

Supports for | MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN SCHOOLS

In early 2022, the Ministry partnered with the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) to host six Mental Health Regional Listening Sessions. During these sessions school district and Federation of Independent Schools Associations of BC (FISA BC) representatives shared their experiences of supporting mental health and well-being in schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This document reflects the work of that smaller group. It builds on the [Key Principles and Strategies for K-12 Mental Health Promotion in Schools](#) to clarify how the four Key Principles of Cultural Responsiveness and Humility, Proportionate Responses and Supports, Trauma-Informed Practices, and Strengths-Based Approaches support mental health and well-being in BC schools.

This is a reference document made for **all education partners**: teachers (enrolling and non-enrolling), school counsellors, school support staff, administrators, bus drivers, families and supportive adults, custodians, district staff, and associated professionals. It is organized into three sections:

Section One describes each of the four Key Principles

Section Two connects the Key Principles to **a) curriculum b) teaching and assessing c) Professional Standards** and **d) First Peoples Principles of Learning**

Section Three presents a list of practices, resources, and partners for each of the four Key Principles

Appendix A contains an infographic which provides a quick-start guide to integrating the four Key Principles into our provincial practice—regardless of specific role or location within the education system.

The pronoun “We” is used to communicate the inclusivity of the term “education partner”.

Thank you to all those who participated in this work.

1. The Four Key Principles for K-12 Mental Health Promotion in Schools

Prior to the beginning of the 2021/22 school year, the Ministry released *Key Principles and Strategies for K-12 Mental Health Promotion in Schools* to help guide school staff with a set of practices and resources to address mental health in schools. The four Key Principles were outlined as:

Cultural Responsiveness and Humility: Cultural humility is a process of self-reflection to help understand personal and systemically conditioned biases and to develop respectful processes and relationships. It involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a life-long learner when it comes to understanding another's experience. Cultural safety is about fostering a climate where Indigenous Peoples and peoples of all cultures are recognized, respected, and reflected without discrimination. School connectedness is impacted by implicit bias and privilege, expectations, sense of belonging and identity, cultural relevance, Indigenous worldviews and perspectives, connection to communities, cultures of reflective practice, and many other factors.

Proportionate Responses and Supports: Vulnerabilities, inequities, injustices, and systemic barriers may have an influential role in our experience. When we use curiosity and inquiry to understand others' experiences, such as how they describe their mental health or what services and supports they need, we are able to understand and demonstrate Proportionate Responses and Supports. Each of us experiences events and "support" differently, and responses should be reflective of this.

Trauma-Informed Practices: Trauma-informed practice means integrating an understanding of past and current experiences of violence and trauma into all aspects of school life. The goal of trauma-informed systems is to avoid re-traumatizing students and adults and support safety, choice, and control to promote healing. Trauma-Informed Practices support all students and adults whether they have experienced trauma or not. Traumatic experiences are always stressful, but stressors are not always traumatic. Trauma is not expressed the same way for all students nor are the experiences that have led to trauma.

Strengths-Based Approaches: Strengths-Based Approaches emphasize the strengths, capabilities and resources of students, educators, classrooms, schools, and communities. They are holistic approaches combining instruction with support for the student's well-being. Strength-based perspectives are based on the belief that all students, educators, and communities have strengths, resources, and the ability to recover from adversity. This perspective replaces an emphasis on problems, vulnerabilities, and deficits, while still acknowledging important individual and contextual risk and protective factors.

2. Connecting the Key Principles

The four Key Principles provide a general framework for supporting mental health and well-being in all aspects of our provincial practice. This section connects the Key Principles to the B.C Curriculum, teaching and assessing, the Professional Standards for BC Educators, and to First Peoples Principles of Learning.

How do the Key Principles connect to the curriculum?

The **B.C. Curriculum** is based on a "Know-Do-Understand" model to support a concept-based, competency-driven approach to learning. Three elements, the Content (Know), Curricular Competencies (Do), and Big Ideas (Understand), all work together to support deeper learning. The B.C. Curriculum also has Core Competencies underpinning the Curricular Competencies in all areas of learning. These are the intellectual, personal, and social skills that all students need to develop for success in life beyond school. Each of the four Key Principles are connected to the B.C. Curriculum and the Core Competencies in a variety of ways.

How can I apply the Key Principles when teaching and assessing student learning and growth?

Applying the four principles when teaching and assessing student learning and growth involves recognizing key factors important for student learning, growth, and development:

- Cultural Responsiveness and Humility calls attention to the fact that socio-cultural factors are important to student learning and growth. It also draws attention to how colonialism has shaped what is viewed as important in the K-12 system, including the definitions of success that are used.
- Proportionate Responses and Supports encourage us to recognize that **systemic barriers, historical injustices, and current events** impact student engagement and achievement.
- Trauma-Informed Practices help us recognize that **traumatic experiences** affect growth in development, which can result in difficulties (e.g., behavioural, executive functioning, relationships) that impact learning. Intergenerational trauma can have devastating impacts on families and communities.
- Strength-Based Approaches highlight that people and communities are **resourceful and resilient**.

Educators are invited to apply **Differentiated Instruction** and **Universal Design for Learning** in planning for assessment. When teaching, school staff can emphasize student efforts and growth as well as competencies and strengths as they relate to the Core Competencies (**Communication, Thinking, and Personal and Social**).

How do the Key Principles connect to Professional Standards?

The four Key Principles connect to the **Professional Standards for BC Educators** and support the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that define educators' work in a number of ways. One example for each principle is:

Cultural Responsiveness and Humility: *Standard 1 Educators value the success of all students. Standard 1 states that "Educators respect and value the diversity in their classrooms, schools and communities, inclusive of First Nations, Inuit and Métis, and other worldviews and perspectives."* Cultural Responsiveness and Humility invites us to engage in self-reflection to understand personal and systemic biases, to recognize that socio-cultural contexts influence learning, and to honour the traditional territories and communities among which we live and work.

Proportionate Responses and Supports: *Standard 4 Educators value the involvement and support of parents, guardians, families, and communities in schools. Proportionate Responses and Supports invite us to use curiosity and inquiry to understand how others have experienced or felt in response to stressors; supports and services should be provided in proportion to the impact or needs of the individual. One way for us to do this is to reach out to parents/caregivers of students to learn about their strengths, challenges, and needs.*

Trauma-Informed Practices: *Standard 3 Educators understand and apply knowledge of growth and development. Standard 3 states "Educators work to create a positive, safe and inclusive learning environment to best meet the needs of students."* Trauma-Informed Practices encourage us to recognize that traumatic experiences are common among students, families, and school staff, and that these experiences impact students' needs.

Strength-Based Approaches: *Standard 5 Educators implement effective planning, instruction, assessment, and reporting practices to create respectful, inclusive environments for student learning and development. Standard 5 requires that "Educators have the knowledge and skills to facilitate learning for students, including learning experiences that reflect individual contexts and local environments."* Strength-Based Approaches encourage us to value the success of all students, by respecting and valuing the diversity in our classrooms and by engaging students in meaningful participation in their own learning. It also invites us to celebrate their own strengths while deeply valuing the strengths of their colleagues and students.

How do the Key Principles Connect to First Peoples Principles of Learning?

The four Key Principles connect to **First Peoples Principles of Learning** and support the learning principles that guide educators' work in a number of ways. Some examples include:

Learning requires exploration of one's identity: One of the First Peoples Principles of Learning is to recognize that learning requires exploration of one's identity; this is one key component of Cultural Responsiveness and Humility. When we explore our own identity, we recognize our lack of knowledge and experience of others' histories and present contexts.

Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story: Proportionate Responses and Supports is positioned within the First Peoples Principles of Learning. By acknowledging that learning is embedded in memory, history, and story, we recognize how each learner's path is unique. When we can hold space for each person to show up in ways that recognize and honour their history and their present contexts, we are working in ways aligned with the First Peoples Principles of Learning and Proportionate Responses and Supports.

Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirit, and the ancestors; Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place): The First Peoples Principles of Learning are trauma-informed. Both the First Peoples Principles of Learning and Trauma-Informed Practices emphasize that learning supports the well-being of the self, family, community, land, spirits, and ancestors. Both acknowledge that learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational. Finally, both remind us that there is no one path to healing trauma: it takes patience and time.

Learning recognizes the role of indigenous knowledge; Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors: The First Peoples Principles of Learning are strength-based. When we can recognize and honour the resilience and role of Indigenous knowledge, we are working in ways aligned with the First Peoples Principles of Learning. The First Peoples Principles of Learning empower us by connecting to the strengths existing in the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.

3. Practices, Resources, and Partners

Supporting mental health and well-being in all aspects of our provincial practice requires ongoing learning and action. This section suggests practices, resources, and partners that align with each of the four Key Principles for K-12 mental health promotion in schools.

Cultural Responsiveness and Humility

These practices, resources, and partners support Cultural Responsiveness and Humility by encouraging reflection on personal and systemic cultural biases, a readiness to listen and learn about others, and collaborative work so equal voices are heard.

<p>Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a personal commitment to Cultural Responsiveness and Humility and set goals to stay accountable. • Use self-reflective practice (e.g., Equity Pause, Journaling, Grounding/centering). • Establish structures and processes for shared decision making with Indigenous peoples. • Actively participate in respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the K-12 system. • Recognize and honour the traditional territories and communities among which we live and learn. • Participate and support student participation in Indigenous community events. • Co-develop and deliver authentic in-service and professional development that focuses on enhancing Indigenous student achievement. • Embed First Peoples Principles of Learning into teaching practices. • Invite Indigenous perspectives into classrooms and environments. • Consult with local First Nations to recognize and incorporate First Nations language of the land and culture. • Support First Nation language revitalization in your community. • Practice awareness and sensitivity regarding the complex and devastating history of Indigenous communities. 	<p>Resources</p> <p>Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action</p> <p>First Nations Health Authority Cultural Safety and Humility</p> <p>Equity in Action Project</p> <p>Métis Nation BC Health & Wellness Newsletter</p> <p>Nahanee Creative</p> <p>First Peoples Principles of Learning</p> <p>Métis-Specific Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) Tool</p> <p>Personal Pledge of Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples</p> <p>FirstVoices</p> <p>Indspire</p> <p>Native Land</p> <p>Equity pause</p> <p>University of British Columbia “Reconciliation through Indigenous Education” online course</p> <p>UBC Anti-Racism Awareness Course</p> <p>First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada</p> <p>Partners</p> <p>Anti-Oppression Educators Collective</p> <p>National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation</p> <p>Indian Residential Schools Survivor Society</p> <p>BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres</p> <p>Métis Nation of BC</p> <p>FNESC</p> <p>YouthLead Arts</p> <p>First Nations Health Authority</p>
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Proportionate Responses and Supports

These practices, resources, and partners support Proportionate Responses and Supports by encouraging us to understand the unique lived experiences of students, families, and colleagues before providing guidance or support.

<p>Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide opportunities for school staff to connect with professionals who have knowledge and experience supporting the mental health of students to build understanding.• Reach out to parents/caregivers of students with disabilities and diverse abilities to learn about their children’s strengths and ways to support their children’s needs.• Develop awareness of identity and intersectionality.• Use data in your school district Mental Health dashboards to identify students that may have additional support needs.• Review attendance data to identify students who are not connected to school and develop specific plans to connect with students to support their learning.	<p>Resources</p> <p>Equitas erace: Racism Resilience BC A Toolkit for Raising Attendance Rates of First Nations Students in British Columbia (Draft 2020) UBC Anti-Racism Awareness Course Act 2 End Racism Black Youth Helpline Project Drawdown SOGI 123 Pride Less Prejudice</p>
	<p>Partners</p> <p>Anti-Oppression Educators Collective YouthLead Arts Support Network for Indigenous Women and Women of Colour Autism Support Network of BC Disability without Poverty</p>

Trauma-Informed Practices

These practices, resources, and partners help us integrate Trauma-Informed Practices into our daily practice. By emphasizing safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment in our interactions with students, families, and colleagues.

<p>Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teach Emotional Literacy and Social & Emotional Learning in daily practice.• Develop trauma awareness among school staff and families through community education (e.g., School Counsellor run workshop, Book Club, collaboration with community agency).• Embed Trauma-Informed Practices into administrative planning (e.g., health and safety plans).• Enhance trust by building relationships with families, asking permission, and creating consistency and predictability.• Embed opportunities for student and family choice and collaboration.• Make time each day for connection (between students, between generations, between us and the ancestors, between us and the land).• Teach and model grounding and self-regulation.• Use strengths-based language in assessment and daily practice.• Assist students to identify what makes them feel safe (safe people, safe environments, safe behaviours).	<p>Resources</p> <p>MCFD Trauma-Informed Practice Guide</p> <p>Linda O’Neill’s Trauma-Informed Classroom Strategies</p> <p>Jennifer Katz’ “Ensoulng Our Schools” (See Teacher’s Guide here)</p> <p>Calmer classrooms</p> <p>My Training BC: TIP Training</p> <p>Everyday Anxiety Strategies for Educators (EASE)</p> <p>ChildMind Institute</p> <p>CAPPD: Practical interventions to help children affected by trauma</p> <p>Erase School Safety</p> <p>Adopting a Trauma-Informed Approach for LGBTQ2S+ Youth</p> <p>National Child Traumatic Stress Network</p> <p>Routes to Safety</p> <p>Trauma-Informed Practice: Compassionate Learning Communities Framework</p> <p>Window of Tolerance</p>
	<p>Partners</p> <p>2-Spirit Collective: Urban Native Youth Collective</p> <p>Battered Women’s Support Services: Indigenous Women’s programs</p> <p>BC Society of Transition Houses</p> <p>Child & Youth Mental Health</p> <p>Foundry BC</p> <p>Victoria Sexual Assault Centre</p> <p>QMunity: LGBTQ2S+</p> <p>Men’s Trauma Centre</p> <p>VictimLINK BC</p> <p>Youth Against Violence Line</p>

Strengths-Based Approaches

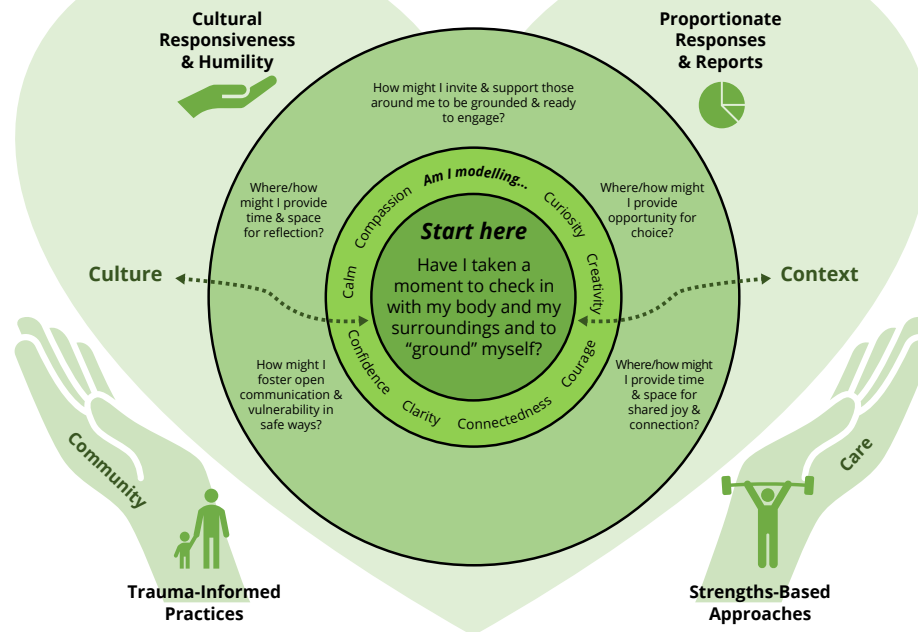
These practices, resources, and partners use Strengths-Based Approaches in our daily practice by encouraging us to recognize the potential in every child, family, community, and colleague.

<p>Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognize each child’s potential.• Identify personal learning goals.• Measure students’ growth against themselves.• Provide opportunities for students to speak/ recognize their own strengths in the classroom and within their family/community.• Ground/center yourself.• Engage in relational ways, supporting connection.• Celebrate dignity, capacities, rights, uniqueness, and commonalities.• Create conditions and opportunities to identify and reflect on strengths used during the pandemic.• Identify and address social, personal, cultural, and structural constraints to individuals’ desired goals, growth, and self-determination.• Invite a growth mindset versus deficit thinking.	<p>Resources</p> <p>MindsetKit</p> <p>Resilient Educator: Building a Growth Mindset for Teachers</p> <p>First Peoples Principles of Learning</p> <p>Character Strengths</p> <p>Strengths Based Reporting</p> <p>Partners</p> <p>Anti-Oppression Educators Collective</p> <p>YouthLead Arts</p> <p>Support Network for Indigenous Women and Women of Colour</p> <p>Indian Residential Schools Survivor Society</p>
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Appendix A

Promoting Connectedness to Support Learning & Well-Being

A map for getting to green



How we show up matters and is connected to interpersonal & systemic influences and resources:

Culture & Context

Remembering that each of us has our own perspective that informs and is informed by past and present experiences and location(s), as well as future aspirations.

- How can I do this work in ways that honour, sustain, and draw from my own cultural connections while honouring those of others with whom I am working? How might the ways in which I show up shape the culture of my shared workspaces?
- How am I maintaining an awareness of where I come from? How am I influencing the world around me?

Care & Community

Remembering that the work of education is primarily relational, which has implications for our practice and well-being.

- Am I getting what I need to be sustained in this work? Am I contributing to what others need?
- Who can I rely on for support for what I need to thrive? How am I building up the community to support others?

Checking in with ourselves first. "How am I?" Taking a moment to ask this helps us notice sensations in the body so that we might address needs in the moment and moving forward. **Grounding** is one way to help us to quiet our bodies and minds and be present by intentionally (i.e. mindfully) focusing on experiencing one thing, whether through the body (stretch, breathe, hum), the arts (dance, draw, listen to a song, reflect on a poem or quote), the natural world (feel the elements, care for a pet or a plant, listen to your surroundings), or in another way that helps you feel settled and calm.

Modelling is important; these reflective starting points might help.

Compassion: How can I show care for myself and all people in ways that honour our interconnectedness?

Calm: How am I experiencing relaxation in my body?

Confidence: How might I trust my connections to the natural world, the ancestors, and other beings to live my purpose?

Clarity: How might I be mindful of my own bias and stay focused on what matters most?

Curiosity: How am I staying open and non-judgemental to my own and others' experiences?

Creativity: How can I remain open to possibilities and hold the attitude that the solution is not found yet?

Courage: How am I facing challenges with integrity and acting in line with my values, even when I do not know what the outcome may be?

Connectedness: How am I nurturing attachment to my values, to my community, to the land, and to my self (including how I maintain healthy boundaries)?

The 8 Cs are taken from *Internal Family Systems* (Schwartz, R. C., & Sweezy, M. (2020). *Internal family systems therapy* (2nd ed.). The Guilford Press.) See e.g. https://foundationifs.org/images/banners/pdf/The_8_Cs_of_Self_Leadership_Wheel.pdf