Guess & Check: A School Wellbeing Game

Guess & Check is a roleplaying game for small groups to explore challenges related to social and emotional wellbeing in K-12 schools. It was produced through a collaboration between WellAhead, the MaRS Solutions Lab, and the Alberta CoLab, based on qualitative data from Alberta schools.

Contents

Printing Instructions

- To print the Game Manual, print p2-9 on 8.5x11" paper, 1 page per sheet, double-sided.

- To print the yellow-bordered Role Cards, print p10-21 on 8.5x11" cardstock, 2 pages per sheet, single-sided. Use a paper cutter or knife to cut along the crop marks.

- To print the blue-bordered Scenario Cards, print p22-29 on 8.5x11" cardstock, 2 pages per sheet, single-sided. Use a paper cutter or knife to cut along the crop marks.

- To print the teal- and pink-bordered Approach Cards, print p30-205 on 8.5x11" cardstock, 4 pages per sheet, double-sided. Use a paper cutter or ruler and knife to cut along the crop marks.
    - The double-sided print may not be perfect aligned, so you may need to trim your cards further to remove excess whitespace beyond the border.
    - Make sure to keep the cards together by role, so that you can match them with their yellow-bordered Role card once they're cut.
    - Make sure to hold onto the pink-bordered role cards – only hand these out to the relevant roles during the "Conference".

- To print the table placemats, print p206-209 on 11x17" paper, 1 page per sheet, single-sided.

- To print the nametags, print p210-211 on Avery® Clip Style Name Badges – 78619, 1 page per sheet, single-sided.

Guess & Check

A school wellbeing roleplaying game

WellAhead

2017

Overview

Guess & Check is a game designed to help educators and people working in the education ecosystem explore the dynamics of social and emotional wellbeing within K-12 schools.

The title of the game refers to the way in which many educators are approaching wellbeing: by trying things, seeing what works, and iterating on what doesn't.

Players each take on a role within the school community, and respond to a series of scenarios using a set of possible approaches. Interactions between the different approaches prompt discussion about the opportunities and tensions related to improving social and emotional wellbeing.

It is grounded in observations and anecdotes drawn from twelve Alberta schools. These schools represent a diverse cross-section of the K-12 system, ranging from elementary to high school, and including public, private, Catholic, and on-reserve schools. While it was designed for an Albertan audience, it might be useful for other Canadian jurisdictions, too.

Guess & Check was produced as the result of a collaboration between WellAhead, MaRS Solutions Lab, and the Alberta CoLab.

What You'll Need to Play

The most important thing you need to play **Guess & Check** is some players. Because this game is intended to be run with large groups, it is designed to be run with "tables" of people.

Each table can play with a minimum of six people and a maximum of ten*.

You'll also need some materials to play. The following materials can all be printed from this .pdf (see p. X for the printing instructions):

- ▫ 1 set of yellow-bordered Role cards per table
- ▫ 1 set of blue-bordered Scenario cards per table
- ▫ 1 set of green-bordered Approach cards per table, sorted by Role
- ▫ 1 set of pink-bordered Special Approach cards per table
- ▫ 1 set of Role nametags per table
- ▫ 1 Game Rules placemat per table
- ▫ 1 School Type placemat per table (optional)

You'll also need one six-sided die per player.

*If you use the "Custom Role" and "Custom Approach" cards, you could theoretically add more Roles and therefore more players per table; however, remember that with more people conversation becomes more difficult.

Getting Started

To get your players started with **Guess & Check**, first read them the following introduction:

"This game is called Guess & Check. It should take about 2 hours to play. During the game, we're going to explore how different roles in the school community can respond to wellbeing needs in the school, and what tensions, trade-offs, and opportunities can emerge."

Next, give them a short overview of what they'll be doing:

"You'll be assuming a role that you don't usually play in the school setting, then identifying different approaches you might take to a few wellbeing scenarios that might emerge in a school."

Next, share the ground rules with them:

"Play to be interesting, not to win: Some of the choices that this game presents are non-optimal: they might represent a person being overwhelmed, disengaged, or outright hostile to the process. As a dedicated educator, it might seem absurd to pick one of those choices. However, for the game to work, we need to explore the tensions between conflicting approaches. To that end, the game includes mechanisms to encourage you to choose approaches that make for interesting conversation and productive tension, not necessarily the "right" choice. When in doubt, play to be interesting.

"Remember that this isn't representative: WellAhead only visited 12 schools, not every single one in Alberta. Some of the things that come up in the game may not feel representative for your experience in schools. As well, remember that this is a game, and so it might lack the nuance of real life. That's okay! There will be an opportunity to discuss what resonates and what doesn't.

"Share the mic: the game moves fairly quickly, and we need everyone to have an opportunity to both listen and be heard. As a general rule, if you think you might be talking too much, you probably are!"

Finally, ask each participant to pick a Role for the game. Here are some guidelines for picking roles:

- Pick a role that is different from your everyday (e.g., if you're a teacher, don't pick the Teacher role!)
- For tables with fewer than 10 people, each table should have at least a Principal, a Student, and a Teacher role selected.

Running A Round

Each round follows the same set of steps:

1. *As a group, read the scenario aloud [1 min]*
2. *Individually, roll your dice. [2 min]*
    - *If you get an odd number, you are in the Red Zone for this round. If you get an even number, you are in the Green Zone. The Red and Green Zones are detailed on the Role cards.*
3. *Pick an Approach from your hand of Approach cards. You should pick a card that matches the Scenario and the Zone you are in. This is a silent, individual activity. [2 min]*
4. *Starting with the person in the Principal role, share back the Approaches you picked. You can say a few words about why you picked that Approach, but remember to share the mic. [5 min]*
5. *As a group, discuss the following questions [10 min]:*
    - *What tensions exist between the different Approaches? What trade-offs might we have to strike?*
    - *What could we change to come up with a better solution?*

You can run as few or as many rounds as you would like; there are 7 pre-built scenarios for you to choose from, as well as a blank Scenario card for adding your own. Three is the recommended minimum if you choose to include a "Conference".

Conference Season

If you have more than three tables of participants, you might consider facilitating a "conference" for some of the players during a break. It's best to run the Conference sometime after two rounds have passed and before the final round.

The Conference is intended to highlight how certain roles and schools have better opportunities for networking and knowledge-sharing than others.

For example, we heard from educators in an on-reserve school who didn't have funding to attend conferences and had to jump through many hoops to meet with other teachers at the public school down the road. In other cases, we heard about districts that had fostered rich collaborative networks between schools operating in the same community.

To kick-off the conference, read the following text to your players:

"If you're a Principal, come to this corner of the room, for the annual Principals' Conference.

If you're a Teacher or In-Class Support role from an odd-numbered table, go to the opposite corner of the room, for an Interschool Collaboration Meeting.

Everyone else, take a 15 minute coffee break!"

During the conference, ask participants to discuss the following questions [10 min]:

- What approaches or solutions seemed to resonate for the people at your table?
- What tensions emerged? What was difficult?
- What was surprising?

After the discussion wraps up, give each conference participant a pink-bordered special "approach card". For principals, this should be the "After School Program" card. For teachers/ in-class support, this should be the "Classroom Technology" card.

Closing Reflection

Reflection and discussion is an important component of the game. Here's a framework you might use to guide that:

Silent Reflection [5-10min]: Ask participants to write their responses to each of these on separate post-it notes.

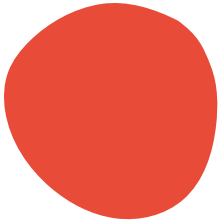
Plenary Discussion [20-30min]: After that, invite participants to share their responses, moving through one question at a time. If you are working with a small group, you can invite everyone to share. In a larger group, you may want to invite volunteers to start, then pose the question: "did anyone have anything really different from that?" If someone shares something that seems like an interesting point of discussion, don't hesitate to invite the rest of the group to weigh in: "how does that feel for you?"

Consider asking participants to weigh in on some or all of these questions (you may want to write them out on a slide or flipchart):

- What are some things that were surprising to you?
- What seemed to work well at your table?
- What didn't work well?
- What dynamics did you notice as you played the game?
    - When you discuss this question, you may want to probe around specific dynamics:
        - What is the impact of the Principal sharing their approach first?
        - What happened when there was someone in the red zone?
        - [if applicable] What was your experience of the mid-game Conference?
- What are some things that aren't reflective of your experience in schools?

Principal

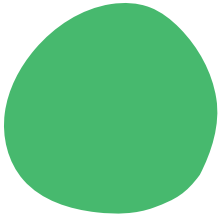
You're the head of the school. You set the vision, liaise with District, deal with the most serious of issues, take care of your staff, and work with the community to build a better school. It's not always easy, but you shoulder a big load.



Red Zone

Distracted: *You're called away to other meetings or have too many everyday crises, both of which keep you from working on the overall vision of the school.*

Burnt out: *too many challenges with insufficient support means that you're responding robotically or leaning on other school staff to cover the gaps.*



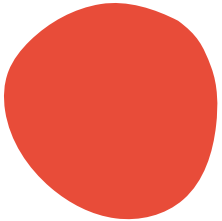
Green Zone

Visionary: *you have the energy and the ideas to transform the school, and staff are recognizing your leadership and buying in!*

Patient: *at a distance from every day classrooms, you can be patient when teachers can't, working through problems collaboratively with all the stakeholders.*

School Support Staff

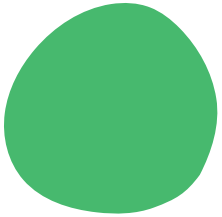
You might be a receptionist, a chef, or a custodian. While you may not have direct responsibility for instruction or student wellness, you keep the wheels turning, and often have a good vantage point on the "gaps" in the school community.



Red Zone

Annoyed: *you deal with these messy, loud, rude kids day in and day out, and you've had enough.*

Distant: *you're hesitant about crossing boundaries or infringing on teachers' territory, so you hold back from engaging too closely with students.*



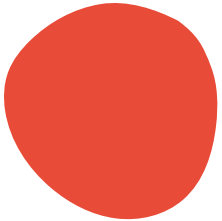
Green Zone

Attentive: *your presence in the school mean you can sometimes identify details and patterns before others do.*

Outsider: *you're not a teacher or an administrator, and so that means that some kids might be more likely to open up to you!*

In-Class Support

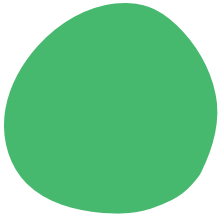
You're an educational assistant, working alongside the teacher to deliver focused instructional support. You might work with a single student, or a small group, but in any case, you keep an extra eye on the classroom's goings on.



Red Zone

Sidelined: *You've got a specific student to attend to, and you don't want to overstep with your teacher partner.*

Burnt out: *You have specific kids that you work with, but the need in the room as a whole is high, and you take on more specialized instruction than might be otherwise expected.*



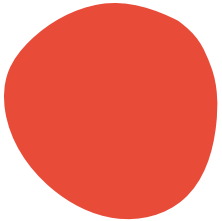
Green Zone

Enabling: *By having an extra person in the room, you can collaborate with the teacher to deliver greater customization.*

Attentive: *You connect regularly with some of the most vulnerable students in the class, meaning you are well-positioned to understand their challenges.*

Teacher

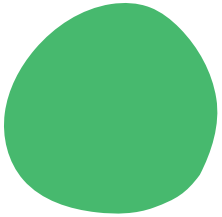
Along with an EA, you're the frontline educator. You make sure your students are growing academically, but also have an eye on their emotional and social needs. You balance customizing for individuals with keeping a group of rowdy kids focused!



Red Zone

Burnt out: *Increasingly complex classrooms and tight resources mean that you're asked to do more with less, and sometimes you just burn out.*

Focused: *you've got curriculum to teach, and you can't sideline it every time a student has a bad day. You press ahead!*



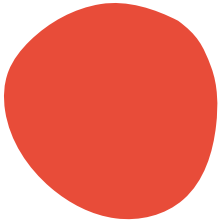
Green Zone

Connected: *As a teacher, you have an opportunity to form close bonds with students across multiple years at the school.*

Customizing: *You can tailor your room and instruction to students' specific needs and ways of learning. This can help meet academic needs, but also social and emotional ones too!*

Parent

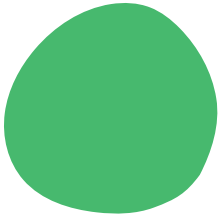
You are trying to raise the best kid you can, making sure they're happy, well-educated, and ready to take on the world. It's not always easy though: money, family dynamics, and changes in the broader community can make this challenging.



Red Zone

Disengaged: *You've got too much other stuff in your life, and you don't have the energy to focus on the problems that the school is creating for your child.*

Escalating: *Sometimes, you can't seem to get results. So, you go up the chain, to try and get ahold of someone who can get things done.*



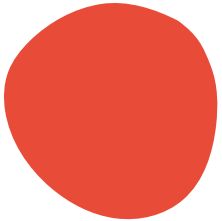
Green Zone

Collaborating: *You view yourself as part of a collaborative team alongside teachers, administrators, and school staff, investigating issues and building plans together.*

Volunteering: *You find opportunities to get actively involved in your child's school, in whatever capacity your time allows.*

Student

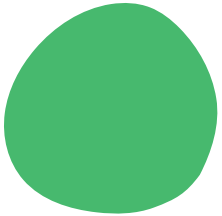
You're at the heart of everything... whether you like it or not! You've got a bunch of adults asking you to jump through hoops, but at the same time you're trying to make sure your friends like you while you figure out exactly who that "you" is!



Red Zone

Tightly-wound: *Whether you're feeling agitated, over-energized, or upset, you've had enough of being passive, and you're ready to stir things up.*

Disengaged: *You feel like the adults around you aren't really trying to understand you, or else you don't trust them enough to open up.*



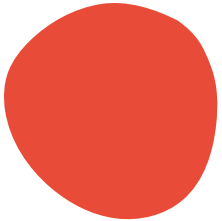
Green Zone

Engaged: *You want adults to include you in the decisions and planning they're making about your life, even when it's about a negative situation.*

Settled: *You have the basic needs figured out, like food and adequate sleep, so your mindset is well-suited to learning and collective problem solving.*

Wellness Worker

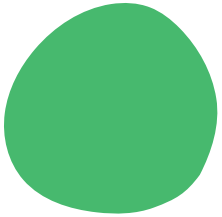
You might be a school psychologist, a family liaison, a chaplain, or an FNMI counsellor. You support the school's wellness efforts, both in targeted intervention with students, capacity-building, and planning school-wide initiatives.



Red Zone

Divided: *You work across multiple schools, and with many students within each school. It's hard to find time, sometimes, to really dig in.*

Missing information: *Because you're not in the school or with the same students every day, you may not have all the information or a full picture of what's going on.*



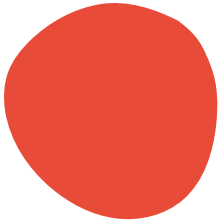
Green Zone

Connecting: *You have different networks than other people in the school. You look for opportunities to leverage these to the benefit of the school.*

Patient: *You can bring different knowledge to a conversation about wellness than a teacher or administrator.*

District

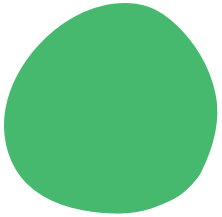
You're District, responsible for keeping a variety of very different schools moving in the right direction. You keep your principals supported, while also facing outwards to the broader public.



Red Zone

Risk-averse: *You worry about exposure to risk, so you make decisions by-the-book, and worry about educators who don't do the same.*

Data-driven: *Data and reporting are very important to you, and any activity that can't be quantified is something to look at with skepticism.*



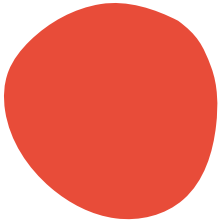
Green Zone

Networking: *You keep track of what resources might be useful for your schools, and make connections where possible.*

Supportive: *You're actively engaged within your area's schools, working with principals to design innovative programs.*

Government

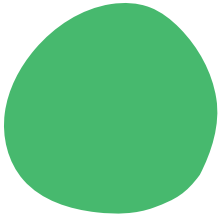
You keep an eye on the education system as a whole, balancing the needs and desires of a diverse set of stakeholders as you try to steer the system in a direction that is best for all Albertans.



Red Zone

Publicity-shy: *Any new program represents risk for government, and so there can be hesitation to get involved.*

Cash-strapped: *In a time of economic downturn, government isn't able to support as many initiatives as they could in the past.*



Green Zone

Innovative: *You're looking to get better results from taxpayers' money, and supporting innovative programs can lighten the load on the system as a whole.*

Partnering: *You can foster partnerships between different system actors, as a central spoke in the education ecosystem.*

Community

You represent the broader community that engages with the school. You might be a community volunteer helping with a nutrition program, or a neighbour next to the school yard. You may not always have the whole picture, but you care deeply about the community.

Red Zone

Skeptical: *Kids can be messy, loud, and rude. Can a school really contain them?*

Disengaged: *The school may be right across the street, but it's hard to see what role you might play in it.*

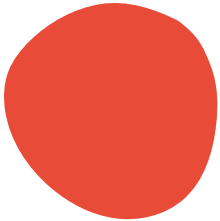
Green Zone

Volunteering: *You are an active part of the school community, and look for opportunities to give back!*

Welcoming: *You see the school as an important part of the community, and invite school members to get involved outside of its four walls.*

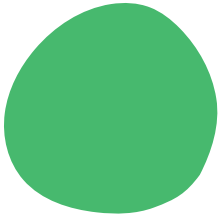
role

Describe the role here:



Red Zone

Red Zone Attitudes:

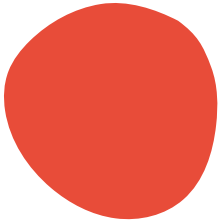


Green Zone

Green Zone Attitudes:

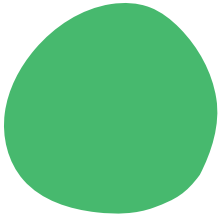
role

Describe the role here:



Red Zone

Red Zone Attitudes:



Green Zone

Green Zone Attitudes:

Tension!

Tensions have emerged within a friend group, with name-calling, cold-shouldering, and occasionally more physical confrontation emerging!

Shared Grief

A student in the school has passed away, and the school community is struggling with grief.

Mourning A Parent

A student has lost one of their parents to illness, and they're struggling in the classroom.

No Friends

A student is struggling to make connections with other kids, and doesn’t appear to have any friends.

Breaking Point

A teacher has reached a breaking point, and is sobbing in the principal's office.

Can’t Sit Still!

A student is struggling to sit still in the classroom, and is acting out on bad days. At their worst, they flipped a desk.

Weekend Woes

A student gets particularly anxious and difficult to handle on Fridays, and often falls asleep at their desk on Monday mornings.

title

Describe your scenario here:

Community

Complain

Trash on your lawn? Kids smoking in your alley? Cursing? Let the school know what you think. Think of it as constructive criticism.

Community

Get Involved

The school is a big part of your community. You can help shape how it operates by getting involved as a volunteer. Whether it's serving on a council in the school or serving in a breakfast program, you can break down the barriers between school and community.

Community

Engage the School Outside of the School

As a member of the community, you can draw the school out from its four walls, to participate in community events, from traditional ceremonies to arts festivals!

Community

Make A Donation

Often, schools are limited in terms of the resources they can access -- as a member of the community, you can help broaden that access!

“External volunteers in our breakfast program form relationships with students, and help them model acceptable behaviour for the wider world — these are visitors after all!”

“Neighbours used to complain all the time — they saw it as a blight on the neighbourhood. I had to tell the students, what you do in the area reflects on the school!”

"We drive around once a week and collect day-old bread from the bakeries, and we get other donations of food for our nutrition program, too."

"Our students participate in the Lantern Festival, producing some of the lanterns, running some of the exhibitions, and helping out with the logistics."

Community

Steer Clear

Sometimes, it's easier to just pretend the school isn't there, and carry on with your life undisturbed.

role

title

description

role

title

description

role

title

description

Add an illustrative quote here.

“The neighbourhood was actually hoping the school would close. They were planning to turn it into a community centre.”

Add an illustrative quote here.

Add an illustrative quote here.

District

Let The Principal Handle It

More often than not, a wellbeing issue at an individual school might be below your radar. You trust your administrators, and let them run the show.

District

Fund An Idea

Sometimes, an individual educator may have a great idea, and a little bit of funding, either through the district or a connection made elsewhere, can make it happen!

District

Provide Advice or Build Capacity

Schools may need advice on complicated situations, and someone at the district level may be well-positioned to provide it.

District

Make A Connection

At the District level, you can make connections between schools, educators, and other kinds of wellbeing practitioners.

"This school doesn't have the income to ask parents for donations, but the district has a fund so we can access $1000 there."

"In the end, it's my [the principal's] decision, but I've consulted with all of the different groups. You have to inform them of why we do what we do."

"Our district is trying to put our staff where they're most needed. It's not always the easiest place to go, but it's most needed."

"All staff want to do well and support students' mental health needs but they do not feel that they are equipped."

District

Encourage A By-The-Book Approach

In some cases, you might want a situation handled in a very standard way -- trying something innovative or flexible might be too complicated!

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Add an illustrative quote here.

“What we’re trying to do is create a common language in all of our schools.”

Add an illustrative quote here.

Add an illustrative quote here.

Government

Provide Funding

Sometimes, a government grant can be the much needed infusion of capital that a school needs to do something awesome!

Government

Steer Clear

Often, certain challenges can be best resolved within the existing frameworks in place. Just let them do what they do best.

Government

Provide Guidance

Sometimes new challenges crop up, and educators require new guidance, curriculum, or policies to support them.

Government

Provide Networks

When solving a problem that pushes against the system as a whole, Government can sometimes play a role in connecting different stakeholders who might not otherwise be engaging around a challenge.

"Each school received funding for their own initiatives. This school has been using it to expand their flexible seating arrangements and a bunch of substitute teacher time to support the wellness initiative."

"We also work tightly with RCSD [Regional Collaborative Service Delivery]. We partner with them. They have psychologists on staff, so we work with them to bring people in to support children and staff."

In-Class Support

Take A Stress Day

Sometimes the weight of ongoing crises and classroom needs can become too much, and you need to take a sick day. Your principals may be more or less supportive of this, depending on the school you're in!

In-Class Support

Look For Clues

As an EA, you're well-positioned to observe students' social and emotional state throughout the school day, and you may pick up on clues that teachers miss if they're busy with instruction.

In-Class Support

Collaborate With the Teacher

You can work directly with the teacher to identify strategies and solutions to classroom challenges, optimizing how you use your time together.

Use Personal Resources

Sometimes, educators like yourself bring in their own resources, whether it's food, classroom supplies, or clothing. It's not ideal, but sometimes things move too slowly otherwise.

“Behaviour communicates their wellbeing.”

"I have to get up and leave a meeting and say, 'I know this meeting is not quite finished, but I have to go and do my exercise or it won't be good for me'."

"It's hard to work in Kindergarten and not have it be your... almost like your life. You're out shopping and see something and think the kids would like it...they become almost part of your family."

"It takes the pressure off the teacher in every classroom to have someone take a little bit of that pressure off. I would love to see that."

In-Class Support

Customize Instruction

As an extra support in the classroom, you can support students' learning by customizing instruction. This can help with academic needs, but also social and emotional ones.

Change the Space

Having two educators in the room means that the classroom can be set up in different ways, letting students choose a space that's best for them.

In-Class Support

Narrow Your Focus

Some days, you just need to work with the student you're there to work with. You may not have the capacity to think more broadly about wellbeing in the classroom.

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Some classrooms have flexible table arrangements, spin bikes, adirondack chairs, standing desks... the list goes on!

“Our students are all learning the same things. Some just need different supports to learn, or learn at a different pace.”

Add an illustrative quote here.

"You go home and think of that one child that was just sitting there that needed someone to sit with him and coax him along, and it can weigh on you. There's always more to do."

Parent

Escalate

Sometimes, it may feel like the best thing you can do is get angry, or raise the concern with someone further up the chain of command.

Parent

Access Supports

Parents can often access a variety of supports, both within and external to the school. This might be learning opportunities, counselling for your child (or as a family), or more material resources (like food or clothing).

Parent

Join In Problem-Solving

Parents are essential partners in finding solutions that will work for everyone. By being an enthusiastic partner, you can help school staff find solutions that extend to home as well.

Parent

Disengage From Problem-Solving

A frustrating experience with school staff or issues at home can make it difficult to be an active participant in the problem-solving process. Sometimes you just have to hope that the school can take care of the issue.

"At this school, parents actually ASK for all of the supports at their disposal. It takes some time to set up, but you do see progress."

“How do you work with the parent when you’re going against their desires?”

"Parents increasingly want us to solve all the problems with their child."

"We have parents who are very supportive and we can say, here's what we're seeing, help us understand. We see parents as partners, because they know their kids way better than we do."

Parent

Get Involved

While it's important to be active when there's a challenge involving your child specifically, getting involved in the school can build relationships and capacity over the long term, too.

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Add an illustrative quote here.

"I work in the nutrition program, and it's a great opportunity to keep my finger on the pulse of the school."

Add an illustrative quote here.

Add an illustrative quote here.

Principal

Draw On Other Resources

For tricky situations, you might have the opportunity to draw on resources that others in the school community can't. For example, community donors, parent council funds, grants, and your own personal networks and resources can be essential for getting a great idea going.

Principal

Convene the Stakeholders

Sometimes, your role is mostly to convene the various stakeholders involved, as well as other experts (like a school psychologist!) to have a conversation about what's happening, why it's happening, and what everyone is going to do next.

Principal

Suspend

Sometimes, students need harsh consequences. Suspension can send a message about what behaviour is tolerated and what isn't, while removing disruptive behaviours from the classroom.

Principal

Bring In An Outside Expert

As the gatekeeper for the school, you can bring in external experts to either address wellbeing issues directly, or to conduct training and build capacity within your staff, student body, or parent community.

“When we do a support team meeting it will be the classroom teacher, the EA [Educational Assistant] and the other roles.”

"Every year, I email my friends who I play hockey with, and ask them if they'll donate to the school."

"Calgary has a wealth of programs. My past experience is really key in helping me figure out who to bring in."

"Our library is where we house in-school suspensions. It reduces the stigma, because everyone comes through the room for one reason or another."

Principal

Investigate

As the principal, you have significant leeway to investigate all sides of an issue, from observations in the hallways to connecting directly with students who are struggling.

Principal

Facilitate A Connection

Because you have an eye on the school community as a whole, you may notice if a student is struggling or socially isolated. Sometimes, all it takes is encouraging school staff to make a connection with that student and become a trusted adult in their life.

Principal

Give Staff a Break

You may notice that staff are starting to get worn out. By giving them some time to recuperate or catch up, you can increase their adaptive capacity in the school system as a whole.

Principal

Expel

Sometimes it's simply no longer possible to keep a student at a school, and you need to make arrangements for them to leave.

"We ask our staff who is not connected, who do we need to connect and collect, and we are intentional about making sure that every kid has somebody they are connected to."

“We make a plan, have some visual clues, what will happen, talk it through. We spend a lot of time on the why it’s happening.”

“I try and think about what would happen in a small town, where there’s no other school for them to go to. Because if you expel a student, they always become someone else’s problem.”

"We learned that report card time was always stressing teachers out. So, we gave them a catch-up day just for report cards."

Principal

Let The Teacher Handle It

If things are really hectic, you might let teachers deal with minor issues directly. You can't solve everyone's problems, after all!

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Add an illustrative quote here.

“Teachers want to react in the moment, but sometimes you need to let a plan run for a little while before you see results.”

Add an illustrative quote here.

Add an illustrative quote here.

School Support Staff

Share Hunches

As a school support staff member, you have the opportunity to pick up shreds of information that others might miss. You might be able to share a hunch with the rest of the school staff team if you observe something troubling.

School Support Staff

Steer Clear

In some cases, you may opt to steer clear — you don't want to overstep with the students or with their teachers!

School Support Staff

Connect With A Student

Students seek out trusted adults in times of trouble, but they don't have to be teachers! In some cases, you might be able to form a unique bond with a student, especially given that you may not be a conventional authority figure.

School Support Staff

Put Your Foot Down

Sometimes, you need to provide clear rules about occupying the school building that other staff members aren't well-positioned to provide. This firm direction can be useful for some students!

"Sometimes a student will come up and give me a hug, but I worry about that. It's not politically correct."

"A lot of what it's about is information sharing among the village. That child's teacher, the educational assistant, sometimes the custodian, the school secretary... they should all be talking about what we're doing."

“The students used to make a mess of the cafeteria, but I made it clear that they couldn’t do that. Now they’re pretty good down here.”

"I rough house with the boys a bit, and they like that. I'm not a teacher, so I can play a bit of a different role."

Student

Share Details

Students can sometimes be very forthcoming if they're struggling with something. Sharing details with an adult you trust is a crucial first step, especially in cases where they might not otherwise know something is wrong.

Student

Withdraw

Sometimes, it's easier to just disengage entirely, withdrawing socially and academically and declining to share any information.

Student

Antagonize The Teacher

If you're having real challenges in other parts of your life, this might translate into a difficult relationship with your teacher. You might talk back, disrupt the class, or otherwise create friction.

Student

Antagonize Other Students

Other students aren't always easy to work and live with. If you're already having a tricky time, you might have trouble working with your classmates in a constructive way!

"When our kids start to become disengaged in what they're learning, something's not right. It's usually not academics."

"My kids know that if they have a rough morning, they can start working or they can write me a note that tells me they aren't in this today. They don't have to tell me why."

"His go-to was aggression and hurting. One day I asked him if he wanted a snack. When the food program started, he stopped coming to my office."

“Last time one kid flipped eight desks; this time he turned one desk on its side.”

Student

Seek A Solution

Being in a bad spot is rarely fun for you, as a student. You might seek to work with the people around you to find solutions. Sometimes, students even ask for harsher consequences than the adults in their lives were anticipating!

Student

Leave The Classroom

If things get really tough, you might choose to leave the classroom, perhaps with your teacher's endorsement, or perhaps without. You might sit in the hall, go to the office, or, if you're lucky, seek out a calming "reset room".

Student

Body Break

Getting up out of your seat and moving your body can sometimes be the reset you need to get focused again.

Student

Technology Overload

Technology can be a great support in class as well as a source of entertainment and connection with other students. But, sometimes it can suck you in and complicate your social life in unexpected ways.

"I slowly started to build a relationship with him to the point where he was coming down here and asking for breaks, resets, and we would play cards and eat lunch."

"Students like being part of making the plan. It's a collaborative conversation about what is happening, what do we need to stop doing, what do we need to do."

"From a social emotional perspective I only see the harm that it does. Bullying comes to mind: the way kids can treat each other, hiding behind devices."

“We talk about brain breaks, body breaks. You’re not losing class time; you’re gaining class time as kids can concentrate better.”

Teacher

Take A Stress Day

Sometimes the weight of ongoing crises and classroom needs can become too much, and you need to take a sick day. Your principals may be more or less supportive of this, depending on the school you're in!

Teacher

Investigate

If you notice something is up, you often have the first opportunity to find out more about what's shaping a student's wellbeing.

Teacher

Kick The Student Out

In some cases, you don't have the capacity to put up with a misbehaving student, and so they get sent to the office, no questions asked.

Teacher

Make A Connection

Engaging with students and forming connections can lay a vital foundation of trust when their wellbeing is at risk later on.

“I can look at their face and know what kind of morning they are having. There are a lot of kids in my class with huge anxiety issues.”

"If I see a teacher getting stressed out, I tell them to just take a day off now. Better to do that than to be out for a week because they're sick."

"Before I can address anything I have to build the relationships. The kids have to know that they're safe [to] allow them to branch out of themselves."

One school we visited had students in the office because they had answered a cellphone call in class -- despite repeated warnings against doing so.

Teacher

Use Personal Resources

Sometimes, educators like yourself bring in their own resources, whether it's food, classroom supplies, or clothing. It's not ideal, but sometimes things move too slowly otherwise.

Teacher

Engage the Parent

Successful problem-solving around wellbeing more often than not relies on support at home. Invite parents in to discuss the challenge and make them a partner in solving it.

Teacher

Discuss With Colleagues

Sharing ideas, information, and a shoulder to cry on can be essential for a high-functioning team of educators.

Teacher

Customize Instruction

Adjusting the way you teach, or creating flexibility in the approach, can create room for students who may have different social or emotional needs on a given day.

"I think it comes back to making sure we aren't enabling parents but empowering parents. I'm not sure how we do that."

One teacher we visited had a reading nook which featured a small campfire made out of felt, which her mother had made!

“Wellbeing is very imbalanced in my classroom, only because we have kids coming from all different backgrounds and home lives.”

"It was stressing me out so much. And you talk to the staff, and they say, all you have to do is love them. And then I relax. And just love my kids. That's where I'm at."

Teacher

Change the Space

In some schools, teachers have a high degree of flexibility in how they set up their space, with the opportunity to bring in decorations, alternate seating, or setting up pods or stations around the room.

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Add an illustrative quote here.

Some classrooms have flexible table arrangements, spin bikes, adirondack chairs, standing desks... the list goes on!

Add an illustrative quote here.

Add an illustrative quote here.

Wellness Worker

Connect to an External Resource

As a wellness worker, you often have different networks than other people in the school. You may know other practitioners in your field or adjacent fields, and can make connections that teachers may not be able to.

Wellness Worker

Facilitate Information Sharing

As the steward of wellbeing knowledge within the school, you may have opportunities to make sure stakeholders are operating with the information they need to make good decisions.

Wellness Worker

Build Capacity

Sometimes, you may have the opportunity to share what you know and how you work with other people in the school community, from teachers to parents, in order to build extended wellbeing capacity in the school.

Wellness Worker

Step Back

In some cases, your case load may be too heavy, or you may judge that it's not your place to overstep, so it may be best for other people in the school to handle the issue.

“With proper support and a proper team approach, and adults who are mindful of their situation, kids can learn through it.”

"Without becoming a social service agency, how can we connect people with services outside the school?"

"If we're not taking care of our own mental health, then we're not going to be able to be fully there for the kids."

“Sometimes, our counsellor will do a bit of capacity building on the strategies she’s using with students on her caseload.”

Wellness Worker

Provide Advice

Your colleagues in the school may not need you to be part of every conversation, but you may still be able to offer advice and ideas as they navigate challenges in their classrooms.

Wellness Worker

Provide Services

In many cases, you can be a direct provider of services, helping students plan around their social and emotional needs, and in some cases, even helping teachers with their wellbeing!

role

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role

title

description

"Our role is not therapy. It's bridging to resources, while making sure that students can manage day to day."

“Sometimes teachers will drop in because they need to to talk or problem solve.”

Add an illustrative quote here.

Add an illustrative quote here.

Principal

After School Program

At the Principals' Conference, you learned about a new after school program that some other principals have found useful for improving academics, providing stability, and encouraging social integration in students.

Teacher

Classroom Technology

One of the other Interschool Collaboration Meeting attendees told you about a new educational app for students which will work with your school's Chromebooks. They mentioned that it was great for drawing out students who are particularly disengaged.

In-Class Support

Classroom Technology

One of the other Interschool Collaboration Meeting attendees told you about a new educational app for students which will work with your school's Chromebooks. They mentioned that it was great for drawing out students who are particularly disengaged.

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1. Read the scenario!

2. Roll the dice.

3. Pick an approach.

4. Share as a group, starting with the Principal.

5. Discuss:

What tensions exist between the different Approaches? What trade-offs might we have to strike?

What could we change to come up with a better solution?

High School

Elementary School

Middle School

The District

Principal

Teacher

Wellness Worker

Student

In-Class Support

	 Support Staff
 Parent	
 Government	 Community