

WELLNESS

Definition of wellness:

Wellness is the complete picture of a person's quality of life. It focuses on positive states, not simply the absence of illness, disease or injury. The World Health Organization defines wellness as "the optimal state of health of individuals and groups, with an emphasis on enabling a person to reach their fullest potential." In the words of Pope Benedict "Do not desire anything less for your life than a love that is strong and beautiful and that is capable of making the whole of your existence a joyful undertaking."

Core beliefs:

- Elk Island Catholic Schools believes in the importance of wellness in body, mind and spirit.
- We believe that supporting healthy school communities is essential for supporting the growth and development of the whole person.
- We recognize that the dimensions of our personal wellbeing do not exist in isolation – but are each a part of the integrated whole.
- The relationship between and interconnectedness of our mental health, physical wellbeing and spiritual wellness are well supported by both research and our own lived experience.
- We recognize that wellness is both an individual and collective responsibility and are committed to ensuring that staff and students are provided with the support they need to be well.
- We believe that wellbeing is a **precondition** to teaching and learning.
- We all have a role to play in supporting wellness within our school division.
- We commit to walking the walk at all levels of our organization.

Workplace Wellness

We are called to create environments that support the wellbeing of each EICS staff member so that our staff can experience the joy of living life to the fullest.

In ensuring staff wellness is a division priority, staff have an increased capacity to take care of our students.

In addition, the organizational value of a healthy workplace is integral to a vibrant and productive workplace.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL VALUE



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“To meet professional practice standards, all educators and system leaders need to be well. The role of system leaders includes supporting leaders and teachers. A comprehensive and integrated workplace wellness plan will address the wellbeing needs of all involved in supporting optimum learning for students.” [CASS Workplace Wellness for Alberta School Authorities: A Planning and Implementation Guide](#)

Five conditions appear to have the potential to create and sustain a positive workplace wellness environment.

1. Comprehensive and integrated approach
2. Shared vision, leadership, and commitment
3. Evidence and research
4. Roles and responsibilities
5. Systemic professional learning



Elk Island Catholic Schools’ Wellness Administrative Procedure includes physical literacy, mental health and nutrition; integrating the importance of wellness in body, mind and spirit.

Physical Literacy

Elk Island Catholic Schools (EICS) recognizes physical literacy as an essential element of student and staff wellness and acknowledges its role in optimal learning and growth and development.

“Physical Literacy is the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.” ([International Physical Literacy Association](#))

We are committed to creating environments that promote physical literacy in schools. This administrative procedure serves to reinforce the importance of physical literacy as a gateway to physical activity and movement within a school environment. It also serves to acknowledge that valuing physical literacy within schools contributes to the healthy growth and development of the whole child.

Mental Health

Elk Island Catholic Schools recognizes that positive mental health for students and staff is a precondition to learning. Beyond learning considerations, we recognize our Christian call to support each other: *“As the People of God, the Church walks in the footsteps of Jesus, the Divine Healer, who came “that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10.10).”* (CCCB, Pastoral Letter on Catholic Health Ministry in Canada).

Mental health is a key aspect of an individual’s wellbeing, alongside physical, social-emotional, intellectual, and spiritual wellbeing. Furthermore, our mental health administrative procedure recognizes the value of connection and relationships, knowing that we are wired by God for connection.

Nutrition

Elk Island Catholic Schools recognizes nutrition as an essential element of student and staff wellness, and acknowledges its role in optimal growth and development. We are committed to creating nutrition environments in schools that promote and provide access to healthy food choices for all. Elk Island Catholic Schools is committed to the development of healthy eating habits as achieved through education in a positive nutrition environment.

EICS will work with the Comprehensive School Health approach in creating and maintaining healthy school communities.

[Comprehensive School Health](#) is an evidence based approach for building healthy school communities based on collaboration between home, school and community partners.

The Air Quality Analogy

- Take a breath in.
- Just as it is near impossible to separate the air we breathe into its individual components, the interconnectedness of all of the dimensions of our wellbeing is undeniable.
- All the pieces of our wellness - our mental health, the food we eat, the way that we move our bodies, our emotional state, our sleep, our relationships - affect the quality of our overall wellness.
- We need to constantly be checking in with the quality of our air.
- When we ignore a dimension of our wellness we feel it and so do those around us. We live and work in relationships.
- We are all breathing the same air.
- The quality of my wellness is the quality of my students' wellness...
- My exhale, will at some point become your inhale.
- We all benefit when we simply become more conscious of that.

The following forms may be applicable to this Admin Procedure as reference:

Appendix A: Physical Literacy and Movement

Appendix B: Mental Health

Appendix C: Supporting Healthy Relationships with Food & Body in Elk Island Catholic Schools