC Meeting Nov. 16, 2016

Table Discussion notes

What can school councils do to support welcoming, caring, respectful and safe school environments?

Table 1

- High School – Meditation/yoga available during exams,
 - immediately before exams
 - accessibility was an issue
 - also price
 - 14 participants
- Anxiety & Mental Health presentation for school community
- Cultural Club
- Teach skills that become healthy habit
- Mindfulness programs are also helpful
- Planning how to manage a stressful situation, so kids learn how to manage/prepare for when things go wrong
- Learning how to manage emotions in a healthier way
- Becoming self-aware
- Learning (funding) programs that teach kids how to handle conflict with peers, also authority, self advocacy, teaching the teachers how to guide students in these skills (constructive feedback) friendship cycles: communication skills (Good Girls/Good Guy programs)
- Link between brain development and exercise
- No relief for kids during the day, no recess for middle school students, no physical release. That time has disappeared. Not a priority for some administrators i.e. short Fridays mean reduced lunch hours, no recess
- How to share knowledge about mental health issues with the school community so everyone can recognize issue with mental health when they appear (i.e. speakers)
- Paying for assessment is an issue
- Software or game online that can help students – share with parents and educators – for all students
- Helping children with these issues to feel normal, accepted
- Councils have limited scope – building environment of respect is important
- Sensory rooms. Could council provide resources for these areas?
- How does music affect kids, could it be incorporated between classes or in school environment or sensory sound.

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Table 2

- School Council could work with student council (High School) (provide money). Student-led initiatives can be effective.
- School Council can host events/speakers (for parents only, for families). Move awareness about mental health could be developed that way. Feedback from parents to trigger follow-on actions. Mental health literacy.
- School Council can build connections between adults and students (e.g. potluck lunch)
- School Council can support programs like stress dogs before exams
- Barrier/Challenges
 - School Councils have limited ability to intervene/engage with those students who might need it most.
 - Cultural barriers prevent some parents from engaging in schools and school councils.

Table 3

- Theme night at Council focused on a Mental Health topic/theme
- Stigmatization regarding “Mental Health” – can parents play a role in the de-stigmatization?
- How can you have a “welcoming/safe” school if you can’t talk about it... parents modelling – council direct line to parent in providing tools to model
- AHS – presentation re: stress
- Where does mental health appear in the curriculum? High School gym – Do children know where to go? Guidance counsellor vs career counsellor???? What is the progression of “welcoming communities” from elementary to High School
- Council – put money “where mouth is” regarding council generated funds... spend re: parent education
- Provide suggestion to principal/school re programming – opportunities
- Celebrity
- Education parents about how to deal with/approach schools for help. What are the watch for signs?
- Build focus on networks to support disenfranchised, isolated family
- Advocacy – smallness / relationships
- Supporting networks
- Intentionally about building community

Table 4

- Identified problem areas:
 1. Effective teacher and school environment on student population
 2. Access to services – leaflets aren’t enough if a person cannot advocate for themselves due to mental health issues

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3. Integration of services and stakeholders
 4. Cost: Personal/System
 5. Ongoing supports after leaving CBE
- Potential ways that school councils can support and overcome these problems:
 1. Place a family advocate (on or off council) in a role to collaborate with the Resource Teacher
 2. Make anonymous reporting and support requests available
 3. Arrange parent information sessions regarding mental health services and available supports
 4. Make School Council funding available to support families who require additional support
 5. Develop student centres in elementary and junior highs.
 6. Provide training to schools and parents on infrastructure available to support Mental Wellness (special desk, spark bikes, fidget tools, etc.)

Table 5

- Wellness committee members at all layers in the school environment (parents, staff, students, community)
- Parent / Teacher education on topics that directly impact their children/students and families
- Integrated classrooms with staff that are advocates for “211” students and not just specialized students

Table 6

- Put out flowers the School Council paid for
- Gardening Club, fund tools and perennials
- Support Youth Leaders
 - Promote inclusiveness
 - Come to School Council for volunteers and funding
 - Youth Leaders present proposals at School Council
- Representatives can go back to School Council meetings with information from tonight’s meeting
 - Ask the questions to school
- “a lot of it’s common sense”; families getting to know one another
- Get opinions from students and follow through with their choices
- Spirit Committee – students bring forward ideas
- Survey students
 - Co-run fun lunch or activity with School Council
 - Fundraiser to increase pride

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- Fundraise to ensure school has needed mental health resources. Earmark a certain amount of casino fund
- Better communications back to students about how choices are made on their behalf
- School Councils could introduce themselves to students at beginning of the year; take about what we do not their behalf.

Table 7

- Banff Trail:
 - Hosts welcome, info sessions for Kindergarten/Grade 1. Would be good to mention mental health awareness
 - Hosts a blog. Could add a link for mental health; Could post this presentation; the blog posts monthly messages; discussion re door not locked policy
 - Welcome back BBQ and a kids lunch for \$1. School council will pay if families can't pay for it. French Carnival and Spring play supported by school council
 - Three pillars: healthy school, French focus and _____. Should we be selling encouraging unhealthy treats?
 - Work closely with resource officer, they're friendly and approachable
 - Suggest parent attend school council to get more knowledgeable (especially if parents can't volunteer during the day)
 - Consider different delivery e.g. pod cast
- Collingwood:
 - School council hosts a 'boo hoo' tea for Kindergarten parents to meet. This promotes welcoming from the start
- Hillhurst/Queen Elizabeth H.S.:
 - Third annual giving day this year about "Giving Good" in community/school, i.e. in service of others.
 - Great program; helped kids learn their strengths
 - Comes down to \$; have great relationship with principal. He suggested running a bullying program so school council is funding it.
 - What kind of mental health support do the teachers get?
- Glenbrook:
 - 31 days of kindness; kids receive a certificate
 - The more we can get parents involved with staff the better off kids are; teachers are over worked
- Mapleridge:
 - Council to build relationship with principal. Be advisory to agenda; as members we can help be friendly, keep confidence; as members she asked principal If council could help . Suggest parents get involved and go into school more.

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- Forest Lawn/James Fowler:
 - School council hosts welcome back pancake breakfast and hot chocolate at Christmas time. Mental Health is on agenda for March School Council which is advertised so community know the school is concerned about this.
 - Foster respectful environment at council meetings. There are students at the council meetings. All see that everyone's input is valued. Fundraising is only Casino at high school so less \$ for e.g. donut day
 - Drug Awareness presentation wasn't well attended so wondering if worth their while to host the mental health one
 - Mental Health support doesn't exist; there was an incident and daughter mentioned that the teacher could access support. She herself saw the crisis management team in operation

Table 8

- Key Communicators share learnings from this session with schools online / other forums.
- Share the presentation with school council
- Model the above principles. Lead by example.
- Advocate outside of school for support and welcoming
- Advocate for additional support in elementary level to help children with the building blocks of brain development
- Have a guest speaker and invite families
- Help fund programs/counselling for families in need
- Create a resource sheet for parents that includes things like: time to talk (AHS program) and including resources from presentation

Table 9

- A little bit of knowledge can be dangerous to share with the whole school. We are not experts.
- Pay for a speaker to come i.e. To touch on bullying and spread to start the conversation
- Perhaps put a link to A.C.E.'s video or resource links provided tonight to parents
- Promote wearing pink on anti-bullying day
- Provide an advocacy role not "expert" role
- Ask staff who is our point person for the school for mental wellness
- What are online resources we could share. Maybe games to make kids aware of mental health issues
- A link on school webpage for resources

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Table 10

- Info board at school. Resources about community resources, AHS resources
- Communicate information on free community training: Community Ext Services! MORE modules
- Have system for children to connect to a “key” support in school – check-in/with kids routinely
- Invite Healthy Minds, Healthy Children to present on a topic or CBE specialist
- Have school communicate universal programs, language back to parents, parent council
- Increase community / communication through school messenger
- Cross cultural sharing events sharing events

Table 11

- Running community events to facilitate a welcoming environment
- School council can be the communicator between principal/teachers and parents/student bodies
- Bring a voice to the issue so the school staff knows what are issues within the school
- Bring a speaker to council to talk about mental health and invite parents
- Maybe a residency on mental health awareness in an elementary school so student can support each other
- A class or section of the curriculum allocated to mental health. Prioritize it into the curriculum for older students (junior high and high school level). Council could start a convo on this.?
- Make it important and part of the discussion for kids.

Table 12

- Virtues of the Month (Coventry Hills School)
- Virtual Yoga
- Mindful Minutes (5-10 minutes post recess – announce over PA)
- Self-Regulation equipment funding
 - Rocking chairs
 - Standing workstations
 - Exercise equipment
 - Sensory room
 - Peace corner
- Mental Health Week – sponsored conversations
 - Education seminars for parents
 - Awareness for students
- Caring for the Community
 - Helping school families in need (funding)
 - Add a check box to fundraising forms to donate an extra \$1-2 for the community

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Table 13

- Model behaviours and provide information to parents and guardians
- Tap into the Empathy of students and the school community
- Share the information with staff and parents to be the bridge between the CBE and the school community
- Help relieve student stress about post-secondary opportunities through early discussions about careers and planning for their future

Table 14

- School Council can sponsor/pay for programs such as:
 - Dare to Care – program that comes into school defines bullying, gives language, coping strategies, local, positive
 - Staff PD
 - Parent presentation for kids
 - Other programs such a cyber-bullying preventions
 - Bullying Ends Here – another program
- Universal Supports
 - School spirit/ community get together
 - Social events
 - Fun fair
 - Family dances
- What might be missing is:
 - Training for teachers – Road to Mental Readiness (RTMR) training for 911 staff. Walks through different stages of where person is at. Facilitates conversation, knowing how to approach audience
 - Schools should help parents look at family centered mental health
- School Council often can't find speakers to come and talk about family centered mental health concerns: school staff, specialists, parent information session
- School Councils can have questions to school be – what universal supports are in place. What worked? What didn't? Like a Circle of Courage. Parents would like support.
- Enhance communication between parents and teachers
- School Councils can support and impact culture: an inclusive process, can support caring welcoming environment

Table 15

- Mindfulness
- Parent workshops
- Promote family events
- Bringing in AHS
- Communication

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- Programs in schools
- Parent involvement
- Community involvement
- Community having a purpose
- Community newsletter
- Build relationships with your community
- Sharing, Sharing, Sharing

Table 16

- Support teachers
- Be active
- Be informative
- Bring in resources, guest speakers
- Community education service – promote education for parents
- Coordinate education with parents and student
- What “stress” is appropriate for what age
- Mental health tab on school web pages with links to resources