

LTA 2 Assignment Final

Introduction

To create a classroom culture of belonging, safety, and community, this paper will explore a possible wellness plan on a classroom level. Exploring my own biases, perspectives, and experiences I will explain what I value and what I believe the role of a teacher is. Connecting my own beliefs and other learning theories to research and other scholarship I will identify proactive, responsive, and well-informed practices that can create and promote wellness within the classroom. This wellness plan will be based on the context of the students, school, and classroom-setting of my current practicum to create a more in-depth analysis.

This paper will start by exploring my own values and what I believe the role of a teacher to be. Based on my own beliefs, I have come up with many ideas that promote wellness on a classroom and school-wide level through the visuals of a Jamboard. Since I am basing this wellness plan on the context of students in my Kindergarten practicum class, I have pulled five ideas that specifically address the wellness needs of the students in the class. I will show how I would generally scaffold these wellness aspects throughout the year and then go into depth about the explanation of why and how I would implement them.

What do I value as a teacher?

Before diving into my wellness plan, it is important to discuss my values as a teacher and where my perspectives and biases come from.

I am a fifth generation Calgarian who is from Welsh, English, Scottish, and Ukrainian decent. My grandfather was born in the Ukraine and moved to Canada at the age of 7. Out of all my grandparents, he was the only one who was not born in Canada. Although, my grandfather completely assimilated when coming to Canada and refuses to speak Ukrainian (he claims that it is dying language), my cousins, brothers, and I feel a deep connection to Ukrainian culture. Growing up, we were not taught the language and we did not practice any Ukrainian traditions and I consistently felt like I had a “lost culture.” However, my cousins, brothers, and I would consistently seek to learn more about Ukraine and their traditions. Because of this lost sense of cultural identity, I believe that as a teacher it is extremely important to value and foster each child’s cultural identity. This means helping students form their cultural identity and including their culture in classroom through visuals, lessons about holidays students in the class celebrate, and other cultural representations that make the students feel seen and heard. However, I do need to be careful when doing this to not point out or single students out because they may not feel comfortable sharing.

I value diversity and celebrate it. During my SCMP IDI test through the Jaffrey Centre, it ranked me as acceptance, someone who “is curious about and seeks out differences between one’s own culture and diverse cultural values and practices.” (Jaffrey Centre, 2023, p. 5). This makes sense due to my own struggle with cultural identity as a child. However, with this, the test noted that I struggle knowing how to react in certain situations regarding other individual’s cultures. While my intentions are to make everyone feel welcome, I do struggle to engage with the complexities of other cultures and am unsure of how it is appropriate to act or react to each culture. Because of this, I need to grow in awareness of where culture is at play and work on increasing my knowledge to know what is appropriate to say. As a teacher this will be crucial in ensuring that my students feel like their cultural identity is valued and I can celebrate students’ culture in an appropriate and informed way.

Growing up, I was a competitive figure skater for twelve years. Six days a week during normal season, I practiced on ice for three hours, did one hour of stretching, and did one strength training session a day. However, when competition was coming up, I trained longer. As well, I was not put on a nutrition plan, like the other skaters at my club, my mom did try to instill the importance of eating nutritious food to fuel my body for all the hours I trained a day. Due to this rigorous training schedule for twelve years, I really value hard work, exercise, and eating to fuel your body. Skating taught me the importance of failure and success which has given me the growth mindset that I have today. As a teacher, I believe in growth mindset teaching. I think it is important to see everything as an opportunity to get better and improve. I also believe it is important to have high expectations for your students and believe that they can succeed and to push them. However, I do struggle with having higher expectations of others then they can accomplish. When I start teaching, I will need to be careful to not hold every student to the same high expectation. Instead, I will need to hold students to the expectation of doing their best but also understand that their best might be different every day.

As well, when valuing nutritious food, I need to remember to consider that different cultures version of nutritious foods are different. Growing up, I learned Western versions of nutritional food. When teaching students healthy values, I need to remember not to discount food that can still be very healthy and nutritious to other cultures. In addition, because of my history with figure skating, I value being active and moving your body. As a teacher, I envision myself including movement in many learning tasks and even in transitions if my students and mobile enough.

As well, when I was 13 years old, I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. During this time, I was constantly taken out of class to attend doctors and specialist appointments. I went to eighteen doctors before I was diagnosed, many of which claiming that my pain was in my head, it was just growing pain and normal, or accusing my mother of mentally causing my pain. In school, I constantly felt unsupported by my teachers who would punish me for my missed schoolwork and would pile on extra school work that I did not have the time or mental capacity to complete. Even with this, I still had no idea about anything I was learning in class because it was not the most important thing in my life at that time. As well, because my diagnosis process was long and grueling, many of my teachers didn't believe anything was physically wrong with me. One of my gym teachers even told me that I was being dramatic. This extremely hurt me and changed my vision of schooling completely as a child. It completely traumatized me as a child having both teachers and doctors, individuals who are supposed to take care of me, not believe anything I was saying.

While I was being diagnosed with arthritis, my family was also dealing my brother's addiction. My brother has been struggling with addiction since I was in junior high (he is currently one year sober yay!). During junior high and high school, he was in and out of rehab constantly. My home life was often chaotic whether my brother was in rehab or not. During this time, home was not a safe space for me. When my brother was home, there was often physical fights, overdoses, or verbal threats to the physical safety of my family. Even when he was in rehab, the effects would still permeate through my household.

Because of my experience with rheumatoid arthritis and my brothers addiction, I have a firm belief that there is more to life than grades and academic success. I value the whole child and trauma-informed education. I believe that students need to feel seen and heard by their teachers and adults in their life to succeed in and outside of school. As a teacher, this is something that I want to do for my students. Making sure that school is a safe-space for students

is extremely important even at the risk of students grades. While I do believe success is important to some degree, as stated above, however, success looks different for everyone. As a teacher, having the expectation that you do your best but your best might be different everyday will be an extremely important practice for me and lesson to teach my students.

As well, being diagnosed with arthritis showed me the importance of advocating for yourself. Without my mom there to advocate for me, I probably would not have been diagnosed with arthritis. Even now as an adult, I have to constantly stand up and advocate within the healthcare system in order to get the treatment that I desire. As a teacher I believe it is important to teach self-advocacy and standing up for yourself. Although this is the case, I still need to be cognisant of what is occurring in my students lives. Just because I would like them to advocate and talk to me or other adults, does not mean that they will. Some students may not feel comfortable opening up to me or another adult yet. Being mindful of students and going out of my way to build a relationship with them where I let them know that I am always here if they want to talk, is still extremely important.

In addition, while I do believe success is important to some degree, as stated above, however, achieving the success can look different for everyone. When I was in high school, I was able to receive accommodations for my arthritis. My arthritis was a lot worse than it is now and often plagued my back and hands. This caused me difficulty when writing and sitting for long periods of time. I had exam accommodations that allowed me to have extra time, speech to text if my fingers were hurting, and breaks during exams where I could move my body. In addition, I was allowed to record lessons to listen back later, and I was able to represent my work through audio recordings. Because of the accommodations that I received and how much it positively effected me, I think it is really important to allow students multiple means or representation, expression, and engagement as well as tier 2 and 3 supports. If I had not received these accommodations in high school, I would not have been able express or represent my knowledge and would not have been as successful within school.

What is my role as a teacher?

Based on these values and experiences, there are learning theories and theorists that resemble and shape my view of the role of a teacher. These theories include cognitive neuroscience and neuro-education, humanism, and holistic approaches as the main ones. I believe my role as a teacher is to look at individuals as a whole person, which is a very humanist approach. I believe that students are competent, strong, and capable of constructing their own thoughts, a view that aligns with Reggio's theories (LTA 500 slides, 2021). Because my view is that students are capable of learning and forming their own thoughts, it is my job when I am a teacher to provide the structure and order to allow students the ability self-discover and make mistakes, like that of Montessori theory (LTA 500 slides, 2021). That is why I believe in play-based learning is an important aspect of learning. However, because I believe in the whole child, I do believe there are other aspects that can hinder this learning in this setting that are grounded in cognitive neuroscience and neuro-education. One example of this is Barkley and Brown's executive function theory. If a student present weakness in specific executive functions, it can be more difficult for them to learn. I also believe that my role as a teacher is to educate through a trauma-informed lens. I believe that students can be shaped and formed by other aspects of their lives outside of the classroom. As a teacher, it is my role to use a compassionate -based strategies when working with students (Sung, 2019). One way to do this is through assuming that your students have the best intentions with their actions (Sung, 2019).

Wellness Plan

Based on my values and my view of the role of a teacher, I have come up with some ideas that could be included in a wellness plan. Going into teaching, I can visualize myself in many different grades from elementary to junior high. Because of this, I have created a Jamboard that lays out many ideas where wellness can be incorporated in both the classroom and school-wide.

<https://jamboard.google.com/d/1fGTyYCravugLmUQHmNVft6FDv2TF52MvbgH5z-2UDKM/viewer?f=0>

On a classroom level:



On a School-Wide Level:



Wellness Plan for X's Kindergarten Classroom

Becoming a teacher, I cannot envision myself in a leadership or administration role and because of this, the wellness plan I have created is mostly at a classroom level. To create a more realistic wellness plan, I have based it on the students within my practicum classroom at school X. Based on the student profiles in my practicum classroom, I have chosen only five ideas from the Jamboard to include in the wellness plan, that address the students' needs based on the school and classroom context. These five practices include: social-emotional learning through play, diversity within the classroom, inclusive education, healthy habits and routines, and trauma-informed practices. I have included a step-by-step scaffolding and then a description of how and why it would be implemented in the classroom.

Scaffolding

Throughout The Whole Year

- Using visuals, visual cues when teaching lessons or communicating
- Compassion-based approaches
- Using multiple means of assessment
- Including UDL within the classroom
- Provide formative feedback to students
- Strengthen relationship by consistently asking questions and checking in with students
- Use play-based learning and centres the whole year
- Have at least one centre during centre time that gets students to move their bodies
 - o Change it every week or two depending on student needs
- Use calendar with different cultural celebrations in long-term planning
- Use land-based learning within teaching and tasks for each subject (inter-disciplinary)
- Constant PD surrounding other cultures, mental health,

August:

- Set up calming corner
 - o Put in sand timer (different times)
 - o Fidget tools
 - o Rainbow breathing visual
 - o Comfortable seating

September:

- Routines surrounding eating healthy snack first during their nutrition break
 - o Basic teaching around what nutritious eating is and why we should be doing it
 - o Practice eating healthy snack first for month of September
- Introducing calming corner
 - o How it should be used
 - o How many people can use it at a time
- Have at least one centre during centre time that gets students to move their bodies
- Send home survey to each students about family culture

- Once returned, review it and research holiday's that each students' family says they celebrate
- Add to calendar to ensure that when planning, will include it in lessons, unit, and long-term plans
- Start introducing self-regulation techniques at the end of September, after the teacher gets to start forming relationships with students
 - Because the teacher knows students better, can cater techniques to fit the needs of the students.
- Implement UDL approaches within routines such as: multiple means or representation, multiple means of expression, and multiple means of engagement.
- Start to build relationship with students by getting to know students
- Orange Shirt Day – start introduction into Indigenous Knowledge and Land-based learning
 - Can be the entry point, now that students have learned most routines

October

- Start introducing land-based learning and its importance within the classroom once routines are taught and practiced lots
 - Incorporate it into all curriculum subjects (interdisciplinary teaching)
- Start introducing Tier 2 small groups to students would need extra supports
 - Involve parents
 - Attempt tier 2 supports for 6 weeks before trying different supports or continuing to use supports that have been useful
 - Document progress
- Have at least one centre during centre time that gets students to move their bodies

November

- Introduce Tier 2 small groups to students would need extra supports
 - Involve parents
 - Attempt tier 2 supports for 6 weeks before trying different supports or continuing to use supports that have been useful
 - Can be with different students than previously or the same students
 - Document progress
- Have at least one centre during centre time that gets students to move their bodies

December

- Introduce Tier 2 small groups to students would need extra supports
 - Involve parents
 - Attempt tier 2 supports for 6 weeks before trying different supports or continuing to use supports that have been useful
 - Can be with different students than previously or the same students
 - Document progress
- Have at least one centre during centre time that gets students to move their bodies

January

- Introduce Tier 2 small groups to students would need extra supports
 - o Involve parents
 - o Attempt tier 2 supports for 6 weeks before trying different supports or continuing to use supports that have been useful
 - o Can be with different students than previously or the same students
 - o Document progress
- Provide feedback to parents about students' success (report cards)
 - o Together come up with new ways to help student succeed
- Have at least one centre during centre time that gets students to move their bodies

February

- Introduce Tier 2 small groups to students would need extra supports
 - o Involve parents
 - o Attempt tier 2 supports for 6 weeks before trying different supports or continuing to use supports that have been useful
 - o Can be with different students than previously or the same students
 - o Document progress
- Have at least one centre during centre time that gets students to move their bodies

March

- Introduce Tier 2 small groups to students would need extra supports
 - o Involve parents
 - o Attempt tier 2 supports for 6 weeks before trying different supports or continuing to use supports that have been useful
 - o Can be with different students than previously or the same students
 - o Document progress
- Have at least one centre during centre time that gets students to move their bodies

April

- Introduce Tier 2 small groups to students would need extra supports
 - o Involve parents
 - o Attempt tier 2 supports for 6 weeks before trying different supports or continuing to use supports that have been useful
 - o Can be with different students than previously or the same students
 - o Document progress
- Have at least one centre during centre time that gets students to move their bodies

May

- Introduce Tier 2 small groups to students would need extra supports
 - o Involve parents

- Attempt tier 2 supports for 6 weeks before trying different supports or continuing to use supports that have been useful
- Can be with different students than previously or the same students
- Document progress

June

- Introduce Tier 2 small groups to students would need extra supports
 - Involve parents
 - Attempt tier 2 supports for 6 weeks before trying different supports or continuing to use supports that have been useful
 - Can be with different students than previously or the same students
 - Discuss this with their next years teacher
 - Stating what worked, what did not
 - Helping decide who they would fit well with in other classes and what students they should not be with

Play-Based Learning

In my kindergarten classroom, many of the students, have weakness in their executive functions surrounding emotional control. Many of the students, struggle with expressing their emotions and don't yet have the self-awareness to identify emotional state and triggers. Teaching lessons and allowing students to practice these skills is important in increasing their emotional control (Crawford, 2023, Strategies for EF Development). Play-based learning can support in the social emotional competencies of children and enhance all social emotional competencies such as responsible decision-making, social awareness, social skills, self-awareness, and self-management (Ljubetic et al., 2020, p. 127). For my wellness plan, centres can allow for teaching to naturally arise from situations that occur during peer play-based learning. Based on certain situations that occur in centres, lessons using puppet shows, social stories, and other teaching methods can be used to support and teach social-emotional control which they can practice in centres. Other lessons could surround the zones of regulation, rainbow breathing, what emotions are and how they feel, how to recognize emotions in our classmates, what to do when your body feels out of control, how to identify when you are not regulated, etc. As well, within the context of the specific students at school x, it allows them to attempt to work through problems and difficulties on their own before getting help from an adult.

As well, my wellness plan has a calming corner in it that can be used within centres. Creating a space in the classroom where students can physically go to practice self-regulation techniques that is separate from the rest of the class is important. Providing students with a calming space within the classroom can teach students that it is normal to take breaks and regulate their emotions, give them space that allows them to get ready to learn, and can instill confidence in students that they can manage their own emotions (Strong 4 Life, 2023). To receive the benefits of the calming corner, there must be clear and explicit guidelines about how it is to be used. The calming corner should be introduced as a space in the classroom where 1 or 2 students can go for a short time to calm themselves before joining the class again. Modelling how it should be used is important when it is first introduced and giving students options of choices is key such as posters with zones of regulation, social stories we have learned, colouring pages, and other calming resource tools (Strong 4 Life, 2023).

Diversity in the Classroom

In addition, my wellness plan includes diversity and inclusivity of many cultures within the classroom. Within school x, a previous survey indicated that a large portion of grade 5 students do not see themselves in the school (Calgary Board of Education, 2022). Because of this, I see a need for the inclusion and introduction of cultural identity education at a classroom level. In my specific kindergarten classroom, I have a variety of students who identify with different cultural backgrounds, and they have diverse celebrations. Forming strong relationships with students is crucial in understanding each students' cultures and being a safe and open space for students to want to share their culture. Having open dialogue with parents is important in ensuring diversity and inclusion is fostered within the classroom.

While there are many ways teachers can go about addressing inclusivity and diversity, I think at a school-wide level, implementing the Racial Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion framework from the Calgary Catholic School District could be extremely helpful. Using the Ready for Rigor Framework (figure 1) could support in creating culturally responsive pedagogy within the school (Calgary Catholic School District, 2023). My school follows the CBE's wellness plan that I personally believe does not do enough to address inclusivity and diversity.

On a more classroom level, it is important as a teacher to know what each students' culture is and to include it in your classroom. Just as I stated above about needing to grow in my own knowledge of other cultures from the IDI test from the Jaffrey Centre, I believe this is important for all teachers. Yale Center for Teaching and Learning (2021) suggests that "students are more motivated to take control of their learning in classroom climates that recognize them, draw relevant connections to their lives, and respond to their unique concerns." By being aware of classroom diversity and learning about each students' culture, teachers can create more engagement in the classroom and cause them to become more motivated. For my specific Kindergarten class, I believe that the best way to do this is alongside the parents. One of the reasons why is because the parents in my specific class are heavily involved, with my partner teacher receiving 20 emails a day from parents, at least one parent from every family attending parent-teacher conferences, and many parents volunteering in the classroom on a weekly basis. One example of this could be to send home a questionnaire getting to know the families at the beginning of the year, that students would complete with their families. The questionnaire should include questions such as "what are important holidays you celebrate?," "do you have any family traditions, hobbies, cooking that is important to your family?," etc. I have attached an example of a family culture questionnaire in figure 2. This way it can be helpful to include these important aspects of each culture into the classroom and can include families and parents in their child's learning.

One way that teachers can ensure inclusivity and diversity is occurring in their classroom is celebrating and informing students about holidays that students in the classroom celebrate. In many classrooms I have been in, holidays that surround Christian or Pagan traditions are celebrated such as Thanksgiving, Halloween, Christmas, and Easter to name a few. However, I have rarely seen holidays and celebrations such as Diwali, Eid, and other non Christian/Pagan traditions celebrated. Within my kindergarten class, I have a diverse group of students that all do not celebrate the Christian/Pagan holidays that are normally celebrated in schools. On Halloween, we had many students not dress up in costumes due to their religious beliefs. However, I do know that they celebrate Diwali, as it has been mentioned by the parents. Approaching all holidays as something that some, not all, people celebrate and teaching these celebrations in a more informative way could be helpful in fostering inclusive practices and

celebrating diversity. This does not mean pick on one student and single out that they celebrate this holiday, but instead approach it in a way that speaks about general facts about the topic. For example, from the beginning of the year family culture survey, I could have found out that some of the students celebrates Diwali. Using a story, I could explain what Diwali is and following it up with centers could help students deeper understand what it is and help students see themselves within the classroom, without singling them out. Incorporating these diverse perspectives into the content of the curriculum can be extremely helpful in ensuring all voices are heard that students can see themselves in the curriculum (Yale Center for Teaching and Learning, 2021). As well, it can raise awareness of the importance of understanding and embracing different and diverse individuals is a beneficial practice within the classroom (Ruggs et al., 2012).

In addition, it is important to use visuals that include students with different skin tones, hair colours and cuts, and of different sizes and shapes throughout the year to help students identify and relate to the content. Allowing students to visually see individuals who look and act like them can help them feel a sense of connectedness to the material being taught and more inclined to do it.

Lastly, I wanted to touch on the inclusion of Indigenous education within the classroom in terms of diversity and inclusion. Due to Canada's long history with Indigenous Nations and people, it is crucial that Indigenous education and pedagogy is used within the classroom. Not only is it required by law for us as teachers to teach students Indigenous knowledge through the Teaching Quality Standards and the Truth and Reconciliation Committees Calls to Action, but it is important to teach indigenous knowledge to not "perpetuate the silence and ignorance of non-indigenous people for yet another generation" (Ensoulng Our School, p. 50). As well, it is important to ensure that as teachers we are "educating for change, equity in education, and reclaiming identity for Indigenous student and for all Canadians" (Ensoulng Our School, p. 50). By educating all students on Canada's history with Indigenous peoples and teaching the practices of Indigenous peoples, we can help all students. One way this can be done in Kindergarten is using land-based learning. Card and Burke's (2021) study surrounding the importance of Outdoor Kindergarten suggests that it bridges both cultural and curricular outcomes providing health and educational advantages (p. 135). They suggest that it can potentially benefit the health of all students through reducing anxiety and decrease the use of medications in students who swap their screen time for outdoor play (p. 134). As well, it can help Indigenous students "see themselves and their culture reflected in this nature based emergent curriculum" (Card & Burke, 2021, p. 135).

Overall, while all of this can be done at a class level, but also consistency through school wide approaches could help in the implementation of the wellness plan surrounding culturally inclusive and responsive approaches. When implementing this, it is importance that teacher ensuring constantly check their own perspectives and biases to ensure that you are using culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogy effectively in the classroom setting.

Inclusive Education

Another way to ensure students in my class are receiving inclusive education is using universal designs for learning (UDL). Using the principles of multiple means of representation (acquiring information in different ways), multiple means of expression (multiple ways to demonstrate their knowledge), and multiple means of engagement (use learner's motivations and specific interests to get them involved in learning tasks) can help ensure that all students are having their needs addressed. (Government of Alberta, 2018, p. 1). In my kindergarten class,

there are many students that need UDL to engage in tasks and be assessed based on their knowledge. For example, when assessing based on the ELA outcome of “children explore how messages can be organized,” we were looking at whether students can create a story with a beginning, middle, and end. While many students are able and interested in drawing a picture, there are some students who struggle to hold a pencil and would not be able to show the extent of their knowledge if they were required to draw a picture. Therefore, allowing students to use puppet shows, dolls, and other dramatic play, to show that they can create a story with a beginning, middle, and end through oral language, guarantees that they are being assessed based on their knowledge. Creating these UDL approaches where there are multiple modes of assessment can help to increase student engagement and academic success (Government of Alberta, 2018, p. 1).

As well, using multi-tiered system of supports can help all students in the classroom by creating supports at a classroom, small group, and individual level (Nova Scotia Public School Program, 2019). While I have already touched on tier 1 UDL practices, supports, and interventions above, using focused tier 2, and intensive tier 3 supports can address need for the student who need more support than just an overall approach (Nova Scotia Public School Program, 2019). In my first LT 1 assignment, I touched on two different students Jeremy and Justin and how tier 2 supports could help improve their executive functions. Within my classroom, my partner teacher and I have started implementing these tier 2 supports, and we have already begun to see the positive impacts of them. By using the multi-tiered system of supports within the classroom, it can ensure that every student receives equitable education surrounding their well-being and achievement (Nova Scotia Public School, 2019, p. 1).

Healthy habits and routines

Another important aspect of my wellness plan is physical wellness. Within your classroom, emphasizing healthy eating and active routines can help foster an overall sense of wellness. Physical wellness can create benefits such as creating good habits, increasing mental well-being, improving overall physical health in students, and increase attention and concentration (Pear Tree School, 2023). Kliziene et al (2021) says that “schools which adopt two hours a week of PE and plan specific contents and activities to achieve development goals at the physical level can promote health, well-being, and healthy lifestyles on a personal level, including bodily awareness and confidence in one’s physical skills, as well as a general sense of wellbeing, greater security and self-esteem, sense of responsibility, patience, courage, and mental balance at the social level, including integration within society, a sense of solidarity, social interactions, team spirit, fair play, and respect for rules and for others, as well as wider human and environmental values” (p. 1). Because of this, I believe it is important to include physical movement into students’ school days and not just during their PE block. Three aspects of physical wellness that I believe would help my Kindergarten class are physical activity, physical wellness routines, and healthy eating. Another study by Barnes et al (2021) suggest that “in childhood and adolescents, a healthy diet, physical activity, and healthy weight, have also been found to be independently associated with immediate positive health outcomes, including improved mental health and academic performance. Additionally, as health behaviors developed during childhood have been found to track into adulthood” (para. 1). As well, they found that schools fail to routinely implement evidence-based practices, and programs (Barnes, et al., 2021, para. 4). While I think the changes in implementation at a school-wide level, such as the importance of the availability of nutritious food within the school, I do believe that at a class

level this can also happen. Their study found that having students study and practice what they learned contributed to an increase in students consuming healthy foods (Barnes et al., 2021).

Incorporating movement throughout centre time is extremely important. Centre time takes up about two and a half hours a day of school x's kindergarten classes and much of it is either seated at a table or on the learning floor. Including centres that cause students to physically move their bodies while still incorporating curriculum content could be helpful in ensuring physical wellness is occurring. One example of this is a centre that incorporates an obstacle course (figure 3). The obstacle course causes students to move their body to get from task to task while also causing them to complete a task that could be practicing something from the curriculum. As well, as a transition, putting on a video giving the students a body break could help get some movement in before moving on to the next task. In addition, it can give the teacher time to prepare for the next lesson or task. However, I do believe it is important for teachers to model physical movement during this time by participating in the movement breaks.

As well, an emphasis on healthy eating is extremely important in ensuring childhood success in and outside of school. Based on Barnes et al.'s (2021) research, I think the teaching lessons surrounding healthy eating is extremely important and applying it to the classroom. Because many students in our class come from affluent families, students are provided with lots of healthy foods in their lunches. However, there are some students who do not have much for healthy food. For example, one student in my practicum class regularly brings a lunch and snack where everything contains chocolate, a chocolate spread, or is dipped in chocolate, with no fruits or vegetables. While this could be for an assortment of reasons such as the parents struggle to get her to eat anything else, it could be financially less money to purchase this type of food versus more nutritious options, or even for time purposes. Teaching the importance of bringing nutritious food and snacks to fuel their brains for learning, what healthy options are, and integrating these lessons with school-wide approaches of supplying healthy snacks for students who are unable to afford these options, could help students make healthy choices surrounding food. As well, teaching students that they always eat their most nutritious options first as a part of the routine could be extremely effective in implementing this. Some students in my class's favourite part of their day is their treat snack. Allowing them to eat it during lunch or during the afternoon snack could be a good way of teaching them about patience and help with encouraging them to eat a balanced diet where they don't restrict their food. I also believe that changing the name of snack to nutrition break. Because we want to teach students about the importance of fueling their body and nutrition, changing the wording can also change the connotations around it.

Lastly, I believe lesson and teaching around self-regulation techniques is extremely important for students physical, emotional, and mental wellness. Every week or every other week, teaching a new self-regulation technique and allowing students time to practice it can be helpful way for students to create healthy habits in relation to their emotion control. Ensouling Our Schools suggests that "even 10 minutes of meditation in the school day results in better outcomes both behaviorally and academically" (p. 31). This can include breathing techniques such as blowing out a candle or rainbow breathing. As well, it can include mindfulness techniques and teaching around the senses to ground students. One example of this is get students to say out loud five things they see, four things they feel, three things they hear, and two things they smell. How this would look in practice and implementation is the teacher would provide a lesson on one of the techniques, let's say it is blowing out a candle breathing, teaching students when and how to use

this technique. Throughout the day, students can practice this when they identify the need, or the teacher can help practice with the class or a specific student.

Trauma-Informed Practices

Many students experience trauma. Trauma can be described as someone who is under chronic stress and perceives themselves to be unsafe physically or emotionally (Ensouling Schools, p. 31). There are different types of trauma such as complex and intergenerational trauma that negatively affect students academically and socially. Students who experience trauma “cannot be rational or problem solve” (Ensouling Our Schools, p. 31). In a school setting, this makes it difficult for students to control emotions. Because so many students experience trauma, it is important to implement trauma-informed practices within the classroom as a wellness approach.

First and foremost, the most important aspect of trauma-informed practice is having a strong relationship with students where there is lots of trust before you can start implementing different trauma-based approaches. Following through on what you say and being consistent can be a great way to gain this trust with students (The Cult of Pedagogy Podcast, April 18, 2023).

As discussed above, UDL supports could be helpful when being a trauma-informed educator. You cannot assume which students have trauma (Gonzalez, 2023). Not all trauma will be visible in students and not all students will be open about their trauma (Gonzalez, 2023). Providing UDL supports can guarantee that all students in the classroom, even the ones that you wouldn’t assume have trauma, are being helped. As well, trauma can impact the school environment, so it is important to implement UDL approaches to help the entire environment (Venet, 2021, p. 56). “By focusing only on individuals, we miss how trauma can impact the entire school environment” and classroom environment (Venet, 2021, p. 56). One example of how UDL can be used in the classroom to help students affected with trauma is providing information in advance. One of the Kindergarten students in my practicum class was physically and emotionally abused by one of her parents and kept in isolation until 2021. Because of this, the student has a severe speech and language delay and struggles receiving knowledge and expressing themselves to us. To engage her in content and learning, we use many visuals to help them understand what we are teaching. This is also helpful for other students in the classroom. As well, allowing her to use visual cue cards or drawings to express her learning and overall needs is helpful and something that other students have started to do as well.

In addition, it is extremely important to use compassion-based techniques when teaching. Sung’s (2019) six compassion-based strategies are extremely helpful techniques to ensure that teachers are using trauma-informed practices. These strategies include: tone, volume and posture; avoiding standoffs; giving them choice and a timeline for when they must choose by before walking away; looking for subtext to what students are saying; gently pressing students as a reminder; and giving visual cues. Depending on the student, your tone of voice, volume and posture can be very effective. Having a calm but serious tone of voice can be helpful for most and using a side posture with averted eyes could work best for students that are more defiant (Sung, 2019). However, it is important to note that these things could vary from culture to culture, and must be considered when adjusting tone, volume, and posture to meet the students needs. Sung (2019) also suggest not having a standoff with a student because it can often lead to situations being escalated but instead to give choices, a timeline of when they can choice by, and walk-away. As well, Sung suggests that assuming the best of each student and their intentions. When students say certain things, there could be deeper meaning behind it (2019). If a student is

not doing their work, give them a gentle reminder and if that is not helpful, have a private conversation with them (2019). The private conversation may not lead to more work being accomplished but instead will help build a stronger relationship with the student (Sung, 2019). Lastly, Sung suggests that using visual cues could help teachers avoid believing students are defiant when they instead have attention issues, learning difference, or even auditory processing issues, all of which can be caused by trauma (2019). Communicating the expected behaviour with an image can keep this from occurring. Using these six compassion-based approaches can help with students who experience trauma by still holding them to expectations that meet their needs and give grace to the students.

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Figure 1:

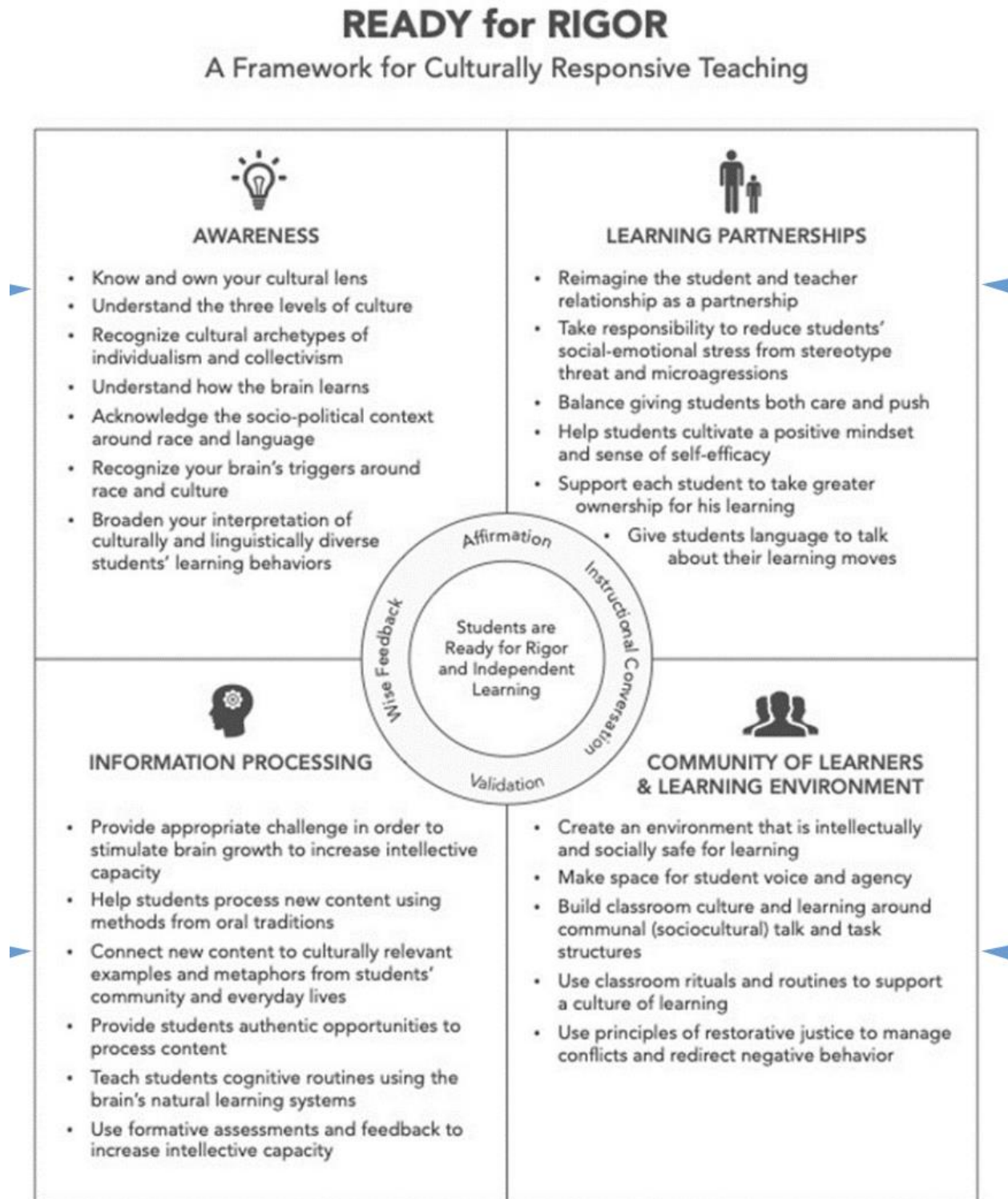


Figure 2: Example of Family Culture Questionnaire

Family Survey

Student: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Parent/Guardian #1: _____
Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Parent/Guardian #2: _____
Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Best Way to Contact Me: ☐ Phone (day/evening) ☐ Email ☐ Notes Sent Home

Is any other language spoken at home other than English? _____

List foods, products, etc., that may cause your student to have an allergic reaction:

Do you have any specific concerns (academic? social? medical?) for your student:

Are there any common holidays or events your student does not celebrate:

What are 2 goals you have for your student for the school year: _____

What motivates your student: _____

In a MILLION words or less, tell me anything else I need to know about your child.
Feel free to brag! Use the back if needed: _____

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Figure 3: Student obstacle course

