

# MENTAL WELL-BEING COACHING INITIATIVE

The Mental Well-being Coaching Initiative paired 6 BC school district teams with expert coaches to work on to improving the well-being of students and/or staff. The district teams included a senior district administrator, a teacher/counsellor and a health authority partner. They received 10 days of coaching per year for two years, tailored to their unique needs. Over the two years most of the districts included a focus on staff well-being.

## WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT STAFF WELL-BEING

### START HERE



#### Start Slow

Listen to teachers, administrators, educational assistants and other staff to build a foundation of understanding about issues and perspectives.



#### Understand Context & Culture

School, district and community context and culture are crucial to understand. While context can be straightforward, the perception of culture may vary among schools in a district, and/or among individuals.

Engaging with a staff in a variety of roles and locations will provide a sense of the culture, the level of consensus around it and provide clues to underlying strengths and areas for improvement.



#### Collect Data

Collect data to understand the current situation, identify key issues and preferred approaches.

While well-planned surveys can be useful, consider using focus groups. Staff well-being focus groups can provide rich data for individual employee groups (teachers, educational assistants, etc.) and can start multiple and widening conversations about staff well-being.

### Do



#### Build Safe Spaces

Build safe spaces where staff can speak freely and be respected for their views. Build in critical challenges, so everyone feels able to challenge ideas while maintaining respect. Personal well-being discussions can trigger strong emotions, so consider including a mental health practitioner in gatherings.



#### Allow Unique Approaches

Individuals conceptualize and manage their well-being in ways that may be unique to them. Initiatives that include a range of supports, personal choice and that tackle both organizational and personal challenges to well-being will be better received than top-down, prescriptive approaches.

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## WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT STAFF WELL-BEING

### DO



#### Act Based on Data

Think through how you move from data to action. What does the data tell you? What will you do as a result? Consider the data that you collected as well as the context and culture and input of your key stakeholders.



#### Communicate

Communication is critical to the success of your staff well-being initiative. It keeps staff involved and signals progress and leadership support for the work. Use communication to keep staff involved and talking about actions to support wellbeing. For example, share a graphics summary of your engagement process and findings and post it publicly, or use school well-being champions to share progress, seek input and spark grassroots action.

### WITH WHOM



#### Engage

Engage with district leaders, unions and professional organizations early in the process to gauge perspectives, interests and concerns so that become allies in addressing staff wellbeing.

Ensure that all employee groups feel valued and included, and use processes that are transparent respectful of peoples' well-being. For example, events outside of working hours should not be mandatory and should provide some recognition that employees are participating outside of their work schedule.



#### Shared Responsibility

No one person or group can “solve” staff well-being. Using a shared responsibility model to frame discussions and develop plans can build joint ownership, and empower individuals and groups to make changes in their sphere of influence alongside those made by the district.



#### Outside Voice

Navigating staff well-being initiatives can be tricky. Working with an external coach who brings fresh perspectives and approaches and can challenge the status quo can help districts and schools tackle underlying issues that impact staff well-being.



#### Partner

Consider partnerships and collaborations with external agencies – with health authorities, municipal governments, and/or community organizations. Their expertise and resources can help more your initiatives forward more quickly.