

Mental Health and Well-Being Belongs to Us

The 3 Rs: Relationships, Relationships, Relationships "The Caring Adult"



JANUARY 2015

Issue #5

"Every child deserves a champion: an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists they become the best they can possibly be."
(Rita Pierson, Educator)

What Does the Research Say?...



A Research Update from Search Institute: Developmental Relationships

Both researchers and practitioners have long embraced the idea that interaction with caring adults is central to young people's development. New research being conducted at Search Institute confirms that conviction, but we are also finding that both *caring* and *adults* are necessary but not sufficient strands in the broader web of relationships that kids need to succeed. In addition to expressing care, young people also need people in their lives who challenge growth, provide support, share power, and expand possibilities. And while relationships with adults can do all of those things in powerful and positive ways, so can close connections with friends, siblings, and other peers.

Search Institute has adopted the term *developmental relationships* to describe the broader conception of relationships that is the focus of our new research and development agenda. Through our work to date, we have identified 20 actions that make a relationship developmental, and we have organized those actions into a framework that is being examined empirically through a national study that will be released in fall 2014. In the most transformative developmental relationships, all of these actions are bidirectional, with each person contributing to and benefitting from them. For the purpose of clarity, however, the framework is expressed below from the perspective of one young person in a developmental relationship.

The Developmental Relationships Framework

Express CARE Show that you like me and want the best for me.

- **Be Present**—Pay attention when you are with me.
- **Be Warm**—Let me know that you like being with me and express positive feelings toward me.
- **Invest**—Commit time and energy to doing things for and with me.
- **Show Interest**—Make it a priority to understand who I am and what I care about.
- **Be Dependable**—Be someone I can count on and trust.

CHALLENGE Growth Insist that I try to continuously improve.

- **Inspire**—Help me see future possibilities for myself.
- **Expect**—Make it clear that you want me to live up to my potential.
- **Stretch**—Recognize my thoughts and abilities while also pushing me to strengthen them.
- **Limit**—Hold me accountable for appropriate boundaries and rules.

Provide SUPPORT Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.

- **Encourage**—Praise my efforts and achievements.
- **Guide**—Provide practical assistance and feedback to help me learn.
- **Model**—Be an example I can learn from and admire.
- **Advocate**—Stand up for me when I need it.

Share POWER Hear my voice and let me share in making decisions.

- **Respect**—Take me seriously and treat me fairly.
- **Give Voice**—Ask for and listen to my opinions and consider them when you make decisions.
- **Respond**—Understand and adjust to my needs, interests, and abilities.
- **Collaborate**—Work with me to accomplish goals and solve problems.

Expand POSSIBILITIES Expand my horizons and connect me to opportunities.

- **Explore**—Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places.
- **Connect**—Introduce me to people who can help me grow.
- **Navigate**—Help me work through barriers that could stop me from achieving my goals.

This information/framework was recently shared with administrators to support capacity building in establishing/strengthening "Caring Adult" initiatives in our schools.

from Search Institute, September 2014 www.search-institute.org

The TDSB "FACTS 2011-12 Student and Parent Census: TDSB Students (Grades 7-12): Relationships at School" provides research to further support the importance of relationships and the impact on students' sense of belonging and engagement at school. The FACTS sheet can be found at <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/AboutUs/Research/ReportsMore/TypeSearch.aspx?type=Fact%20Sheets>.

Timberbank Cares

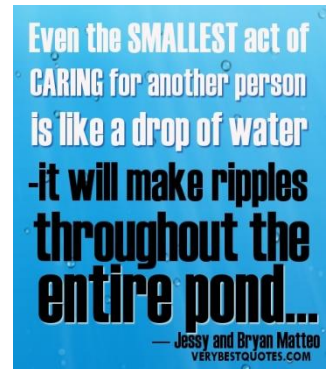
At Timberbank Junior Public School, our goal is to make every child matter and feel that he/she belongs in our school! And we do this by "connecting" with them both in the classroom and outside the classroom e.g., at recess, before school or at lunch. A smile, a simple hello, how was your weekend, what did you learn today, etc...begins the process of building that relationship.

Each teacher has identified students in their class who they believe will benefit from a caring adult. Teachers are assigned a student who is not in their class. All of our staff including our caretaker and office administrator are involved in this as they too have a student assigned to them. "Timberbank is Teamwork" and as a team, we believe that we can make our school a welcoming environment for each and every child.

At every staff meeting throughout the year, we share good news stories and discuss strategies and different ways to build positive relationships with students as the “Caring Adult” is a standing item on the agenda each month. This is a great way to share and celebrate the good things that are happening with our students and the progress that is being made with them.

A small and easy way to make every child feel that they belong!

(By: Anna Epitropou, Principal – Timberbank Junior Public School)



"We must assure that we fill our students' hearts and minds with the potential for envisioning a future better than we ourselves can even imagine." (Lisa Delpit, educator and author)

Eighteen months ago, staff at Queen Alexandra Middle School started a program to support at-risk students through our “One Caring Adult” (OCA) program.

To initiate the program, teachers put forward names of students who are at risk for any number of reasons – emotional, social, academic and/or behavioural. These are not the students who are already receiving intensive support through the office, guidance or social work, but those who still need some extra adult attention. Adults in the building who wish to participate in the OCA program are matched with these students. Together, the adults and students plan their meeting schedule – whether it's for lunch in a classroom every other week, help with homework after school, or 10 minutes weekly to clean out a locker. Each schedule looks different depending on the needs of the student. The Caring Adult becomes a safe and caring “touch stone” adult for the student. The OCA program is currently in its second year of operation and is still going strong.

(By: Emma Nichols, Principal and Karen Maxwell, Vice-Principal – Queen Alexandra Middle School)



Whenever you hear about mental health and getting help, the first step is to always go talk to an adult. But it's not as easy as you think it is. Some adults are completely judgmental, and will brush you off, while others are as sweet as candy and will help you in whatever way you need it. The question is, though, how do you know which adult is which? The truth is, you don't. Some people are judgmental because they don't have enough knowledge about the issue. By creating more awareness about mental health, we could erase the stigma around mental health, and create more adults that love.

Having caring adults around when you are struggling is a huge benefit, because it's hard enough suffering on your own. But with the help and support of someone who cares, you don't have to be alone anymore. It's a huge deal for a suffering soul to have someone next to them who cares and listens. It seems small, but believe me when I say, it means the world to all of us who are struggling everyday with mental illnesses like depression and eating disorders as we can vent in peace about our issues to someone who cares about us and who will listen to us without judging us.

(By: Chandni S., Student – Scarborough Centre for Alternative Studies)

Remember to view:

- The “Foundations of Children and Youth Mental Health and Well-Being” online training module on KEY to Learn. This module has been loaded onto everyone’s Learning Profile - click on the “MyLearning” tab to get started.
- The Anxiety Awareness Module with your staff. This module can be found on the Professional Support Services webpage under training modules or by clicking the following link: <http://tdsbweb/site/ViewItem.asp?siteid=10486&menuid=42888&pageid=36043>

Children and Youth Services Staff – Building Relationships as Caring Adults

Child and Youth Services staff strive to build and participate in relationships with students and their families. Child and Youth Care Practitioners enrich the school community, focus on mental health and wellbeing, and enhance student and school safety. We help with social, emotional and academic growth and offer lots of supports. We meet students where they are at, we hang out with them and hang in even when things get tough and while we focus on needs, we also emphasize strengths. We prefer to “work with” rather than “doing to or for” as we support learning during daily life events. It is within this context that we are engaged in advocacy for children and youth.



This year, Child and Youth Services is collaborating with the office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth to provide an opportunity for our students to raise their voices and to participate in the **“I Have Something To Say”** project.

“Through a variety of activities, the team will engage children and youth with special needs to find out what their vision is of a world where all children belong, are valued and supported to realize their potential” (<http://provincialadvocate.on.ca/main/en/ihsts/index.html>, 2015). Child and Youth Workers or Counsellors in the school will partner with students who would like to share their thoughts and feelings about their needs. They will help students to present their needs, thoughts and requests through whatever mediums they may choose such as letters, poems, pictures, or videos. This information will be used to create a strategy to elevate their voices to create change. Parents are also welcome to participate and share their thoughts with the advocate’s office.

Irwin Elman, Ontario Advocate for Children and Youth presented to our team in November 2014. He believes that Child and Youth Care Practitioners are natural advocates for children and youth. He believes we should pay attention to what the children and youth have to say. We want to join with children and youth and support their efforts to be heard.

We encourage you to go to the website for more information about this program at:

<http://provincialadvocate.on.ca/main/en/ihsts/index.html>.

(By: Christine Gaitens – Chief of Child and Youth Services)

“You need a caring adult to help you succeed at school. They help teach me – help me with work – and do other stuff. In Grade 4 there was a helper in the class and she would always help me with questions – she knew when I needed help.” Dillon, age 13

Resources

- TDSB Professional Learning Library
- “Well Aware - Developing Resilient, Active and Flourishing Students”, Patrick Carney
- Search Institute: Discovering What Kids Need to Succeed
<http://www.search-institute.org/what-we-study/developmental-relationships>
- Stories about Charismatic Adults: Relationships that Change Lives
http://www.drrobertbrooks.com/monthly_articles/1212
- “Raising Resilient Children: Fostering Strength, Hope, and Optimism in Your Child”, Robert Brooks, Sam Goldstein

Upcoming Events

Bell Let’s Talk Day: January 28, 2015
Jesse Ketchum Junior and Senior Public School
and TDSB Media Event Warden Avenue Public School

“Students as Champions of Mental Health and Well-Being” Forums: February 20 (East Schools) and 27 (West Schools), 2015 at Central Toronto Academy – 570 Shaw Street

Hincks-Dellcrest Parent Seminar – Understanding and Supporting Children with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders: January 29, 2015 at Young People’s Theatre – 165 Front Street East

“Change the View” Video Contest – contest opens February 19, 2015 and closes April 9, 2015. For more information please visit:
http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/news_and_events/ctv2015-about-the-contest.php

Mental Health and Well-Being Core Leadership Team

Heather Johnson & Saleem Haniff, Social Workers, Mental Health and Well-Being – System Support
Rose D’Alimonte – Chief of Social Work/Attendance – Area D
Marcia Powers-Dunlop, Interim Senior Manager – Professional Support Services
Sandy Spyropoulos, Executive Superintendent – Student Support Services and Care