

2020–2021

Impact Report



Well at Work



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR & CEO

The pandemic has disrupted all aspects of life, and in the K–12 sector, dramatically so. In April 2021, the OECD reported that 1.5 billion students in 188 countries had been locked out of schools and were required to participate in alternate forms of learning. The situation was uneven and occasionally confusing, as some countries closed schools completely, some only partially, while ten countries kept them open. In Canada over the last year, there were 5.7 million children and youth attending primary or secondary school. Their experiences of COVID-19 have been fraught. Closures, reopenings, home-schooling and hybrid learning models – sometimes all of the above – became the new normal. Inequities among students were greatly exacerbated. There was unequal access to computers and the Internet, and most fundamental of all, food, as school meals were not consistently available.

Amidst this disruption, EdCan has provided new resources and support for short-term needs. It is also vital to not lose sight of the long term. This pandemic will abate one day but other societal crises are not going away. This makes the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) a key framework for addressing our collective challenges. There is an urgent need to act on the SDGs to respond to the devastating impacts COVID-19 has had on countries across the globe. Children and youth are the ones who will have to live in a world and deal with the aftermath if problems such as climate change, pollution, and rising inequality are not addressed. The SDGs can be used as teaching tools in cross-cutting themes and at all grade levels. We look forward to advancing this work with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and other partners.

Our initiative, **Well at Work**, took shape well before the arrival of the pandemic. It became even more relevant as of April 2020, during the first wave. This Impact Report provides a comprehensive look at the progress made so far as we strive toward the goal of making a culture of workplace wellbeing a permanent feature of schools across Canada by 2023. It's a bold goal and we know it will take more partnerships and champions to help attain it, as well as strengthening those connections we have already been privileged to forge.

Guiding us in all the work we do is a new Theory of Change. The strategic planning process behind this endeavour was well timed, given the external challenges that provided a new context for everything that we do. It was our privilege to engage staff, the Advisory Council, and all Board members in this important undertaking. We are grateful for their efforts, which have given all of us a roadmap to use whenever we need a reminder of our "north star" – the positive impact we want to have in K–12 in the years ahead.

In difficult times like these, the resilience of any network is tested by the strength of each of its connections. These relationships enable everything we do. Look to the ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS pages to see how over the past year the network has been reinforced from inside and outside the EdCan Network. We are deeply grateful to new supporters, and those who have been with us for a while, all of whom have ensured that we, at this inflection point in our 130-year history, continue to evolve to support K–12 education to the best of our abilities.

Looking ahead, we feel that a commitment to equity, inclusion, and respect, and embracing evidence-informed solutions to long-standing and emergent challenges, will be vital elements in contributing to the needs of the K–12 sector and hence to a more vibrant and resilient Canada.



Denise Andre
EdCan Chair



Max Cooke
EdCan CEO



Denise Andre
EdCan Chair



Max Cooke
EdCan CEO

EDCAN'S INTENDED IMPACT & THEORY OF CHANGE

From April to July 2020, thanks to funding support from the McConnell Foundation's Innoweave social innovation coaching program, members of the EdCan Board and Advisory Council conducted a strategic planning process. Our goal was to achieve the highest level of clarity possible about the impact we want to have in the coming years and the actions we will need to take to concretize this impact.

Our strategic planning resulted in the following ULTIMATE IMPACT STATEMENT: *By 2025, EdCan will have collaborated with all ministries of education and other education organizations to enhance educators' capacity to explore and respond to public education's emerging systemic opportunities and challenges. This work will heighten every students' wellbeing and opportunities for meaningful learning to help them discover their purpose and path in life.*

THE ORGANIZATION WILL ACHIEVE IMPACT FOR:

SCHOOL-BASED EDUCATORS AND PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS:

- Increased knowledge of – and flexibility to – implement designs for learning.
- Increased recognition and validation of promising practices.

SCHOOL DISTRICT LEADERS:

- Increased capacity to apply evidence-based practices to lead a process of continuous improvement throughout an entire school district.
- Strengthened sense of shared vision and action toward key policy issues.

SCHOOL LEADERS:

- Increased capacity to lead relevant, timely, and action-oriented professional learning for school-based educators.
- Increased capacity to scale promising practices beyond a single learning environment.
- Increased recognition of – and confidence in – how best to apply evidence-based practices to optimize learning environments.

ALL BENEFICIARIES:

- Increased self-efficacy; increased collaboration; increased wellbeing.

THEORY OF CHANGE

RESEARCH

EdCan will conduct original research independently or in co-creation with key collaborators including ministries of education, faculties of education, professional associations, and stakeholder organizations. This research will provide the evidence base from which EdCan can draw upon to inform system leaders on key issues facing K-12 public education, including actionable solutions.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1

INCREASING WORKPLACE WELLBEING FOR K-12 STAFF

Supporting school districts and provinces to make teacher and staff wellbeing a top policy and investment priority.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2

ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO LEAD SOCIETAL CHANGE

Supporting students' acquisition of Global Competencies via the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework, which will engage them in meaningful learning and discovering their crucial role in solving local, regional, national, and global problems.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3

EQUIPPING K-12 STAFF BY INFORMING THEM ON EMERGING ISSUES AND ACTIONABLE STRATEGIES

Identifying ways, through its three areas of action, to support educators and key collaborators by responding to emerging issues, challenges, and opportunities.

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

EdCan will use the evidence base gathered through its research to create a wide variety of plain-language publications – written, visual, and multimedia – to be distributed to its key beneficiaries through traditional and social media channels.

CONVENING AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

EdCan will bring together a diversity of stakeholders from across the spectrum of K-12 public education to share its evidence base while building stakeholder capacity to shift from knowledge to action through professional learning opportunities. Conversely, convenings will also be an opportunity to obtain expert input that will inform EdCan's evidence-based publications.





Well at Work
by EdCan™

Increasing Workplace Wellbeing for K–12 Staff

"The last of the human freedoms: to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." - Viktor E. Frankl

A global pandemic surely ranks as one of the most difficult times for finding new ways to learn and work. From April 2020 to March 2021, schools implemented difficult and unchosen adaptations. Amidst the turbulence, uncertainty and loss, we saw the emergence of a broader awareness of the critical importance of K-12 workplace wellbeing. As parents stepped in and helped with children's remote learning, they gained a new appreciation for the enormous efforts and contributions of all school staff. This appreciation was amplified by millions across Canada and around the world.

It is often said that you can't help others unless you help yourself. In an emergency, you must put on your own oxygen mask before helping someone else with theirs. In K-12, the working conditions of staff are the learning conditions of students. The pandemic taught us that to survive and thrive, we must foster a healthy environment for everyone.

WELL AT WORK 1.0

While **Well at Work** experienced two years of significant growth and innovation from 2019–2021, the scaffolding for the initiative was in place well beforehand. Some of the members of the eventual Design Team were participants in the groundbreaking convening organized in 2017 by McGill University and WellAhead, an initiative of the McConnell Foundation.

The *National Summit on Teacher and Staff Wellbeing* was the first of its kind. It brought together senior government policymakers, union and professional association leaders, researchers, and practitioners from almost every province and territory in a neutral setting to discuss workplace wellbeing. Convening these different players from each jurisdiction provided opportunities to discuss workplace wellbeing with peers from across the country, and discuss challenges and opportunities common and unique to each jurisdiction. There, participants shared and learned from concrete evidence showing that when teachers are burnt out, students experience higher levels of chronic stress, lower performance on academics, reduced feelings of support, and lower school satisfaction. We started to explore the changes that can effectively improve staff wellbeing.

It's vital to remember that school staff means everybody: from principals to teachers to custodians to educational assistants to administrative assistants and other employees in the K–12 community. All make critical contributions to the school community and all of them, in turn, need to be supported in order to do their best.

During EdCan's partnership with WellAhead (2019–2020), an awareness was growing – thanks to research, knowledge mobilization, and stakeholder convening and consultations – of the actions that either impede or promote staff wellbeing. A major convening in Toronto – *The Case for Investing in K-12 Staff Wellbeing* – brought together for the first time leaders of school districts, government ministries, and professional associations to discuss workplace wellbeing. This was a major first step in catalyzing a broader conversation that would help facilitate concrete change.

In early 2020, the McConnell Foundation and EdCan asked relevant thought-leaders to consider how to make measurable improvements in the wellbeing of K–12 staff across Canada. A Design Team was formed to develop a preliminary strategy. The team then conducted 75 stakeholder interviews across the country to test assumptions and further refine the strategy. This laid the foundations for **Well at Work 2.0**.

In January 2021, as WellAhead wound down, EdCan received a grant from the McConnell Foundation so that the important efforts we had helped initiate through **Well at Work** could continue.

WELL AT WORK 2.0

Ongoing efforts to improve staff wellbeing in school will focus on four solutions that, thanks to the work of the Design Team and extensive feedback from stakeholders, enjoy a broad consensus for support among K–12 stakeholders.

1

Solution 1: Professional learning

...for school district leaders, principals, and wellness leads on actionable strategies to measure, implement, and evaluate comprehensive approaches to K–12 workplace wellbeing.

Example: The **Well at Work** K–12 Leadership Course is an asynchronous online professional learning service that will support Canadian education leaders in creating healthy and resilient workplaces for teachers and staff during the pandemic and beyond. Program funding was donated by Canada Life, an insurance, wealth management, and benefits provider focused on improving the financial, physical, and mental wellbeing of Canadians in each province and territory.

“Educators have adapted quickly during these challenging times, and that’s why at Canada Life, we’re proud to support their psychological health and safety as they work with children and youth.”

Brad Fedorchuk, Executive Vice-President, Group Customer, at Canada Life.

2

Solution 2: Coaching platform

...for school and district leaders and teams to receive guidance to embed mental wellbeing for all staff into their district’s culture, priorities, and structures.

The **Well at Work** coaching platform will build on the learnings of School Mental Health Ontario and McConnell/WellAhead-DASH BC Mental Wellbeing Coaching Initiative (2017–19)

As part of the Wellbeing Coaching Initiative, district leaders, teachers and staff in Powell River, B.C., found that using structured focus groups helped participants identify practices and habits that contribute to or detract from their wellbeing. The findings were used to formulate wellbeing priorities for possible implementation by decision-makers.

3

Solution 3: Provincial and pan-Canadian stakeholder engagement

...to convene and connect stakeholders to advance issues related to workplace wellbeing and align their efforts to achieve them, including through communities of practice for teachers and staff.

EdCan, as a neutral and trusted convener, is ideally positioned to help school leaders and staff come together to address workplace wellbeing. There are numerous challenges in K–12 to be overcome through the efforts of all stakeholders. Most of those challenges pre-date COVID-19 and were exacerbated by the pandemic, including a high attrition rate among teachers, especially during the first five years, and the need to recruit new principals.

In the words of K–12 stakeholders:

“If all education stakeholders work together – government, boards of education, and unions – we can create an environment that promotes and sustains staff well-being.”

“So many educators passionately care about their students and direct reports but forget that self-care is of extreme importance as well.”

“We must make time for this work. It is crucial to the success of our students, retention of staff, and it makes financial sense in the long term.”

4

Solution 4: Economic study

...of the costs of K–12 staff stress and burnout, and the benefits of investing in positive mental health and wellbeing to offset these costs.

We heard a clear message from school district leaders, including superintendents and trustees: if workplace wellbeing is to become a priority in schools, we will need to make the case for it. As new research helps prove the cost of burnout and stress in the form of absenteeism, long-term disability, and high staff attrition rates and presenteeism (staying at work while unwell), between now and 2023, EdCan will strive to achieve new investments in the K–12 education to ensure that a culture of workplace wellbeing can become a permanent fixture in schools across Canada.

In the 2017 Global Talent Trends study, 49 per cent of Canadian employees said they want more focus on health and wellness.

Our Approach

Several other vital considerations will be at the forefront of our work:

- Racism, Indigenous culture, and workplace culture must be reflected
- Unique needs of rural, remote, and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis school districts must be acknowledged and respected
- Mental health impacts of COVID-19 need to be addressed

To achieve success, **Well at Work** must intervene at three levels, each one complementing the others, because no single approach can resolve this complex issue.



Individual:
self-care programs, mindfulness classes, and other activities to improve personal resilience and the ability to cope with stress.



Organizational:
improving workplace culture, enabling collaboration, and reducing off-hour emails to create a healthier workplace context, increased sense of psychological safety, and improve collaboration among staff.



Systemic:
actions such as funding staff wellbeing initiatives and improving working conditions to provide the necessary mandate and resources for schools to address staff well-being in a sustainable way.

Thanks to a communications and messaging study of 1,600+ stakeholders (teachers and staff, district leaders, parents) conducted in partnership with Avalanche Strategy, we have a clear understanding of what messages resonate and contribute to shifting mindsets and achieving results.

Schools Strategy in March 2021. B.C.’s Minister of Education, Rob Fleming, described it as a “new approach that embeds positive mental health in all aspects of the education system, including culture, leadership, curriculum and learning environments.”

A significant example of a high-level shift in approach in order to incorporate workplace wellbeing is the Government of British Columbia’s release of its new **Mental Health in**

We are heartened by the progress made so far and are eager to push on. The next phase, **Well at Work 2.0**, will be publicly launched in fall 2021.

200,000+ UNIQUE VISITORS

100+ CONTENT CONTRIBUTORS

1,700+ ONLINE AND IN-PERSON EVENT PARTICIPANTS

www.edcan.ca/well-at-work

Personal Wellbeing Programs from Our Partners

We’ve developed partnerships with various organizations to support the wellbeing of K–12 staff.



An on-demand health, wellness, and fitness program designed specifically for educators.



Mindfulness practices can benefit educators both personally and professionally.



An international movement with the mission to support the mental health and wellness of teachers.



A not-for-profit coaching initiative that specializes in supporting school leaders and teachers.

WELL AT WORK KEY MILESTONES

NOVEMBER 2017

National Summit on Teacher and Staff Wellbeing, organized by McGill University and the McConnell Foundation

NOVEMBER 2019

The Case for Investing in K-12 Staff Wellbeing: Financial, Legal, Student Achievement, convening in Toronto

SEPTEMBER 2019

Launch of *Well at Work 1.0*

Creation of Knowledge Platform with easy-to-access materials on wellbeing: fact sheets, infographics, videos, magazines, blogs, podcasts, articles

MARCH – MAY 2020

Well at Home webpage, a compilation of external resources to support K-12 staff working from home during the COVID-19, received 19,551 page views in three months

NOVEMBER 2020

Launch of *smartEducation™* program by EdCan and Mindfulness Everyday

OCTOBER 2020

TeacherFit program (in partnership with TeacherFit) launched

JUNE – JULY 2020

Design Team consults on and refines four *Well at Work 2.0* priorities: professional learning, coaching platform, provincial and pan-Canadian stakeholder engagement, economic study

MAY 2020

Well at Work Knowledge Platform records over 120,000 pageviews since launch

DECEMBER 2020

Happy Teacher Revolution program (in partnership with Happy Teacher Revolution) implemented

FEBRUARY 2021

Launch of *Being Well at Work: Personalized Coaching for School Principals and District Leaders* (in partnership with BTS Spark)

JANUARY 2021

Canada Life announces donation to the *Well at Work* K-12 Leadership Course

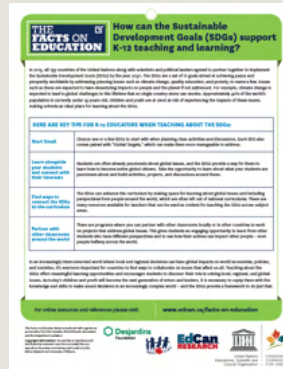
FALL 2021

Scheduled public launch of *Well At Work 2.0*



STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2: ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO LEAD SOCIETAL CHANGE

In February 2021, EdCan launched a partnership with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO) to help raise awareness of the potential to integrate the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into K-12 classrooms as a meaningful learning tool. This was part of our strategic commitment: engaging and empowering students to lead societal change. The SDGs are a set of 17 areas of action aimed at a global audience that seek to achieve a sustainable, livable planet for all – human and non-human. The SDGs offer an exciting cross-curricular learning experience, and provide a framework for students and educators to become problem solvers in their own communities.



Ayush Chopra: The Importance of SDGs in Education



STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3: EQUIPPING K-12 STAFF BY INFORMING THEM ON EMERGING ISSUES AND ACTIONABLE STRATEGIES



At a time when good information has been so critical to wellbeing (and the side-effects of misinformation so dangerous), *Education Canada Magazine* was a vital resource in K-12 schools. The magazine explored, among other topics, how to support diverse students' needs during remote learning; tackling inequities that the pandemic exacerbated; what implementation sciences teaches us about how to effectively have a positive impact in K-12; and understanding the emotional toll of teaching.

EdCan also helped provide useful information through our *Facts on Education* sheets and Professional Learning Discussion Kits.



How can teachers and parents help students build up their financial literacy?



How can parents and teachers support elementary students as they learn from home during COVID-19?



Tobacco and cannabis vaping among youth: What are the risks?

Education Canada Magazine

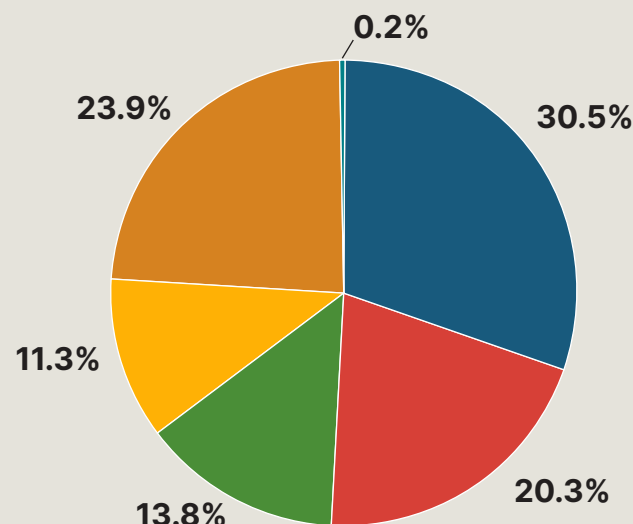
147,804+ VISITORS

Facts on Education Sheets

21,293+ VISITORS

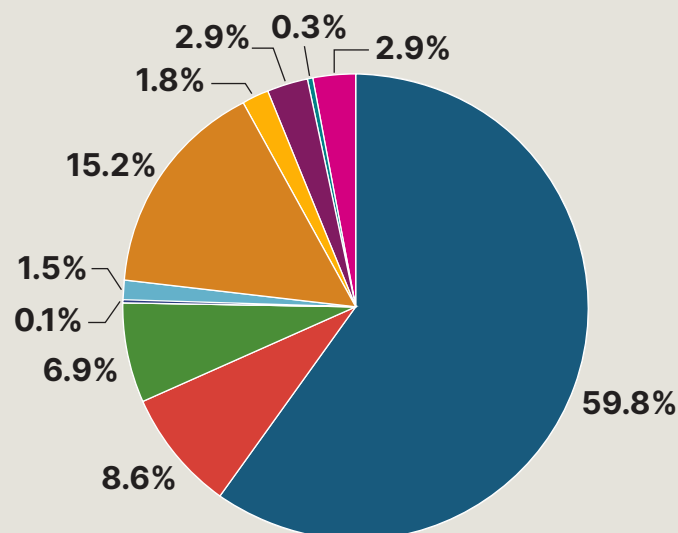
2020 - 2021 REVENUE

Revenue	2020 - 2021	% of total
Sustaining fees (provinces and territories)	\$268,558	30%
Other membership	\$179,197	20%
Publications	\$121,697	14%
Research	\$99,639	11%
Project and program grants	\$210,324	24%
Interest	\$1,666	<1%
Total	\$881,081	100%



2020 - 2021 EXPENSES

Expenses	2020 - 2021	% of total
Salaries and benefits	\$494,807	60%
Administrative	\$70,936	9%
Office rent and utilities	\$56,956	7%
Organizational governance meetings	\$842	<1%
Research	\$12,235	1%
Publications	\$125,573	15%
Communications and visibility	\$14,905	2%
Project and program	\$24,059	3%
Professional learning	\$2,782	<1%
Meetings and events	\$23,988	3%
Total	\$827,083	100%



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To fortify us for the work ahead, we find it reassuring to look back and express gratitude for the new relationships that strengthened the EdCan Network so that we can continue to adapt in how we support the K-12 sector. The role that our volunteer Directors and Advisory Council Members play in supporting our work is indispensable to our continued success. We are extremely grateful to our members: the ministries of education, school districts, faculties of education, professional associations, and individuals whose memberships we rely on to support educators in ensuring that all students thrive in our schools.

We are grateful for our partnership with Desjardins that makes the Tech Donation Program possible, now in its second year. The program, administered by EdCan, supports schools and students' immediate need for technology, which has been exacerbated by the shifts to distance learning caused by the pandemic. Over three years, \$100K per year is being donated to provide computers and other vital technical equipment for students in need. Our **Facts on Education** fact sheet series continues to flourish thanks to the continued support of the Desjardins Foundation and Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA). We also appreciated CADRE 21's sponsorship of our French professional learning magazine department.

We are delighted that Canada Life supported the launch of the **Well at Work** K–12 Leadership Course. This program will support Canadian education leaders in creating healthy and resilient workplaces for teachers and staff during the pandemic and beyond.

It is an honour for EdCan staff to collaborate with and receive financial support from the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO) as our organizations join forces to raise awareness of how the Sustainable Development Goals can engage and empower students to discover their role in leading societal change.

And thank you to the ongoing support of the McConnell Foundation. The Foundation has been a valued thought partner to us over the last couple of years, and the funding

provided in 2021 ensures that EdCan can start to scale the **Well at Work** initiative with the goal of making workplace wellbeing a permanent feature of the K–12 sector.



United Nations
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Cultural Organization



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