



Bringing social and emotional learning and  
mental health literacy into the classroom



*An Educator's Guide*

A program offered by WE Schools

## Dear Educator,

We are excited to introduce the WE Well-being Program to help empower children, youth and educators with the knowledge, skills, competencies and experiences to promote mental well-being in classrooms, schools and communities across the globe. The framework for the program is research-based and has been developed with experts in the fields of social and emotional learning, as well as mental health literacy. The Foundational Module promotes awareness, understanding and action through experiential service-learning. As one of the largest youth-serving organizations, with a reach of over 20,000 schools and groups and more than 1.95 million youth, WE is uniquely positioned to reach young people. Our programs reach directly into classrooms (virtually and in person), and through our social media networks and annual large-scale youth empowerment events we are able to impact the lives of millions, through compelling and relevant content, to inspire action and conversation. On behalf of the WE organization, as well as the partners and advisors who have made this initiative possible, allow us to extend our deepest gratitude for your participation in WE Well-being.

With sincere appreciation,



Craig and Marc



“Here we are at a very exciting point in history. We have the WE Schools program on the one hand that has been engaging youth and inspiring them to do good in the world. Then on the other hand we have the field of Social Emotional Learning, which has decades of research showing that you can teach these Social Emotional skills such as social awareness and self-management. We are bringing them together for the very first time to create pioneering work that will make a difference in the world and promote the well-being of youth.”

—Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl

## Introducing the WE Well-being Program

A program that empowers young people and educators with knowledge, skills, competencies and experiences to promote their own positive well-being and the well-being of others.

### Scope of Practice

To promote emotional, social, physical and mental well-being for schools, families and communities. We do not provide crisis support or treatment. We do increase awareness and increase access to resources from our strategic partners who specialize in mental health intervention services.

### WE Schools Program Outcomes

- Promoting positive, inclusive, safe and caring environments and relationships
- Increasing resiliency, celebrating diversity and reducing stigma
- Increasing knowledge, skills and positive human qualities that promote social, emotional, physical and mental well-being

### Program Objectives

**Promotion and Prevention:** Drawing on evidence-based mental health promotion and prevention strategies, WE will support the early development of positive mental well-being for individuals, families and communities through stigma-reduction and accessible and inclusive programs.

**Translating Knowledge into Action:** WE will make mental well-being as understandable and actionable as physical well-being.

**Celebrating Diversity and Mental Health Equity:** WE will actively celebrate diversity and promote strategies that include a focus on specific/priority populations and mental health equity.

**Youth as Change-Agents:** Leveraging our youth-centric platform, WE will engage youth as change-makers and leaders to promote their own mental well-being knowledge, skills and competencies, and to support the well-being of their schools, families and communities.

**Scale & Impact:** WE will harness the organization’s reach—4+ million students, 20,000 schools, tens of thousands of engaged educators, technology platforms such as the WE Global Learning Center, celebrity ambassadors and WE Day stadium events with 250,000 participants—to deliver the programs and resources for large-scale impact on mental well-being and the cultivation of positive human qualities.

## **WE Well-being: Social Emotional Learning**

Thank you for being a part of the WE Well-being Program. We look forward to your collaboration and insights as we embark on this journey together. These materials are meant to support Educators with implementing social emotional learning and promoting student well-being in the classroom. We look forward to learning with you and offer immense gratitude for your participation!

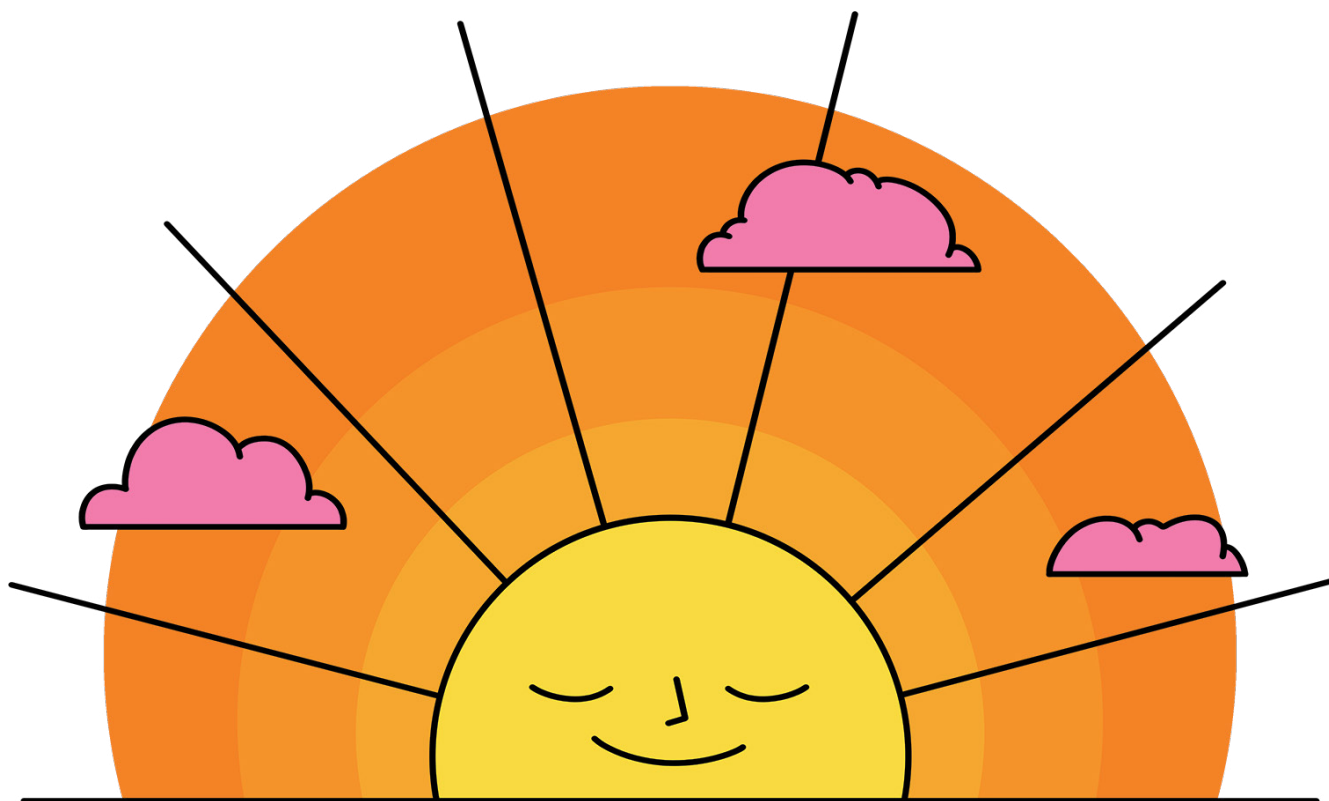
### **Timeline**

**Fall 2019:** Foundational Module

**Late 2019:** Grades 4–6, Lessons 1–5

**Early 2020:** Grades 4–6, Lessons 6–12

**Ongoing:** Virtual and in-person professional development for educators



## WE Well-being Pillars

WE Well-being is focused on increasing the knowledge, skills and positive human qualities that promote our well-being. These areas of capacity building have been identified as common elements across evidence-based mental health promotion and prevention programs:

**Knowledge** – mental health literacy, brain development, healthy self-care practices, i.e, physical activity, sleep, nutrition, etc., how to support others

**Positive Human Qualities** – empathy, gratitude, compassion, altruism, resilience

**Identifying and Managing Emotions** – self-awareness, self-management, mind-body connection

**Relationship Skills** – listening, cooperation, friendship, empathy, conflict resolution, being respectful to others, recognizing emotions in others, community building

**Positive Motivation and Growth** – growth mindset, optimism, positive attitudes, sustained learning

**Stress Management** – problem solving skills, relaxation, calming, mindfulness, cognitive restructuring, support seeking, distress tolerance, balance

**Self-Confidence and Identity** – mattering, assertive communication, self-advocacy, knowing oneself

**Learning Skills/Executive Functioning** – responsible decision-making, goal-setting, problem-solving skills, time management, study skills, perseverance, organization skills

**Social and Environmental Awareness and Action** – community service, helping others, active citizenship, interconnection

**Sense of Purpose and Contribution** – self-realization, meaningful living, sense of self as part of something greater

**SOURCES:** CASEL; CAMH & School Mental Health ASSIST common elements analysis of evidence-based SEL programs, 2016; Ryff, 2018.

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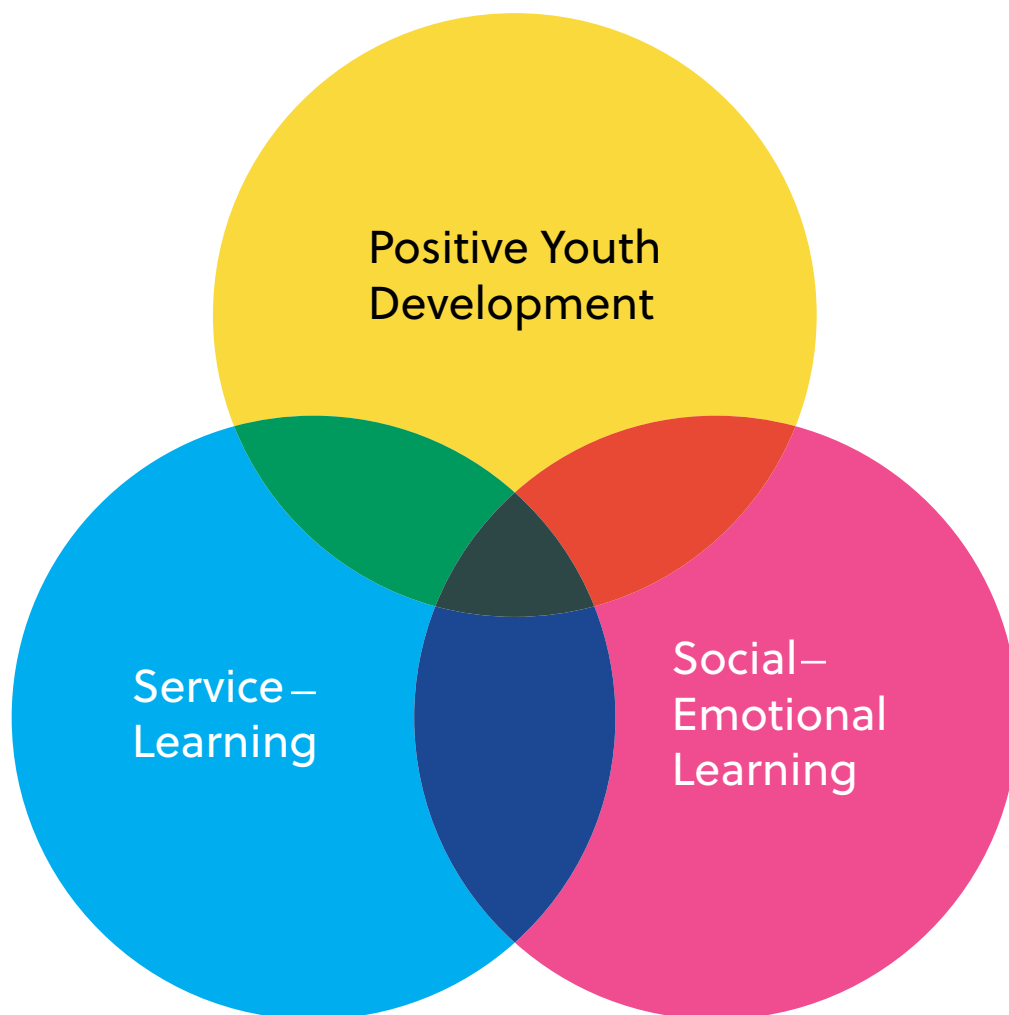
## WE Well-being Program Supporting Literature

*Review by Dr. Molly Stewart Lawlor*

Well-being has been identified as an important buffer against myriad of negative outcomes, including psychological disorders that can occur during childhood and adolescence (Gilman & Huebner, 2003; Suldo, Thalji, & Ferron, 2011). As such, well-being is an important area of focus for prevention efforts in schools. WE Well-being uses a strengths-based approach to support child and adolescent well-being. The WE Well-being program is a research-

based curriculum grounded upon a foundation of service-learning, positive youth development and social-emotional learning. Specifically, WE Well-being fosters child and youth purpose via community service-learning as a means to develop social-emotional competencies, and positive human qualities, such as gratitude, empathy, compassion, altruism and resilience. An important component of the WE-Well-Being Program curriculum involves a focus on creating a positive, inclusive and supportive learning community. Research has found that positive relationships are linked to higher well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017), hence the importance of fostering a sense of belonging in schools. Students who feel they belong within a community at school are found to have increased engagement, academic outcomes and well-being (Battistich et al., 1997; Osterman, 2000; Van Ryzin, Gravelly, & Roseth 2009). Finally, students have been found to show greater civic engagement when they feel heard and respected, and are in learning contexts that support positive bonds (Campbell, 2008).

The following provides an overview of the three primary theoretical underpinnings of the WE Well-being Program—positive youth development, service-learning and social-emotional learning.



## Positive Youth Development

Positive youth development (PYD) seeks to emphasize and promote the potential of children and youth. Specifically, the PYD approach “aims at understanding, educating, and engaging children in productive activities rather than at correcting, curing, or treating their formal adaptive tendencies or so-called disabilities” (Damon, 2004, p. 15). Three areas that are central to the study of PYD are purpose, positive attributes and resilience.

### Service-Learning

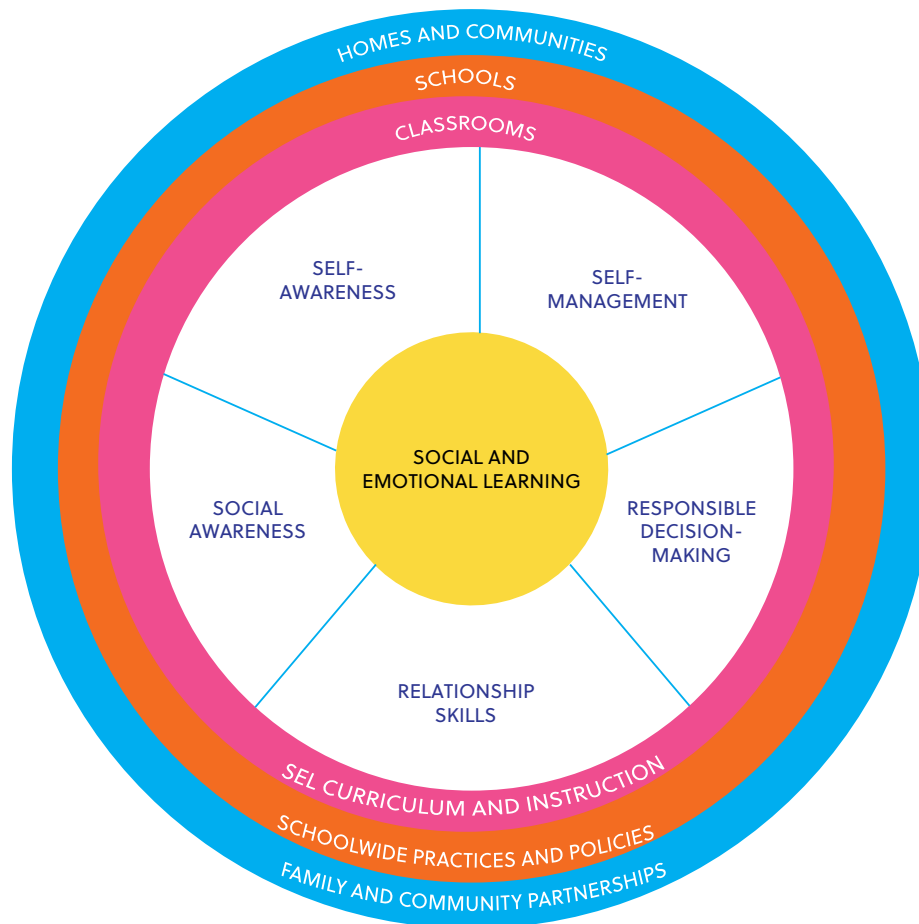
Service-learning is a learning approach in which students explore challenges or problems in their school or community, develop plans to solve them and take action (Kids Involved Doing Service Learning [KIDS] Consortium, 2013). There are six components of service-learning that have been found to be important for positive results (Anderson & Hill, 2001; Billig, 2000; Billig, 2011).

WE Well-being includes each of these six critical service-learning components:

1. Investigation
2. Planning
3. Action
4. Reflection
5. Demonstration
6. Celebration

### Social-Emotional Learning

Social-emotional learning (SEL) encompasses the processes through which individuals attain and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to identify and manage their emotions; understand another’s perspective and show empathy for others; set and achieve positive goals; develop and sustain positive relationships; and make responsible decisions (Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning, 2013). Five competencies have been identified that are central to SEL. The first two components, self-awareness and self-management, pertain to one’s emotional capabilities. The next two competencies, social awareness and relationship skills, are linked to one’s social capabilities. Finally, the fifth competency, responsible decision-making, pertains to one’s decision-making ability.



## Social-Emotional Competencies

<b>Self-awareness</b>	The ability to accurately recognize one’s feelings and thoughts and their influence and behaviors. This includes accurately assessing one’s strengths and limitations, and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.
<b>Self-management</b>	The ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations. This includes delaying gratification, managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself and settling and working towards personal and academic goals.
<b>Social awareness</b>	The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school and community resources and supports.
<b>Relationship skills</b>	The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking help when needed.
<b>Responsible decision-making</b>	The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior, social interactions and school life expectations based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions and the well-being of self and others.



## Summary

WE Well-being takes this strengths-based approach to foster purpose, social-emotional competence and positive human qualities. This is achieved with the interplay between ME and WE. First, students take care of ME, by learning and applying knowledge about how to foster personal well-being. Following this, through community service-learning, students move to WE, where their sense of purpose is supported by enacting positive change in their community. Part of the WE Well-being approach includes the promotion of a supportive learning environment that facilitates positive relationships amongst students, their teachers and the wider school community.

## WE Well-being Scope and Sequence

**Overview:** The Foundational Module helps to create a positive, inclusive and supportive learning environment. This is the foundation that is required to implement WE Well-being. This module can also be used for other areas of WE Well-being to help prepare teachers and students to engage in WE learning in a meaningful, safe and supportive environment.

Lesson	Primary Purpose and Theoretical Connection	Activities	WE Four-Step Alignment
<b>Lesson 1</b> <b>Welcome to WE Well-being</b>	To cultivate a caring, classroom/school environment.  Grounded in Positive Youth Development; SEL; Self-Determination Theory: Fostering Autonomy, Belonging and Competence	Students think critically about what they feel contributes to a positive, inclusive and caring learning environment.  What does it look like? Sound like? Feel like?	Step 1  Investigate and Learn:  Students explore topics related to a real-world challenge or opportunity.
<b>Lesson 2</b> <b>Creating the WE Classroom</b>	Students create an action plan for creating a caring classroom/school community.  This theme helps to support the idea that in order to take care of others, you need take care of yourself first.  This takes a systems perspective—taking care of the class as a group, prior to taking care of others in the community (service-learning).  Grounded in Community Service-Learning and Positive Youth Development	Students work to create their caring classroom environment.  This can take many forms: Charter, physical space, meetings, inclusion activities, etc.	Step 2  Action Plan: Students develop a plan to implement their service-learning project.  Note: In this case, the project is focused on their own classroom or school community.

<b>Lesson 3</b> <b>WE Classroom in Action</b>	Students take action to implement their plan  Grounded in Community Service-Learning and Positive Youth Development	Students implement their plan to foster a positive, caring and inclusive learning environment.	<b>Step 3</b> Take Action: Students implement their action plan.
<b>Lesson 4</b> <b>WE Reflect on our Community</b>	Reflect on how it went! Reflect—connect—reflect again.  Grounded in Service Learning and Positive Youth Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students reflect personally on their experience taking action.</li> <li>2. Students share with each other about their experiences implementing their action plan.</li> <li>3. Student take time to reflect again privately about any new awareness that was generated from what they heard from others during the sharing discussion.</li> </ol>	<b>Step 4</b> Report and Celebrate: Students present and reflect on the results of their service-learning initiatives.

### Foundational Module: Simple Actions

Simple actions are designed to promote transferable learning by inviting students to explore the module topics across four life domains: Self, School, Community and Home. Following completion of the four foundational lessons, students should be provided time to explore each of the four following simple actions. Following the exploration of simple actions, students are invited to write a personal reflection of their experience applying the simple action.

<b>Simple Actions to Build Community</b>	<b>Self:</b> Students explore what community means to them. Example: Students can write reflections or create an art portfolio identifying aspects of community that foster their sense of connection.
	<b>School:</b> Find ways to foster a sense of belonging across the school community. Example: Organize buddy classroom activities for older and younger grades to help foster connection, leadership skills and community.
	<b>Community:</b> Invite students to use the four steps of WE service-learning (investigate, plan, take action and reflect) to organize an initiative to build connections to the larger community. Example: Connect with a local high school to help build a bridge for students during the transition from elementary and middle school.
	<b>Home:</b> Build a bridge from classroom to home. Ask students to think of creative ways to build extend the classroom community to home. Example: Create a student-led newspaper that shares classroom and school news with families. Invite families to contribute to the newspaper.

### Additional Simple Actions for Educators to Create a Caring Community

**Daily Greetings** [click here](#)

**Purpose:** To acknowledge and welcome students and show them that they are valued, to celebrate diversity and uniqueness, and to model the importance of taking time for relationship building at school.

Creating Collaborative Class Norms [click here](#)

**Purpose:** To establish norms as a group and to identify what matters to students as a group/classroom.

That’s Me! Game [click here](#)

**Purpose:** Group activity to help identify similarities with others and improve group cohesion in the classroom.

Inspirational Outdoor Graffiti [click here](#)

**Purpose:** To welcome others to the school and to allow students to share ideas.

What’s New [click here](#)

**Purpose:** To celebrate and acknowledge things going on in each student’s life.

VIP [click here](#)

**Purpose:** To help students to feel special and know that they matter and belong within the classroom. To help students identify their unique qualities and to share them with others. To help students understand and appreciate diversity and what makes each person special.

Find more classroom activities at School Mental Health ASSIST [click here](#)

### WE Well-being Program: Grades 4-6

**Overview:** This sequence of lessons is focused on developing a caring classroom community and engaging students in active learning to gain skills and knowledge about gratitude, empathy, compassion, altruism and resilience.

Lesson	Primary purpose	Activities	WE Four-Step Alignment
<b>Lesson 1</b> Welcome to Well-being  <b>Lesson 2</b> Setting Intentions	<p><b>Setting Intentions:</b> Practicing mindfulness to understand ourselves and others</p> <p>Grounded in Positive Youth Development and Mindfulness Research</p>	<p><b>Students</b> Students are introduced to the idea of mindfulness and setting intentions. By focusing our attention, we can calm our mind and body so that we can make better choices. This begins with setting intentions. Students practice a mindful moment by practicing deep breathing before learning about setting intentions.</p>	<p><b>Step 1:</b> Investigate and Learn</p> <p>Ongoing mini personal process throughout the lesson; students will practice setting intentions with each positive attribute exploration.</p>

<p><b>Simple action</b></p>	<p><b>Example:</b> Deep belly breathing: <a href="#">click here</a></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> The objective of this activity is to help students develop a deeper mind/body connection by practicing deep breathing to support self-regulation, awareness of emotions and resiliency.</p>		
<p><b>Gratitude</b></p>			
<p><b>Lesson 3</b> WE Have Gratitude</p> <p><b>Lesson 4</b> WE Express Our Gratitude</p> <p><b>Lesson 5</b> WE Reflect On and Celebrate Gratitude</p>	<p>Grounded in Positive Youth Development</p>	<p>Students are led through all four WE learning steps in regards to how gratitude impacts their own well-being and will then consider the greater impact of well-being on others around them.</p>	<p><b>Steps 1 through 4:</b> Mini personal processes.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Gratitude is covered in multiple lessons.</p>
<p><b>Simple action</b></p>	<p><b>Example:</b> The Book of Gratitude: <a href="#">click here</a></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> To intentionally notice the positive elements in our day to shift the balance toward optimism. This activity can enhance students’ general positive outlook and can become a lifelong mentally healthy habit.</p>		

### Empathy and Compassion

<p><b>Lesson 6</b> WE Well-being Empathy and Compassion</p>	<p>Grounded in Social-Emotional Learning; Positive Youth Development</p>	<p>Students engage in empathy in compassion via a story springboard (e.g., digital video story, news article or other medium that tells a story with a theme of empathy and compassion).</p> <p>Students delve into how empathy and compassion impact our relationships, community and society as a whole.</p>	<p><b>Step 1:</b> Investigate and Learn</p> <p>Students explore topics related to a real-world challenge or opportunity.</p>
<p><b>Simple action</b></p>	<p><b>Example:</b> Walking in Your Shoes: <a href="#">click here</a></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> To help students identify ways to be more understanding and compassionate toward others.</p>		

### Altruism

<p><b>Lesson 7</b> WE Well-being Altruism</p>	<p>Grounded in Positive Youth Development</p>	<p>Students are introduced to altruism through inspirational stories. The task is to explore examples from literature or real life that display altruism. Key takeaways: Altruism and kindness can be seen in grand gestures and in everyday moments of kindness.</p> <p>Students reflect on how altruism impacts them when they receive it from others and when they act with altruism.</p>	<p><b>Step 1:</b> Investigate and Learn</p> <p>Students explore topics related to a real-world challenge or opportunity. With Reflection</p>
<p><b>Simple action</b></p>	<p><b>Example:</b> Pay It Forward: <a href="#">click here</a></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> This activity will build empathy and compassion by encouraging students to notice good qualities in others and reinforcing that kindness so that their peers feel valued.</p>		

### Taking Action

<p><b>Lesson 8</b> A Focus on WE</p>	<p>Students explore how they might foster positive human attributes within the community.</p> <p>Grounded in Service-Learning and Positive Youth Development</p>	<p>Students consider an activity that would benefit their school or larger community.</p>	<p><b>Step 2:</b> Action Plan</p> <p>Students develop a plan to implement their service-learning project.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> This is a group project focused on the larger community's well-being.</p>
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<b>Lesson 9</b> ME to WE in Action	Student take action to promote well-being in their community  Grounded in Service-Learning and Positive Youth Development	Students put their plan into action. Teachers keep a record of the event with pictures, video, etc.	<b>Step 2:</b> Take Action Students implement their action plan.
<b>Lesson 10</b> WE Reflect and Celebrate Altruism	Reflection  Grounded in Service-Learning and Positive Youth Development	Students reflect personally on their experience taking action. They listen to one another's reflections on their shared experience acting with altruism within their community.	<b>Step 3:</b> Report and Celebrate  Students present the results of their service-learning initiatives.
<b>Simple action</b>	<p><b>Example:</b> Self-Advocacy Cards: <a href="#">click here</a></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> This activity helps students to be aware of their own needs and preferences, to self-advocate and to build their help-seeking behaviors.</p>		
<b>Resiliency</b>			
<b>Lesson 11</b> Resiliency	Grounded in Risk and Resiliency Research; Positive Youth Development	Students will have the opportunity to discuss the topic of resiliency, leading with questions like: What is resilience? What does it look like for you? What do we need to be resilient?  Students think critically about the personal, social and contextual elements that contribute to personal resiliency.	<b>Step 1:</b> Investigate and Learn  Students explore topics related to a real-world challenge or opportunity.
<b>Reflection</b>			
<b>Lesson 12</b> ME to WE Reflect and Celebrate	Grounded in Service-Learning and Positive Youth Development	Students will reflect personally on their experience taking action. They will then share their experiences and implement their action plan with each other. To end their lesson, they will take time to reflect again privately about any new awareness that was generated from what they heard from others during the discussion.	<b>Step 1:</b> Report and Celebrate  Students present the results of their service-learning initiatives.

## WE Well-being Advisors

We are fortunate to have a panel of WE Well-being Advisors who have supported and advised the development of our programming. Their insight and support have been paramount in creating a resource program that is connected to meaningful research to promote well-being in children, youth and adults.



### Dr. Molly Stewart Lawlor Primary Author, WE Well-being Program

Primary author for the Hawn Foundation's MindUP™ program ([www.mindup.org](http://www.mindup.org)) and Committee for Children's Mind Yeti mindfulness-based digital application ([www.mindyeti.com](http://www.mindyeti.com)), Dr. Molly Stewart Lawlor has expertise in social and emotional development throughout childhood and adolescence. Molly's research includes the investigation of mindfulness and psychological adjustment in children and adolescents, and evaluations of social-emotional learning programs for children and adolescents in school settings. Molly has expertise in program development, specifically social emotional-learning (SEL) programming and mindfulness-based curricula. She is the Director of Education and Research for Playing Forward, and developer of the Taxi Dog Social Emotional Learning Program (<http://taxidogedu.org>).

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### Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reich

Applied Development Psychologist and a Professor in Human Development, Learning and Culture at the University of British Columbia, Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reich is a renowned expert in social and emotional learning research with children and adolescents. She is also the Director of the Human Early Learning Partnership in the School of Population and Public Health in the Faculty of Medicine at UBC.

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### Dr. Kathy Short

Clinical Child Psychologist with research and practice interests in school mental health promotion, knowledge mobilization and implementation science, Dr. Kathy Short is Director for School Mental Health Ontario ASSIST, a provincial implementation team supporting the uptake and sustainability of evidence-based promotion and prevention programming in schools. Dr. Short has served on several provincial advisory groups, including the Student Well-Being Advisory Committee for the Ministry of Education and the Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council for the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care.



## **Dr. Stan Kutcher**

Member of Canada's Senate, Former Head of the Psychiatry Department at Dalhousie University, Associate Dean for International Health and the Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health, Dr. Stan Kutcher is a renowned expert in adolescent mental health and a leader in mental health research. His work has ranged from clinical research to medical education innovations and he has developed and helped deploy innovative school mental health literacy and youth mental health care capacity building programs in primary health care.

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## **Maria LeRose**

Award-winning television producer and interviewer Maria LeRose has a sense of what is engaging and memorable to audiences. Whether she is producing a television documentary or an educational video, moderating a dynamic dialogue or doing a personal performance coaching, she is always engaging and captivating an audience.

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## **Lisa Pedrini**

Lisa Pedrini has worked at HELP (Human Early Learning Partnership) as a National Scale-Out Project Manager. There, she helped launch the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI)— a self-report questionnaire completed by children in Grades 4 and 7 that asks them how they think and feel about their experience both in and outside of school—in Canada. Questions relate to areas of development that are strongly linked to well-being, health and academic achievement. Lisa has also held various roles in education, most recently as the Manager for Social Responsibility and Diversity for the Vancouver School District.

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## **Marna Macmillan**

Safe Schools Coordinator in Coquitlam, BC, Marna MacMillan is a leader in social and emotional learning, curriculum and safe schools. A teacher for the past 28 years, she coordinates implementation of both the Grade 4 and 7 Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI), a self-report questionnaire completed by children in Grades 4 and 7 that asks them how they think and feel about their experience both in and outside of school. Questions relate to areas of development that are strongly linked to well-being, health and academic achievement.





## **Carrie Patterson**

*Chief Operations Director, WE Charity*

As the Chief Operations Director for WE Charity, Carrie Patterson is responsible for all WE Schools programs, including WE Well-being, the WE Global Learning Center and the exciting and innovative programs taking place in person and online. She also leads all WE leadership programming and camps, overseeing teams in three countries who are dedicated to bringing experiential service-learning to life for millions of young people around the world. Carrie is passionate about empowering youth and strives to provide young people with transformative experiences through the WE Schools Program. Carrie has a long and extensive career specializing in work with young people around the world. Carrie came to WE with over 12 years' experience from the Tim Horton Children's Foundation, where she finished her time as the Director of Operations, responsible for supervising the camp operations in Kentucky, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba. Carrie began attending camp herself at the young age of eight, and attributes the lessons she learned there to molding her into the strong leader she is today. She also brought those valuable lessons with her to WE. Her diverse experience with youth also includes serving on the boards of directors for a number of non-profit organizations. She recently finished her term as Chair of the Board of Directors for Camp To Belong, an organization that reunites brothers and sisters separated from foster, adoptive or kinship homes through Summer Camp Programs. Carrie holds an Honours degree in Business Administration from Wilfred Laurier University, located in Ontario, Canada. In her spare time she enjoys staying active, and participates in marathons and triathlons.

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## **Jeff Hainbuch**

*Head, Educational Partnerships, WE Schools*

Jeff is an experienced educator with over 25 years in public education with extensive experience leading family of schools, curriculum development, special education, leadership and staff development, and serving marginalized communities. Jeff has been a teacher at both the elementary and middle school levels, as well as a principal for over 10 years in very diverse communities. A significant portion of his career was dedicated to creating, supporting and implementing district-wide social justice programs. The last few years of his career were spent in central office as Superintendent Lead in support of Special Education. He holds an Honours Degree in Physical Education, a Bachelor of Education degree from York University as well as a Master of Education degree in Guidance and Counselling from OISE.

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## **Maureen Dockendorf**

*Director of Educational Partnerships, Western Canada, WE Schools*

Maureen has spent her career in education working as a teacher, university faculty associate, principal and assistant superintendent for the Coquitlam School District. As the Superintendent of Reading/Literacy and Early Learning at the BC Ministry of Education, Maureen was a team member supporting the redesign of British Columbia's K-12 curriculum and competency development. Maureen is frequently called upon to provide advice on policy, process and practice in the realms of professional learning, collaborative practice, educational leadership, curriculum implementation and assessment. She holds a Master of Education Degree from Simon Fraser University.

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## **Kaila Muzzin**

*Project Manager, WE Well-being*

Kaila has worked with students in Canada and internationally within a diverse range of learning environments. She developed co-curricular workshop programming for The Second City in Toronto, fusing the arts with social justice education, leadership and personal character-building. In addition to this, Kaila has facilitated educational and leadership development programming in Ontario schools and summer camps, and through the WE Schools program. She is passionate about the impact that outdoor experiences and the arts can have in promoting well-being for youth and adults. Her credentials include an Undergraduate Degree in Global Development Studies with a minor in Vocal Music, as well as a Bachelor of Education specializing in Primary-Junior Education.

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## **A Letter from Leysa Cerswell Kielburger: Simple Actions for Well-being**



Leysa is a faculty member at the Centre for Mindfulness Studies, where she trains educators and health care practitioners in mindfulness-based interventions. She also runs the Centre's Psychology Aid program for homeless and unstably housed youth. Leysa has taught and worked in North America, Southeast Asia and East Africa. She is completing her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology, with her research focus on mental health care for underserved and marginalized populations.

### **Dear Educator,**

**Two words from the bottom of my heart: THANK YOU.**

Thank you for working with positivity, intention and purpose to nurture young people and their families. Like you, WE shares a vision that is bold and tenderhearted, guided by deep compassion and empathy for those we are working to support—youth, families, educators ... shameless optimists like you. WE Well-being is designed to engage and empower young people, educators and families by sharing proactive resources and by championing prevention, awareness and agency. Along with our classroom resources, we are excited to roll out a series of everyday actions that draw from strength-based mental health promotion and prevention strategies designed to boost well-being and resilience. WE Well-being actions will foster empathy, gratitude, compassion and resilience. Although designed with students in mind, these tactics and strategies are applicable to any age. Action by action, day by day, we can promote our own mental health and the well-being of our schools and communities. On the next few pages, we've shared a few of these simple everyday actions. Share them with your students. Try them out yourself. You will find similar tactics threaded through the modules to use in your classroom every day. Where to begin? You could start, as I have here, with a thank-you letter. Set aside a minute at the beginning of your day to send a quick note of gratitude to someone you know. (Yes, a text will do!) Social connection is a predictor of long-term well-being. Studies show that senders feel happier with every dispatch. In that spirit of gratitude, there are many people I would like to thank and acknowledge: First of all, thank you. Our work relies on your purpose and passion. We are eager to hear about your experiences, we welcome your thoughts, feedback and participation in the WE Well-being pilot program. Please keep in touch as you bring it to life in your classrooms!

Thank you to the Elkington Family and the Erika Legacy Foundation. Like Bill and Sabrina, we are resolved that Erika's life will continue to make a difference. We are beyond grateful on behalf of all those it has already touched. Along with a generous donor from Manitoba, the Elkington Family and the Erika Legacy Foundation have helped to shape and inspire this program every step of the way. WE is grateful for the guidance and input of many generous mental health experts, educators and researchers from across the country, including Dr. Kimberley sShonert-Reichl, Molly Stewart Lawlor, Maria La Rose, Lisa Pedrini, Marna MacMillan, Heather and Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, Dr. Arpita Biswas, Dr. Sean Kidd, Dr. Mark Sinyor, Dr. Stan Kutcher, Dr. Amy Cheung, Dr. Gail McVey,

Judith Nyman and Dr. David Kreindler. Without them, none of this would be possible. A special thanks to Dr. M. Lee Freedman and Dr. Dominique Morisano for their big hearts and brilliant contribution. Our work is better for their care and compassion to every detail. Deep appreciation to Dr. Kathy Short and School Mental Health ASSIST for their groundbreaking work in Ontario and for sharing so generously their evidence-based approaches. Big hugs to friends and parents around WE, who have put these ideas to the test: Roxanne Joyal, Sandra Martin and Leeanne Comish. And enormous thanks for the incredible energy and passion of the WE team members who have brought WE Well-being to life, including Sue Allan, Lisa Lisle, Carrie Patterson, Maureen Dockendorf, Jeff Hainbuch, Erin Blanding, Kaila Muzzin, Marta Cutler, Ivana Manzon, Rebecca Wilson, Rachel Thompson and Catherine McCauley. Finally, thank you to Marc and to Craig for inspiring us all to take care of the world—work that includes taking care of one's self. Welcome to WE Well-being.

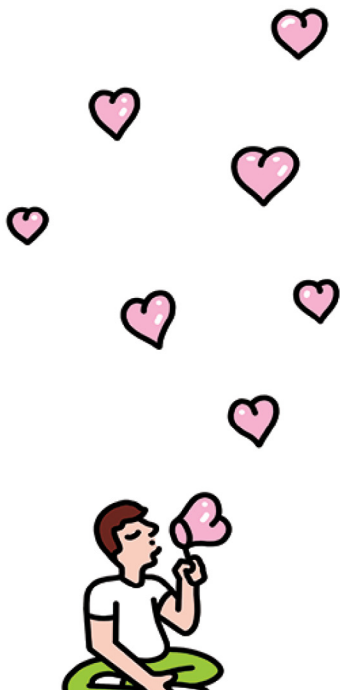
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## WE Well-being.

Taking care of the world includes taking care of one's self. That's why WE is launching WE Well-being, a vital and timely evidence-based initiative designed to empower people of all ages.

We are thrilled to share some every-day actions drawn from a series designed to nurture well-being while promoting prevention strategies, awareness and action.

### Let's begin with a little self-care for educators.



#### Shine.

We dare you to own a compliment. It's not always easy, especially if you're feeling overworked and not tapped into your strength and stand-out qualities. Our brains are wired to value negative information over the positive, another reason we struggle with praise. Bask in kind words without deflection. Instead of talking yourself down, or diminishing your achievement—"It was nothing"—try saying thanks.

Baumeister, Roy F., "Bad Is Stronger than Good," *Review of General Psychology* 5 (2001): 323–370.

Tugend, Alina, "Praise Is Fleeting, but Brickbats We Recall," *The New York Times*, March 23, 2012.

van Schie, Charlotte C. et al., "When Compliments Do Not Hit But Critiques Do: An fMRI Study into Self-esteem and Self-knowledge in Processing Social Feedback," *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 13 (2018): 404–417.



## Make routine the key to your Zzzs.

Want to rest easy? Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, “no matter what.”

Sleep is the Swiss Army knife of health, explains neuroscientist Matthew Walker, director of the Center for Human Sleep Science at the University of California, Berkeley. “No matter the ailment, it’s more likely sleep has a tool within the box that will see you well.”

How much is enough? Shoot for nine hours—more or less. Dr. Walker has lots of bedtime tips—avoid screens, dim lights an hour before bed, lower the thermostat—but keeping things regular tops his list of advice.

Cespedes, Feliciano, et al., “Objective Sleep Characteristics and Cardiometabolic Health in Young Adolescents,” *Pediatrics*, June 15, 2018

## Eat an orange

Try the orange challenge on your next lunch break. It’s a simple exercise that reminds us of the power of paying attention.

Here is poet and teacher Thich Nhat Hanh with the instructions:

Peel the orange. Smell the fruit. See the orange blossoms in the orange, and the rain and the sun that have gone through the orange blossoms. The orange tree that has taken several months to bring this wonder to you. Put a section in your mouth, close your mouth mindfully, and with mindfulness feel the juice coming out of the orange. Taste the sweetness.

Find another moment—and then another—that you can approach with wonder and curiosity and gratitude. Notice if—and how—it changes the way you see the world.

Thich Nhat Hanh, “The Moment Is Perfect,” *Lion’s Roar*, May 2008.

## Be on the lookout for joy.

Keep a watch out for wonders—no matter where you are.

Alistair McAlpine is a pediatric palliative care physician. “I spend my days working with children who have life-threatening or life-limiting illnesses and their families.” In a Twitter thread that went viral, he shared big lessons from his little patients. When asked to talk about joy and meaning, kids described time spent with family and pets, laughter and kindness. Sandcastles, swimming and ice cream also made the list. “Simple pleasures,” McAlpine observes. “(Moments) that cost little except the effort of being present.” Go ahead: Eat the ice cream! *McAlpine, Alistair, “What Terminally Ill Children Taught this Doctor about How to Live,” The Guardian*, February 9, 2018.



## Be your own BFF

Make a commitment to be nicer to yourself. Author and educator Rachel Simmons is on a mission to show just how. In one exercise, she invited an auditorium of high school kids to place their hands on their hearts: “Feel the pressure and warmth of a kind hand.” The simple exercise moved many to tears. “They had never thought to approach their own setbacks with gentleness.” Self-compassion is a life-long survival skill that’s never too late to learn. The next time you mess up, consider how you would respond to a friend in a similar situation. Without hesitation, extend to yourself the same compassion, kindness and care.

Marsh, Imogen C., et al., “Self-Compassion and Psychological Distress in Adolescents—a Meta-analysis,” *Mindfulness* 9 (2017): 1011-1027. DOI: 10.1007/s12671-017-0850-7.

Simmons, Rachel, “The Promise of Self-Compassion for Stressed-Out Teens,” *The New York Times*, February 20, 2018.

## Five simple actions to share with your class

Have your students finish this sentence.

Today I will help by \_\_\_\_\_.

As you invite the class to share, introduce or reinforce the concept that when you help others you help yourself. Some people even experience “helper’s high”—energy, inner warmth and calm—a phenomenon first identified by Allan Luks when he surveyed more than a thousand volunteers on the connection between helping and health.

Challenge students to identify one small thing—hold a door, lend a hand, bend an ear—that they can do for somebody else.

Luks, Allan, “Helper’s High: Volunteering Makes People Feel Good, Physically and Emotionally,” *Psychology Today* 22 (1988): 34–42.

## Celebrate and champion kindness.

Start by sharing the Dalai Lama’s advice: “Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.”

Introduce the science—we are wired to be kind! It feels good to do good. One researcher compares kindness to “psychological chocolate.” It can lower blood pressure while stimulating feel-good chemicals in the brain and inspiring others.

Acknowledge acts of kindness in the classroom. Encourage students to be on the lookout for kind acts—little or big, random or intentional.

Start small at the start of the year and watch it grow.

Allen, Summer and Jill Suttie, “How Our Brains Make Us Generous,” *Greater Good Magazine*, December 21, 2015.

Layous, Kristin, et al., “Kindness Counts: Prompting Prosocial Behavior in Preadolescents Boosts Peer Acceptance and Well-Being,” *PLoS ONE* 7 (2012). DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0051380.



## Take five for a high five

Here is a five-minute exercise that could start or end a class period. If using as a continuing exercise, consider having students devote a small notebook to this contemplation.

Invite students to list five small things for which they are thankful:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

As easy as 1-2-3, this is an exercise that delivers countless rewards.

When first introducing the exercise, you might explain the science behind it.

For example, Robert Emmons is a world-leading scientific expert on gratitude. By studying more than 1,000 people ages eight to 80, he and researchers linked the benefits of gratitude practice to stronger immune systems, higher level of positive emotions, better sleep and more get up and go. Encourage students to set aside time to reflect—first thing in the morning or last thing at night. They will thank themselves later! *Emmons, Richard, "10 Ways to Become More Grateful," Greater Good Magazine, November 17, 2010. Emmons, Richard, "Why Gratitude Is Good," Greater Good Magazine, November 16, 2010.*



## Create a wall of positive Post-its

Here is a group exercise that brings social posting to life while creating some positive classroom vibes. All that's required is a little kindness and a lot of sticky notes.

Educators and students will use sticky notes to anonymously write something nice about every other person in the class. Students will deliver their contributions to the teacher, who will place them in a designated space labeled with each individual's name.

(There can also be a focus on class positives instead of individual.)

Activities like this support the development of kind interactions for staff and students. They support the goals of a safe and positive school climate to foster learning and prosocial behaviors.

Binfet, J.T., Gadermann, A.M. & Schonert Reichl, K.A. (2016), "Measuring Kindness at School: Psychometric Properties of a School Kindness Scale for Children and Adolescents," *Psychology in the Schools*, 53(2), 111–126.

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## Nurture real-life connections.

Connection is key to living a healthy life. This quick exercise encourages students to consider some real-life community building—away from the hearts and emoji in their social feeds.

Invite the class to write down four things they will do in the month ahead to connect with others in real life:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Although it takes work, relations are vital—"a form of self-care," says Dr. Robert Waldinger, a psychiatry professor who leads the Harvard Study of Adult Development. Science links social bonds to long-term health outcomes. No one is immune to loneliness or social isolation.

Remind yourself to connect in real life. Here are some ideas that could get kids started: Phone a friend. Make a date for homework. Join a school club or intramural league. Volunteer.

Brody, Jane, "To Counter Loneliness, Find Ways to Connect," *The New York Times*, June 25, 2018.

Williams, Michelle and Jeremy Nobel, "Goodbye Loneliness. Hello, Happiness—A Prescription for Healthier Lives," *The Boston Globe*, May 8, 2018.

## Stay Connected

We are grateful for your participation in the WE Well-being program and want to ensure you are supported with all aspects of implementation. If you have any questions or suggestions, please reach out to us at [wellbeing@WE.org](mailto:wellbeing@WE.org).





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