Big Idea: Mental Health

Essential Question: How can we help students prioritize mental health at St. Patrick’s High School?

St. Patrick’s High School, Ottawa Catholic School Board

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
ENGAGE

With a specific focus on mental health, we are responding to the challenge of finding ways to help students in our school community prioritize their mental health.

This project relates to UN Sustainable Development Goal 3 - Good Health and Well-being.
WHY MENTAL HEALTH?

We want to work towards promoting mental health for all students at St. Patrick’s High School.

Going into the project, we already had a good understanding of the importance of taking care of our mental health due to the impact it has on our overall well-being. Based on the impact of various world events over the past 2 years and our personal experiences, we felt that this was an important topic and challenge to address in our school community.
We took time to explore how different parts of our identities (i.e. gender, race, culture, etc) play a role in our feelings, values, and biases towards mental health. Through the 'Start With Myself' activity, we noted that these elements could be limiting factors in accessing mental health supports and that there was no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to addressing mental health.

As our conversations continued, we shared different strategies that we used in the past to deal with mental health challenges including talking to a trusted friend/adult, seeking professional help via a therapist, meditating, exercising, listening to music, etc. As a group, we also came to understand that we generally know that resources exist to support our mental health but we are not always sure where to find them or how to access them.

Through our discussions, we identified that we all recognized the importance of mental health.
After wrapping up our initial discussions in the engage phase, we wondered how we could reduce stigma and provide tools for the students at St. Patrick’s to promote positive mental health.
HOW IS THIS A REAL WORLD CONCERN?

Mental health challenges are experienced by many of us at different points in our lives. These challenges range in severity however, we recognize that facing mental health challenges as youth and not knowing where to turn to for support can be detrimental.

Through discussions about our personal experiences, we know that mental health can impact our relationships, physical health, and ability to succeed in school and extracurricular activities. On the next slide, we show the Engage Planning activities we took part in to help us identify how this is a real world concern.

“In any given year, 1 in 5 people in Canada will personally experience a mental health problem or illness.”

Canadian Mental Health Association, 2021
Below are the 2 activities we used in our Engage planning phase...

**DISCUSS**
We discussed what we know about mental health already, how mental health is part of our greater well-being, and the strategies we’ve used to take care of our mental health in the past.

**NOTICE**
We used the ‘Start with Myself’ activity to evaluate our feelings, biases, and values surrounding mental health. We examined how societal and cultural ‘stigmas’ can have an impact on the way we express how we feel about our mental health and our tendency to seek help.
During the investigate phase, we created surveys, watched videos, performed research, and invited experts/community connections into the classroom to learn more about mental health.

Students used guiding questions featured on the next slide to begin their investigations.
INVESTIGATION QUESTIONS + METHODS

How does mindset (mental health) impact physical and psychological health?
- Watch a presentation.
- Conduct research online.
- Consult a topic expert (presentations by the School Mental Health Worker & Addictions Counsellor)

What strategies can teens use to promote their mental health?
- Conduct research online.
- Create surveys using Google Forms.
- Consult topic experts (presentations by School Mental Health Worker, Addictions Counsellor, Guidance Counsellors)

What stigma exists surrounding mental health?
- Watch a presentation.
- Create surveys using Google Forms.
- Conduct research online.
- Consult a topic expert (presentation by School Mental Health Worker and Addictions Counsellor)
ACTION

In order to address the essential question “how can we help students prioritize mental health at St. Patrick’s High School?”, we created a website for and by students.
Why a Website?

We decided on this action pathway because students are now more **digitally connected** than ever. Making a website allows us to **reach** as many students as possible and **provide access** and **information** about a variety of mental health resources available to them in our school community.

The website will allow us to share different forms of media and resources that will work and appeal to our diverse student population. This was important to us since we discovered how different elements of our identities impact how we deal with our mental health. We will be able to post resources and services that appeal to different levels of ‘readiness’ to address mental health.
WEBSITE BRAINSTORM + BUILDING

our class brainstorm

meeting with Ciena team + wireframing
SPH Mental Health

Click on the laptop to access our website or click HERE!

https://sites.google.com/ocsb.ca/sphmentalhealth/home
TO DATE, WE HAVE...

- Used ‘wireframe’ techniques we learned about by meeting with Ciena employees;
- Collaboratively created a website using Google Sites and all of its functionalities;
- Created infographics, interactive wellness calendars, and in-school advertisements using desktop publishing software;
- Used Audio-Visual (A/V) equipment to record videos of community connections that support the mental health in our school;
- Used video editing software to create informational videos and meditations to be accessed by students;
- Released the website to the school community to support mental health during virtual learning.
WHAT'S NEXT?

We want to continue to build this website to help reduce stigma and support mental health at our school.

OUR NEXT STEPS

- Advertise the website to the student body with student-made posters;
- Use student feedback to improve and develop resources;
- Sustain the website for years to come using grant and existing tech;
- Use the website as a foundation for other mental health and well-being initiatives in the school.

We printed these with our HP DesignJet printer from Ciena & Digital Promise!