

The Story of an Elementary School Art Club Supported by a Health Promoting Schools Grant

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#### Teacher-Scholar

- Grade 4/5 Math, Science and Visual Arts Teacher, Elmsdale District School, Chignecto-Central Regional School Board
- PhD Student, Interuniversity PhD Educational Studies, Mount Saint Vincent University
- Focus on teacher wellness and ethics of care theory lens of positive psychology
- Art Club where research and practice collide

### **Ethics of Care**



- Care is a basic human need (to be cared for and to care for others)
- Education as "a constellation of encounters, both planned and unplanned, that promote growth through the acquisition of knowledge, skills, understanding, and appreciation" (Noddings, 2002, *Starting At Home: Caring and social policy*, p. 283)
- Teacher as facilitator of relationship-building
- 🦍 Reciprocal relationships



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## Ethics of care and joy

A classroom built on an ethics of care is one in which joy is experienced by both teachers and students:



Sometimes when we become aware of our relatedness-when reciprocal receptivity is at its height-we experience joy....[J]oy...offers itself as an unsummoned reward or by-product of relation. It seems to be triggered by receptivity, an openness to the other that is somehow reciprocated in an almost mystical fashion. We are momentarily overwhelmed by a feeling of joyful oneness with this other.... Joy helps to maintain us in caring and, thus, adds to our ethical ideal (Noddings, 2013, *Caring: A relational approach to ethics and moral education.* 2nd ed., p. xvii).



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#### Positive Psychology and Wellness

PERMA - Martin Seligman, *Authentic Happiness* (2002); *Flourish* (2011):

Positive emotion Engagement Relationships Meaning Accomplishment





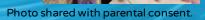
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- Positivity Resonance and Broaden-and-Build Theory Barbara Fredrickson -
  - Love as micro-moments of connection between people (2013, pp. 17-18).
  - Love and connection have long-term positive effects on physical and mental wellbeing (2013)

# Positive Psychology and Teacher Wellness

# Relationships between students and teachers essential for both students', but also teachers' wellbeing:

- Turner and Thielking (2019):
  - Use of PERMA strategies in classrooms teachers less stressed, more relaxed, calmer, positive, and engaged
- Split, Koomen, and Thijs (2011):
  - Teacher-student relationships are beneficial to teachers' wellbeing because they contribute to a basic need for relatedness
- Aldrup et al. (2018):
  - A positive teacher-student relationship predicts increased work enthusiasm and reduced emotional exhaustion





# SEL and Focus on Relationship-building

School focus on student wellbeing and SEL



- Relationship building
- Trauma informed approach



#### **Research and Practice Align**







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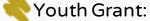
Meet weekly during first half of lunch time

Relationship building, ethics of care

Grades 4 and 5

#### **Health Promoting Schools Youth Grant**

Health Promoting Schools (HPS) approach - NS Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DOEECD)



- Health Promoting Schools Leadership Team
- Partnership between Chignecto-Central Regional School Board and NS Public Health, Northern Zone
- Applications reviewed monthly (until February 2023)
- Students in grades 5-12 "students have a voice in making their schools healthier places"
- Program must focus on improving student health and well-being
- In the grant application, students pointed out that Art Club:
  - > is a positive factor in their mental health
  - provides an opportunity for them to relax and decompress during the school day,
  - > is an outlet for their emotional and artistic expression



#### **Student Agency** and Wellness

- Anindya Kundu looking at the "roses in concrete"
  - Agency "the potential ... to enact free will and impact their own lives" (2016, p. 20)
  - "Critical thinking on one's social position and deliberate efforts to change one's circumstances for the better" (2016, p. 21)
  - "Circle-jumping," social capital and networking (2017, pp. 73, 79)
- Art Club student initiated, based on their interests empowerment, emotional regulation, coping skills
- Grant application:
  - opportunity structure for developing self-efficacy wellbeing (Bandura, 1977)
  - skills that lead to cultural capital and access to resources (circle-jumping)



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## For Further Information



To continue this conversation, you can reach me at:

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