



# TOGETHER IN WELLNESS: A GUIDE FOR LEADERS AND WELLNESS CHAMPIONS

# BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

We've all heard the term 'school community' and been part of one too. In Alberta, school is a special place where people come together to learn as well as bring the greater community together.

Communities of practice are groups of people who share a passion for something they know how to do and who interact regularly to learn how to do it better. It's an idea that's gaining ground in the education sector. For many, it's all about learning from and reflecting on our experiences, and mentoring others to share these lessons. So, encouraging a community of practice is a natural fit.

Besides providing a place to share professional learnings, establishing a community of practice also builds a sense of teamwork. And teamwork helps us become better in ways we might not have imagined.

No matter what type of leader you are, you've likely heard of or benefitted from a community of practice, likely in the context of professional development. When it comes to fostering a positive workplace culture and supportive team environment, the quality of an employee's work is tied to their level of engagement, happiness and overall well-being. Try the following activity with your team and consider how you can integrate workplace wellness into each step. Alternately, how can you build a community of practice for wellness champions?



Communities of Practice aren't just for professional development!

## TEAM ACTIVITY

### How to prepare:

Review [Building a Community of Practice](#) in our Together in Wellness Planner. Pay special attention to the tips in 'Grow your Community of Practice':

**Build shared understandings.** Expand the definitions you use everyday and respectfully present, or respond to, multiple perspectives on a topic in a reflective way.

**Unpack the research.** Try following research and sharing these great ideas with your colleagues. When possible, have face-to-face discussions about the research, even if it's only for a few minutes!

**Reflect on practice.** Discuss helpful changes to practice through a 'more or less' approach. Pick a topic and share what elements you'd like to see more or less of. Possible topics include the use of technology, streamlining interactions with parents and colleagues, allowing more time to work on other things, or how to set boundaries around work-life balance.

### How to include your team:

1. Share copies of [Building a Community of Practice](#) and allow your team time to review the first page. This can be done prior to or during the meeting.
2. Next, pick a topic and conduct a 'more or less' reflection through a facilitated conversation. Leading a facilitated discussion is a productive and inclusive way to consider ideas to enhance the work that you do with each other. Try this exercise with a large group or smaller breakout groups, online or in person.



Communities of Practice can focus on different topics, like developing skills and group activities to encourage workplace well-being.

The following example is how to start or enhance a workplace wellness community of practice.

- a. Explain workplace wellness or ask people to think about what makes them feel healthy and well while at work. Encourage them to think beyond physical activity and healthy eating.
- b. After considering a number of examples, ask the group to discuss what they'd like to see more of and less of. Now is the time for brainstorming beyond a yes or no, so write down everything that comes up. If an idea is seemingly unfeasible, write it down too—it just might generate other ideas or even a solution!

### How to debrief:

Now, bring the group back together and pose a few questions for consideration or discussion. Some example questions are:

- What did you talk about?
- What interested you?
- What were the more significant items discussed?
- What are some next steps?
- From here, ask the group to make an action plan and move forward with it.

### How to continue:

Your community of practice is always growing and evolving. Continue the process by picking items that didn't get discussed or choose a different topic to consider next time. Some examples include technology use in the school, interesting requests for professional development, how to work with students or parents, or ideas for team building. You might be surprised at the breadth of ideas.



Visit [TheWellnessSandbox.ca](http://TheWellnessSandbox.ca) to discover more great ideas and connect with wellness champions from across Alberta.