

SHOWCASING YOUTH SUCCESSIONS IN YOU MATTER 2

PROUD TO BELONG!



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I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

YOU MATTER is a collaborative, youth-focused, community-involved mental health and well-being (MHWB) initiative created by Avon Maitland District School Board (AMDSB), in partnership with community agency Rural Response for Healthy Children. YOU MATTER is also supported by the Trillium Foundation and the Tanner Steffler Foundation.

YOU MATTER empowers youth leaders to support MHWB by developing, leading, implementing, and monitoring MHWB initiatives in their schools. YOU MATTER is designed to remind everyone that “we all have mental health” and that there is a continuum of health and well-being which changes over time and in response to situations.

The YOU MATTER inquiry asks:

“How do student-designed and student-implemented MHWB initiatives support students in schools?”

Through YOU MATTER 2, students learned about MHWB, built relationships within teams and worked collaboratively to achieve goals that promoted a sense of belonging and wellness for everyone during a difficult school year.

6500

Students reached by YOU MATTER 2 to support MHWB in AMDSB

41%

Schools with students from Grade 6-12 involved in YOU MATTER 2

280

People attended the YOU MATTER 2 Virtual Kick-Off event on January 19th, 2021

290

People attended the YOU MATTER 2 Virtual "Showcasing Student Success Event" June 2021

39

School Team Plans submitted for YOU MATTER 2

18

Different types of Initiatives were completed by School Teams both virtually and in-person

ALL ABOUT YOU MATTER

Let's take a look through all of the amazing accomplishments of YOU MATTER!

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE YOU MATTER PROJECT? CLICK ANYWHERE ON THIS BOX FOR A VIDEO WITH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MATTER 1 & 2

II. SCHOOL TEAM SNAPSHOT

According to end-of-project survey data, **147** students participated in their school's YOU MATTER 2 MHWB School Team

52 AMDSB Staff led their school's YOU MATTER 2 MHWB School Team

School Teams ranged from 3-10 students and had between 1 and 4 leaders

School Teams used Virtual Meeting Platforms (Zoom, Google, Teams), Email, Jamboards, Social Media and Texting to meet.



When learning in-person, school teams also met in-person.



93%

Over 93% of School Teams were able to perform some part of their MHWB initiative!

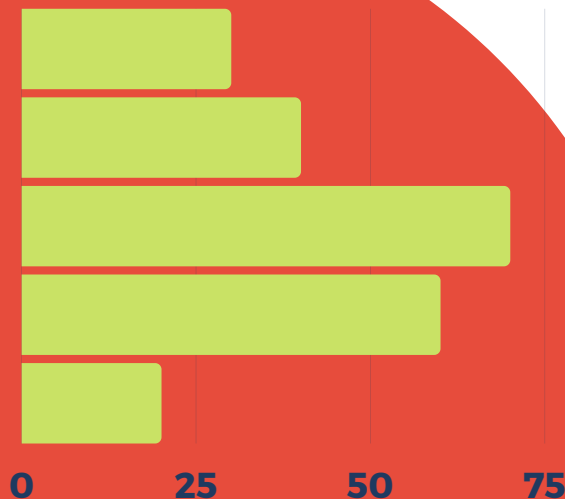
Reduce Stigma

Promote Resources

Mindfulness

Sense of Belonging

Other



46%

46% of the School Teams were able to collect some data about their initiatives!

School Teams set the above goals for their MHWB initiatives. Teams could select multiple goals. The School Teams that selected other goals focused on improving MHWB overall.

"My student peers were very valuable because we worked so well and very hard to make MHWB better at our school. Without them, I would not have been able to make my plans and ideas work."

III. SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

Of the 64 respondents, five themes were identified with three themes grouped as successes and two themes grouped as challenges.

SUCCESSSES

School Teams reported 3 main successes;

14%

**ABILITY TO
BE FLEXIBLE**

20%

**ENGAGEMENT OF
STUDENTS**

28%

**IMPACT OF
INITIATIVES**

Students described the impact of their initiatives as a success. This was due to both the number of initiatives they were able to implement and the widespread positive impact of those initiatives on participating students. Students appreciated the opportunity to engage creatively in planning MHWB initiatives and the support for carrying out their activities in school.

Responses related to engagement included successful collaboration between MHWB teams and students being engaged with the MHWB initiatives. Students commented that through YOU MATTER 2, they were “allowed to talk about positive mental health and well-being with a unique and individualized group...We also had to consider the broad age groups in our school and how our check-ins and activities would be able to be completed by all grades.” A strength of YOU MATTER 2 was the commitment of team members who were engaged in MHWB learning and activities.

Respondents described being proud of the ability to pivot between online and physical learning. Students noted a strength in being able to “be flexible during uncertain times” and explained how YOU MATTER 2 created a purpose for them to gather together and give support to one another during a chaotic school year.

CHALLENGES

School Teams reported 2 main challenges:

25%

**INCONSISTENT
SCHOOLING**

12%

TIME

Inconsistent schooling was identified as a core challenge from everyone involved. This theme included challenges that arose due to the changes between online and physical schooling as well as teacher/administration changes. Students described that it was very difficult to make plans when they did not know what the next weeks or months would look like. When it comes to time, everyone recognizes that a student-designed and student-implemented MHWB initiative requires a significant investment of time. For example, “This was a very challenging initiative in the most challenging school year. We absolutely did our best and the students persevered, but it may not have been the best year for the entire initiative to continue. Messaging from organizers to temper expectations and scale back efforts as the year unfolded unlike any other would have been very appreciated and helpful. The option to table all participation and pick things back up when demands were (hopefully) less next year would also have been very welcome.” Inconsistent schooling and time were interrelated and posed challenges in planning and implementation.

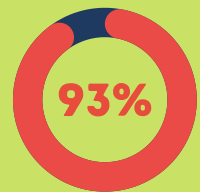
“As a group, despite limitations of being at school, we were still able to gather together and give support to one another.”

“I think a challenge for our group was COVID and the breaks we didn't know how the rest of the year would look.”

IV. ENDURING OUTCOMES

YOU MATTER 2 contributed to the MHWB efforts in AMDSB.

Participants noticed a greater sense of awareness when it comes to MHWB, noting that there were more conversations and connections to resources for students, staff and families. There is a common theme of MHWB being normalized and that the stigma has been reduced because of the YOU MATTER 2 project.



93% of participants would participate in a YOU MATTER 3, noting that they enjoy learning more about MHWB, that it helps others, and that the student-led component has made a difference.

A third of respondents identified meeting with their YOU MATTER 2 school team as their favourite part of the initiative.



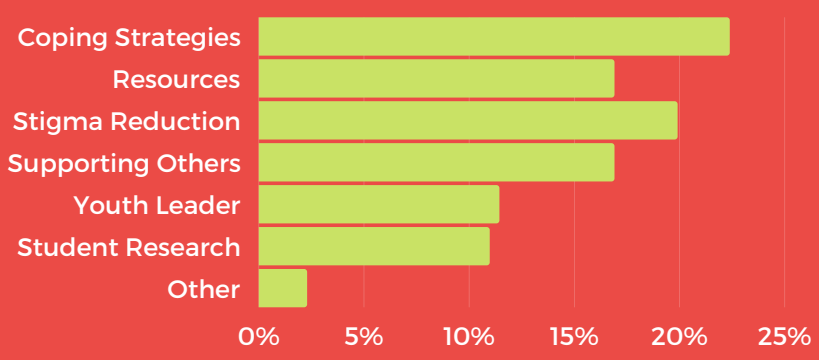
Participants were asked what part of the YOU MATTER project was most meaningful to them:

- 32% - Implementing the Initiative
- 28% - Working in teams with Peers
- 25% - Engaging in Virtual Symposiums
- 12% - Participating in Student Research

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Participants noted that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic impacted their YOU MATTER 2 experiences, suggesting that YOU MATTER 3 would be more engaging in-person rather than virtually. It was also noted that school teams would have enjoyed more constant communication about the outcomes of the project and they would enjoy seeing and hearing about what other school teams had been working on. Participants noted that including the Grade 6 students was beneficial, and should be continued in future.

When participants were asked about what they would like more about in the future, this is how they responded!



YOU MATTER 2 offered a way for youth to come together to talk explicitly about and receive education about MHWB by fostering a community within, across and beyond schools. By coming together, YOU MATTER 2 contributes to increasing knowledge and reducing stigma about MHWB. Student leaders played a pivotal role in planning, leading and communicating about MHWB. Student leadership engaged in shared conversations, deepening understanding, awareness and activity that is supportive of a range of MHWB ideas. Commitment from youth leaders made a tremendous difference in this project.

MOVING FORWARD

In MHWB programming and inquiry evolves over time;

- YOU MATTER 2 included a group of youth leaders, who co-hosted the launch and celebration days, and collaborated with adult leaders to guide the overarching YOU MATTER initiative.
- Participants would like to know more about MHWB, Coping Strategies and Stigma Reduction.
- Start MHWB student-led initiatives earlier in the school year and recognize that each school will engage in the process differently
- Enhance project communications from the outset and throughout the project so there is more of a shared understanding about goals, activities and outcomes
- Increase and consider systematizing data collection from students who participate in MHWB initiatives across schools