



The Circle of Wellness



By Deirdre Kinsella Biss

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*With the release of the latest issue of **Principal Connections**, Editor Deirdre Kinsella Biss provides a sneak preview of what you can expect in our magazine this month.*

We begin this school year with the well-being of our students near and dear to our hearts and our practice. We know students need to have a positive sense of well-being, a strong sense of self, and a real sense of belonging in the world to help them learn, grow and thrive.

As Catholic leaders, we face the challenge of creating learning conditions within our schools that empower students to grow in a positive, holistic, healthy manner. Our school environments must be welcoming, safe and caring while being equitable, inclusive and respectful. We have a personal responsibility, as well as a role to play, in bringing this initiative to life in our Catholic schools.

Deputy Minister of Education, Bruce Rodrigues, encourages us to go deeper and develop a better understanding of what students need to feel to be successful. He says understanding the whole student, and appreciating the connection and impact on academic performance, is our next best educational step. In this edition of *Principal Connections*, he discusses the importance of a renewed focus on the well-being of the whole child, the importance of student voice, and the need to place a student's sense of self and spirit at the centre of everything we do.

In her article, **How I Became an Upstreamist**, Dr. Jean Clinton invites us to think like "Upstreamists." The Upstreamist philosophy encourages us to get to the root causes of student well-being. She urges us to look deeply into what actions we can take to promote student success and thoughtfully examine the upstream factors that impact our students. It's only by understanding the root causes of well-being that preventive work can be done.

Self-knowledge and self-reflection are key components in developing the cognitive, emotional and social needs of our students. Faith formation and faith development help students develop these skills. In his article, **Put Into the Deep**, Ernie Christie brings forth the idea that students must journey more deeply into reflection through contemplative prayer. He shares a new vision for society where the teaching of stillness and silence is at the heart of education.

Principal Nancy Dinolfo and Vice-Principal Sonia Snyder have made the practice of Christian Meditation a major focus at their school. In their article, they identify how this school-wide focus has been a critical factor in creating a school environment that is safe and accepting. They also share their delight in discovering that students love to meditate!

Research professor, Stuart Shanker, discusses self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal relationships and decision-making in his article, ***The Self-Reg School Initiative***. Learning to understand the difference between student misbehaviour and student stress behaviours helps educators encourage students to take ownership of their own well-being.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learning Partner, Marina Westbrook tells us that there is much to be learned from a First Nations perspective that can be applied to the healthy well-being of students. In her article, ***All My Relations***, she talks about the importance of caring for all of Creation, and how schools can set a standard of reciprocal respect that will radiate from our students.

Well-being is a complex issue. The schools of 2017 must promote wellness and strong social systems for our students, our staffs and ourselves. We must work relentlessly and collaboratively to bring this priority alive. Recognizing the state of our own personal wellness, understanding the importance of boundaries, addressing the need for work life balance, and modelling positive and healthy practices are the structural foundations for leading a balanced and mentally healthy life.

To quote Jean Clinton, “At the heart of this process are caring adults who reach out to young people to show they care about their well-being.”

Let us be those welcoming, healthy and caring adults.



The above article was featured in the **Student Well-Being** issue of CPCO's *Principal Connections* magazine.

If you would like to read the whole issue, you can purchase it [here](#).

CPCO Practising Associates can read the issue by logging in [here](#).