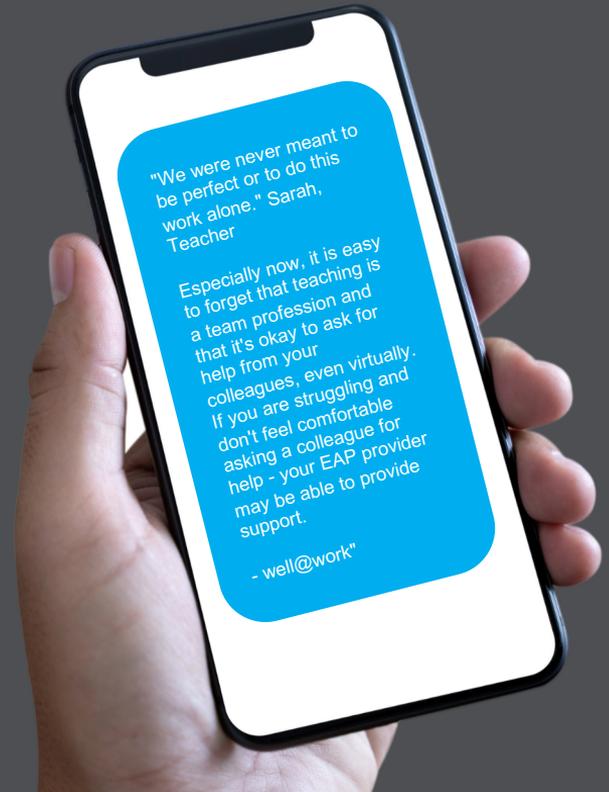


How can we improve K-12 school wellbeing?

Lessons learned from a field trial



WellAhead **McConnell**



Agenda



Topic

Introduction to BIT

Introduction to Well@Work program

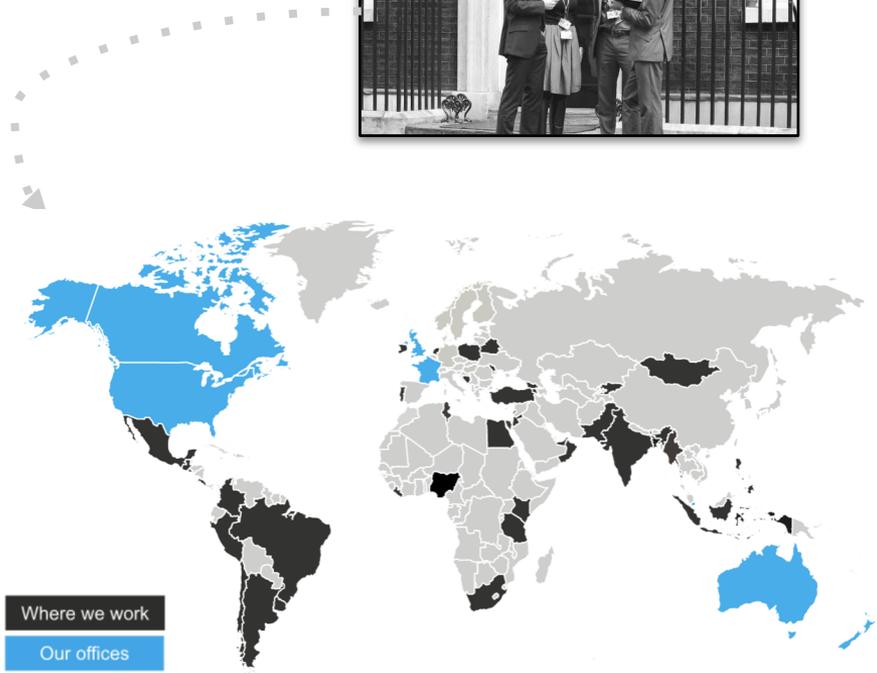
Results & Lessons Learned

Questions

From world's first government “nudge unit” to global social impact company



- We are a **global social purpose company** that was born inside the UK government to apply behavioural science.
- We have more than **200 dedicated behavioural science professionals**, with offices in London, NYC, Washington DC, Toronto, Sydney, New Zealand, Singapore, Paris and Manchester, UK.
- We have run over **900 behavioural insights projects**, including projects on wellbeing, social cohesion, sustainability, physical and mental health.



Behavioural Insights in one sentence

Behavioural Insights

is an approach that uses evidence of the conscious and non-conscious drivers of human behaviour to address practical issues

Well@Work


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Our project methodology



- Target**  Define the *behavioural* goal
- Explore**  Understand the barriers to that goal
- Solution**  Design the “intervention(s)”
- Trial**  Develop and implement a rigorous, appropriate evaluation method
- Scale**  Inform policy and practice with evaluation results



Target

**How can we
increase whole-
school wellbeing?**





Explore: Activities

1. Phone interviews



5 semi-structured interviews with leading academics

2. Site visit to BC



Fieldwork in Vancouver, BC
25 interviews with principals/administrators (10), teaching and non-teaching staff (13) and school districts (2)

3. Desk-based literature review



Review of the literature on wellbeing, burnout and school culture change



Explore: Stressors

*"I get hundreds of emails every day',
'there's so much information coming
at me."*

Workload

Behavioural
challenges led one
teacher to ask,
*"Can I do this till I'm
65?"*

**Behaviour
Management**

*"This is a hard job
to not be here for."
"You are always
thinking about the
kids."*

Not Switching Off



Explore: Enablers

“Feeling like you made a difference stops the burnout.”

Interactions with kids

“I think our best support is each other.” “For me, it’s connection.”

Support from educators

When asked ‘one thing’ they would change to improve school wellbeing, many mentioned collaboration.

Collaboration



Solutions: BIT's approach to the issue

This project aimed to identify small-scale, low cost intervention ideas, which can realistically be implemented within the constraints of the current system.

Solutions must:

- Target and be **tailored** to: administrators, teachers and EA's or teacher support staff, Non-teaching staff
- **Not add significant burden** or increase workload
- **Be applicable** across varying cultures from 160 schools in 3 provinces
- **Focus on what we can feasibly change**, therefore many structural changes are outside the scope.

Solutions

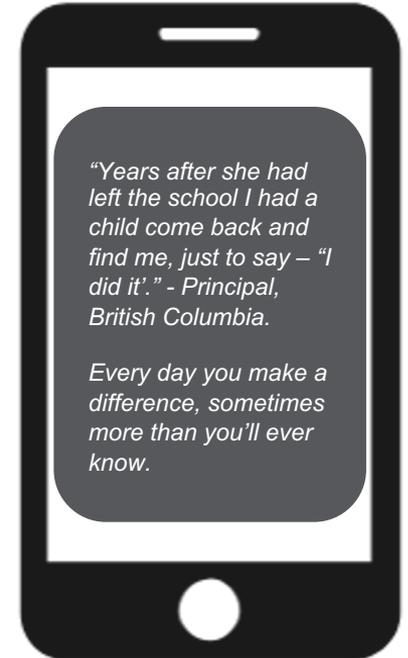


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Solution 1: Weekly Wellbeing Program

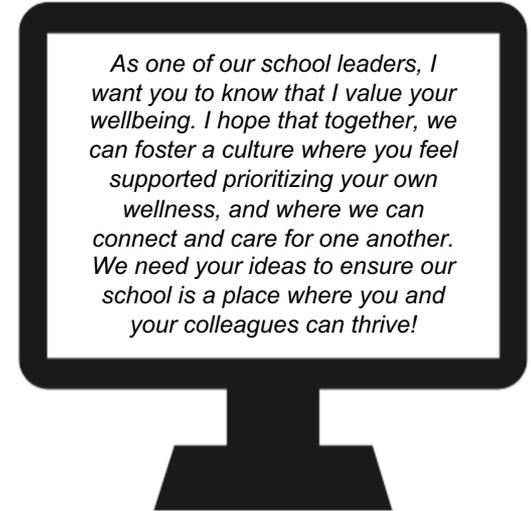
Delivery	Text message
Description	<p>This included prompts delivered once a week over the course of the 7-months, that focused on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Gratitude2. Storytelling3. Normalizing healthy practices4. Supporting healthy thinking patterns (promoting socio-emotional competencies)
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Co-created the weekly wellbeing prompts with stakeholders● Obtained consent from school staff to receive text messages● Selected a text message platform (e.g. Simple Texting) and scheduled the messages● Sending the text messages to school staff





Solution 2: Principal Endorsement

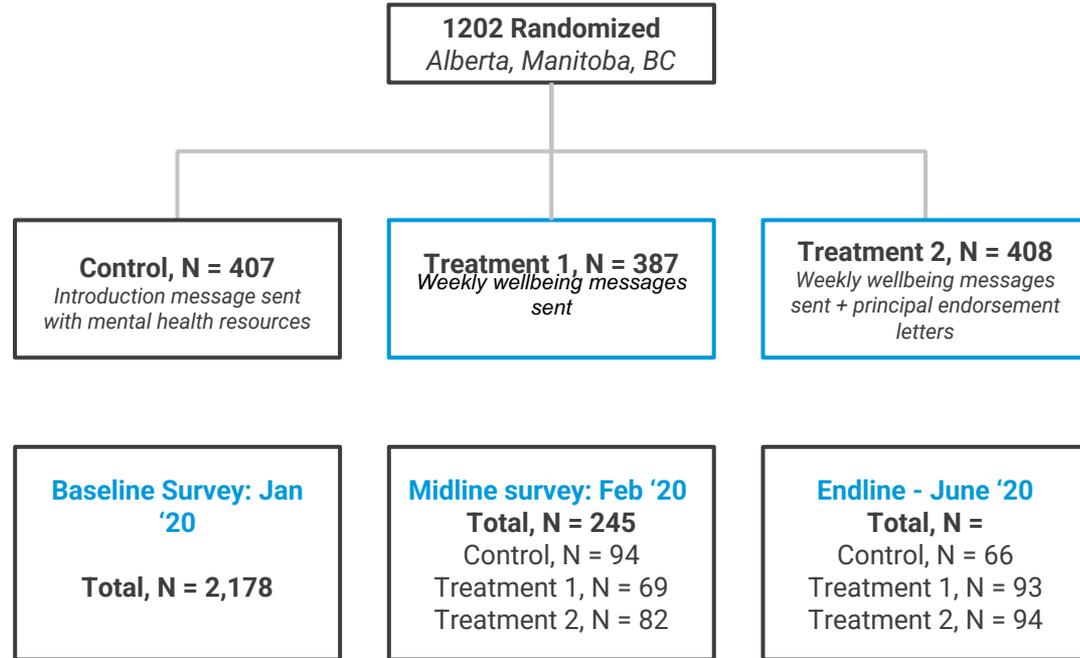
Delivery	Principals emailed all school staff 4 times throughout the year
Description	We drafted four evidence-based messages: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Permission for wellness2. Fresh start3. COVID-19 & Mental Health4. Gratitude
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BIT developed email templates for Principals to send• Principals adapted to their school culture• Emails were sent out





Trial Design

BIT ran a Randomized Control Trial to **test whether a 7-month supportive text message intervention** (Treatment 1: text only; Treatment 2: text + emails from school leadership team) **could reduce burnout and improve wellbeing** among a sample of Canadian teachers recruited in November 2019.





Outcome measures

Two primary outcomes

Primary

1. **Wellbeing.** Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale [7 items]

5 = Lowest wellbeing, 35 = Highest

2. **Burnout.** Copenhagen Burnout Inventory [7 items]

0 = No burnout, 100 = Extreme burnout

Lately, how often have you...

"...been feeling optimistic"

"...been feeling useful"

"...been thinking clearly"

example items

Lately, how often have you felt...

"...worn out at the end of the working day"

"...your work is emotionally exhausting"

"...burnt out because of your work"

Results

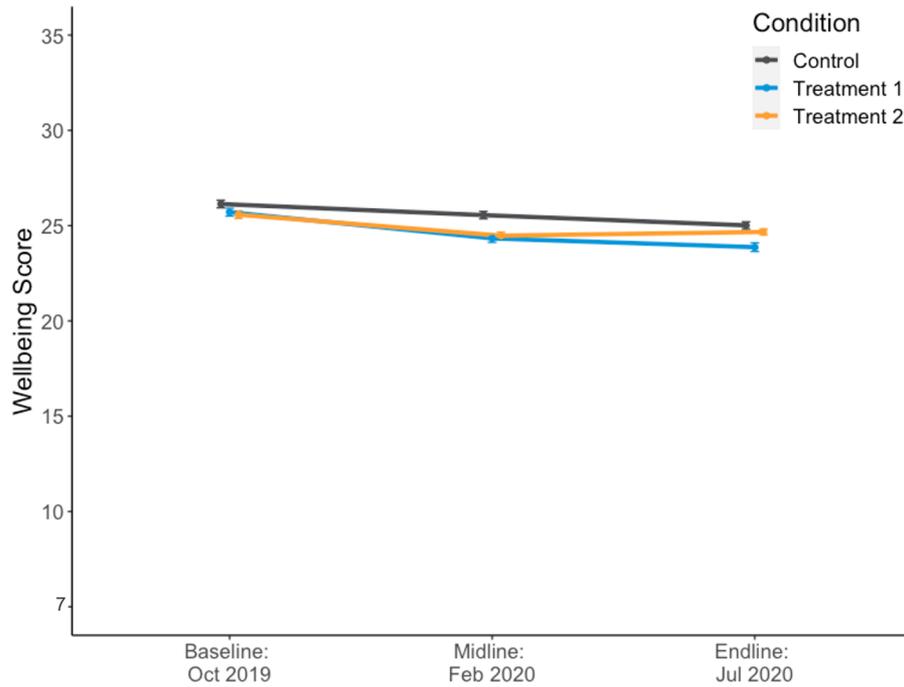

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Line charts for primary outcomes

Full range Y-axis

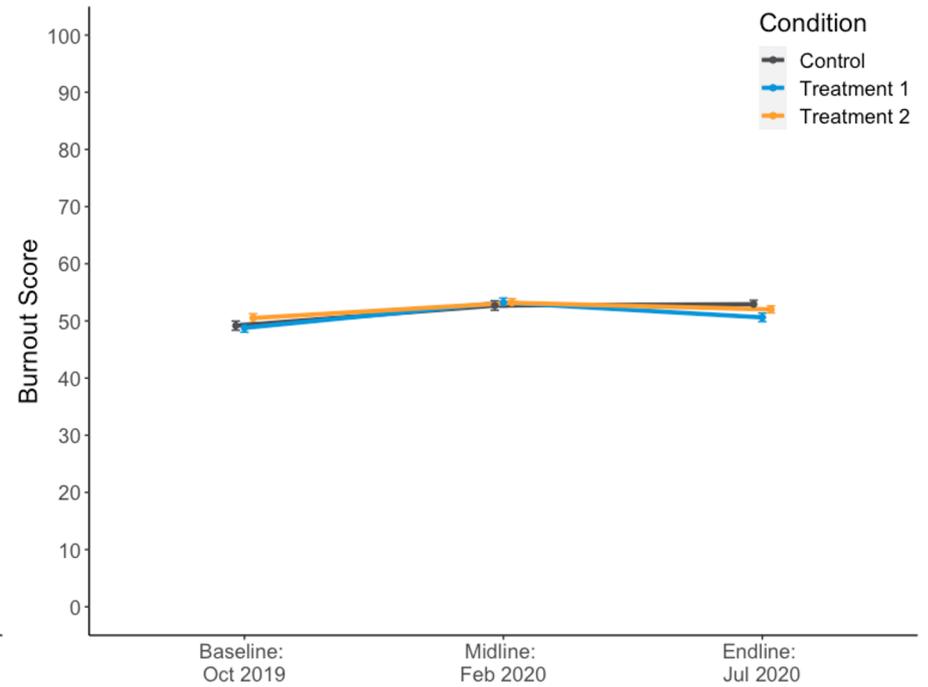


Wellbeing Score by Treatment Condition



baseline (n=1147), midline(n=245), endline (n=253);
Primary analysis

Burnout Score by Treatment Condition



baseline (n=1147), midline(n=245), endline (n=253);
Primary analysis



Secondary Outcomes

- We do not see significant effects on:
 - Finding work **meaningful**
 - Feeling **valued** as a staff member
 - Sense of **belonging** with your colleagues
 - Number of **sick** days taken
- Interestingly we do see that all groups report **high levels of paying attention to wellbeing resources** and report a **high % of likelihood of taking action on wellbeing advice**
- When asked to what extent COVID-19 has affected your wellbeing (0-10), we see a very small but significant positive effect on participants in T2.



Texts and Emails were well received

- School staff reacted very positively to the text messages
- The intervention text messages served as a reminder to focus on their wellbeing
- Preferences for text message content varied among interviewees
- Principals were particularly pleased with the email templates



“(The messages are) a reminder that yes our work is important, but we also need to make sure we’re healthy so we can help our students.”



School Context plays a big role

- School administration play a key role in staff wellness, and the well@work messages have fit into broader wellbeing strategies

“The email templates work if the culture within a building reinforces that. If it’s just an email and you’re doing nothing else, staff would be really leery about it. (...) But if the culture in the school has been developed so that wellbeing and well becoming is part of the conversation and part of how we do business, then I believe it would be embraced by staff.”

- Principal

Lessons Learned


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Discussion

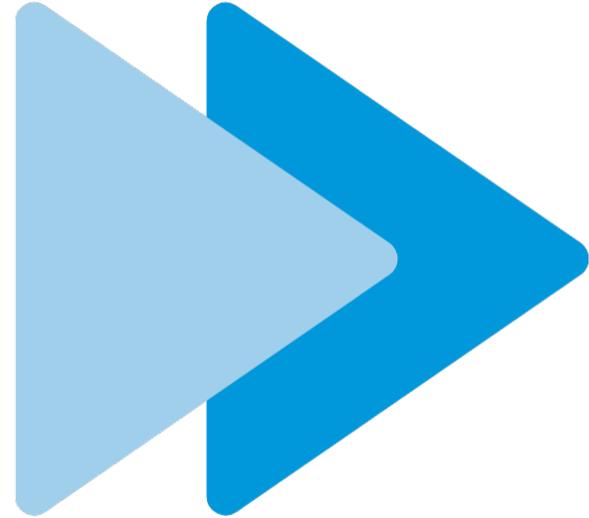
- Our results indicate that **“light-touch” SMS interventions appear insufficient to significantly move Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) and Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWS) over ~6 month periods of time.** This may be due to a variety of factors:
 - Measurement
 - Intervention content
- There may be **specific subpopulations where light-touch SMS interventions work.**
- There was weak evidence that **pairing SMS messages with additional system-level (leadership) support may help.**



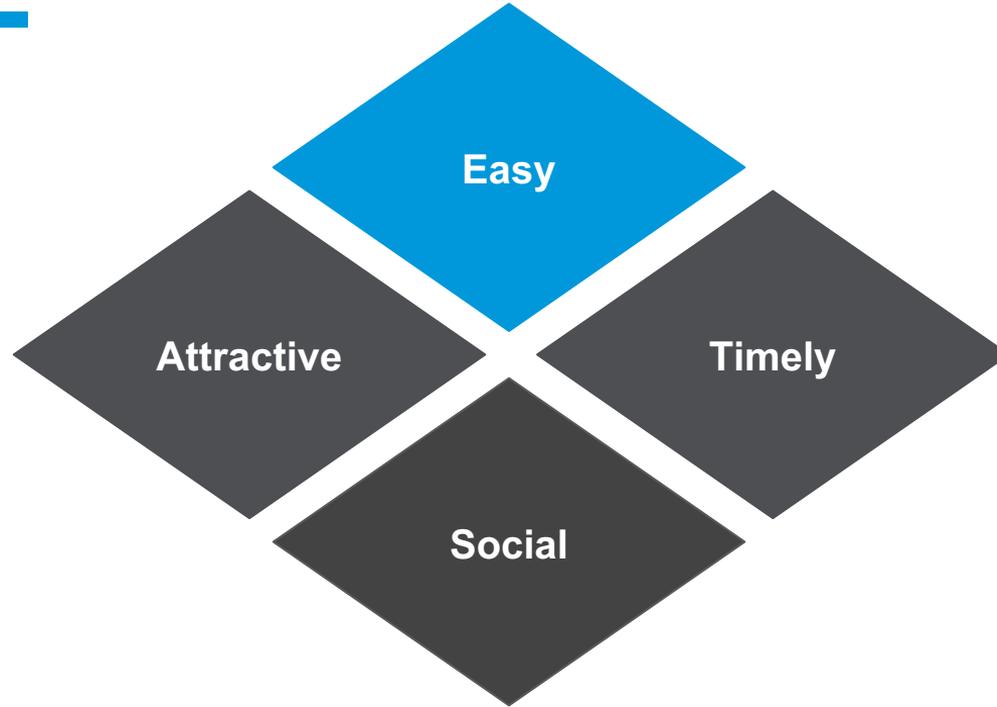
Moving forward

1. Use SMS as a channel to connect staff to resources and share wellbeing strategies

2. Refine and prioritize leadership messages. Future light-touch wellbeing strategies should maintain a strong focus on leadership communications.



EAST

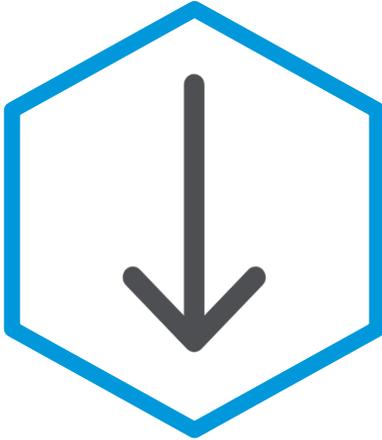


Note: while individual and organizational approaches are useful for improving wellbeing, systemic approaches are still necessary to see significant improvements in K-12 staff wellbeing.



Applying EAST to Wellbeing & Mental Health

Reduce friction



Change the default



Simplify options





Applying EAST to Wellbeing & Mental Health

Make benefits salient



Messenger Effect



Personalize





Applying EAST to Wellbeing & Mental Health

Social Norms



Peer-to-Peer



Normalize it





Applying EAST to Wellbeing & Mental Health

Bookend the year



Use prompts



Check in





Questions

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