Educational success, health, well-being: supporting actors in adapting their practices in Quebec's school context

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Effective actions in schools: equipping stakeholders

The effectiveness of mental health promotion in schools, as with actions targeting other youth issues, depends on a comprehensive approach towards success, health and well-being determinants. School is a part of children's environment and is critical in developing their skills[1]. All aspects of school life contribute to their health, well-being and success, and all children can enjoy healthy development if:

- they feel welcomed, accepted and respected;
- they learn in a safe and supportive environment;
- they have the opportunity to be actively engaged in their learning;
- their learning style and rhythm are taken into consideration;
- they have the opportunity to develop personal and social skills;
- there is consistency in the actions intended for them: in-class educational activities, school rules and standards and extracurricular activities;
- connections are made between what they experience in school, at home and in the community.

Creating a school environment where effective health and well-being promotion measures support educational goals and priorities requires an adaptation of practices that is considerably challenging for partners at the national, regional and local levels[2, 3, 4].

The Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ) developed a synthesis of recommendations. This is an innovative contribution to adapting promotion and prevention practices in schools[5] and is based on two broad areas of expertise: education and social and health sciences. It represents a significant effort to integrate and adapt scientific and grey literature to effective intervention practices for youth in schools.

> All aspects of school life contribute to children's health, well-being and success

The synthesis contains eleven fact sheets, each addressing an issue of special concern, including mental health. Recommendations are made based on the different educational levels and developmental stages of youth. They are divided by intervention level (school, youth, family, community) and reflect the theoretical and conceptual basis for effective interventions. The recommendations have been translated so they could be adapted to schools and formulated to be consistent with the Programme de formation de l'école québécoise. (http://www.inspq.qc.ca/pdf/publications/1065_ReussiteEducativeSanteBienEtre.pdf)

Situations are covered under one format, bringing any common background to readers' attention, which is something that is unfortunately often overlooked in favour of silo approaches and practices. It invites us to think critically about current practices in order to move towards a more comprehensive and integrated vision. To that effect, work is underway to continue discussions on the various dimensions of integration.

Beyond the tools: supporting stakeholders

The INSPQ's synthesis is a decision support tool developed to analyze current practices in light of scientific recommendations to increase their effectiveness. Though useful, the tools alone are not enough to support the adaptation of required practices, and the need to accompany stakeholders is well documented. Effective accompaniment should:

- help professionals adapt their practices rather than getting them to replace them with new procedures that are designed and developed by others;
- allow practitioners to work in intersectoral collaboration (particularly health and education);
- allow practitioners to reflect on their practices so they can describe, analyze and adapt them. This calls for analysis and introspection capacity, which requires time;
- combine these intentions with implementation requirements and the obligation of result[6].

Learning communities prove to be an appropriate modality for this purpose since they allow: collective learning; problem solving; co-construction of meaning and knowledge; emergence of practices from experiences and reflections, put into perspectives with theory and, lastly, the co-construction of tools.

However, it should be noted that adapting practices among stakeholders must be considered in the context of organizations to which they belong. It depends on organizational conditions in place to support change.

Fact Sheet Model

School	Youth	Family	Community
Educational environment • Values, beliefs, attitudes of teachers and other service providers • Educational principals • Educational approaches, practices and methods • Specific elements • Organizational conditions	**Knowledge, know-how, behaviour** Elementary students : • Personal skills • Social skills Secondary students : • Personal skills • Social skills	• Important information to give parents • Advice and parental practices to adopt • Family support • Ways to involve parents	• Rules, standards and policies • Support for youth and their families • Youth social participation • School-family-community collaboration projects
Social environment • School climate • Rules, standards policies • Educational organization			
Physical environment • Condition and layout of the building • Material resources			
Youth services • Social support • Preventive services			

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