The **TOOLBOX**

TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE WITH THEIR EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF ADULT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS DURING THE PANDEMIC
FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL PROFESSIONALS

TOOL: Prevention

TARGET AUDIENCE: Secondary school professionals

TOOL INTENDED FOR: Professionals

DESIGN

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COMITÉ QUÉBÉCOIS POUR LES JEUNES
EN DIFFICULTÉ DE COMPORTEMENT

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF ADULT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS DURING THE PANDEMIC FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL PROFESSIONALS

TOOL: Prevention

TOOL INTENDED FOR: Professionals

– Details: E.g. Teachers, psychoeducators, special education technicians, any other secondary school professionals.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

– Secondary school professionals (working with 13-17-year-old teenagers)

NEEDS AND BEHAVIOURAL MANIFESTATIONS

– Adult-teen bond
– Positive adult-teen relationships
– Need for reassurance and warm contacts
– Need for independence and autonomy
– Behaviours: opposition, lack of school motivation, dropping out of school

SPECIFIC GOALS

– To understand the importance of adult-teen relationships in secondary schools
– To understand the potential impact of the pandemic on adult-teen relationships in secondary schools
– To develop basic strategies for developing and maintaining positive adult-teen relationships in secondary schools

DESIGN

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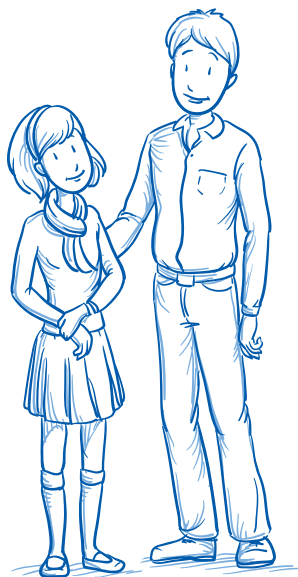
Building positive relationships is an essential practice in schools. This consists in providing support to students in addition to creating meaningful relationships, enabling teens to develop in a pleasant, positive environment. They will thus be more inclined to learn and show more respect for school rules. Positive relationships will also support their feelings of being appreciated and being viewed as individuals (1).

However, the current situation is causing many disruptions in students' routines. Above all, it's important to remember that certain children are more sensitive to the situation than others. It's important to be aware of this and respect the teens' pace and fears.

In this context, it's essential to develop quality relationships with students. To do so, teachers should be responsive to the needs expressed by teens through their behaviours. They should try to interpret the meaning of and adjust to teens' behaviour (2).

It's also important to keep in mind that committed teachers will be considered to be genuine by their students; this will foster mutually positive relationships. Students will also be more inclined to seek help if necessary (2). In addition, teachers who have positive, warm (2) and supportive interactions (3) with students will have a better chance of developing positive relationships with them.

Ultimately, teachers who allow students to make choices in their learning and who use encouragement rather than punishment will help develop independence; this influences the quality of the relationships (2).

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POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Try to display a positive, warm, respectful attitude and active listening (1)
– Maintain eye contact with students.
– Use humour, praise good behaviour, smile.
– Greet students by calling their names when they arrive in the classroom.
– Listen to what teens want to express and, if necessary, ask questions to understand better. This will allow teens to feel
respected by adults.
– Share some personal experiences with students. This will help build positive mutual relationships.
– Whenever possible, allow children to correct mistakes.

Since teachers' commitment is considered to be a factor in predicting positive relationships, depending on the teachers' interests, it may be worthwhile to participate in extracurricular activities with students (e.g. directing a play, attending a basketball game, organizing a community dinner, etc.). This will allow interactions that are not focused on school tasks. By doing so, the relationships can be strengthened or developed in a positive way (2).

Whenever possible in terms of school organization, it's recommended to keep the same groups of students together in order to foster stability and the development of a sense of belonging. Teachers would thus change classrooms and not students (2).

At the beginning of the year, take time to get to know the children (strengths, interests, challenges, etc.) and determine with them how the classroom should be run. Given the current situation, it might be appropriate to reassess school expectations for students to allow them to get used to how things work. This will also give teachers time to develop positive relationships with them (1).

To avoid undue pressure on teens, praise students' achievements, efforts and good behaviour. Ultimately, keep in mind that it's the learning process that counts and not the result itself (4). For example, failure to perform a task that beforehand was considered "easy" could have an impact on students' sense of competence and on their trust and relationship with you (1).

Try to individually help each student learn and take as much time as possible with them, depending on their needs. To do so, ask students if they need help, move around the classroom, stop by each student to check for potential questions, etc. (1).

Vary teaching methods in order to reflect everyone's interests and strengths (1) and allow students to choose tasks; this will promote students' autonomy and motivation (2).

Encourage, congratulate and praise.
– Don't just praise their achievements; praise their efforts.
– Encourage students with more difficult tasks; tell them that you believe in them.

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STRATEGIES WHEN DISTANCING AND USING PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (4)

Communicate frequently with students in class using a variety of methods. Synchronous methods allow live discussion over the phone or video conferencing; asynchronous methods allow delayed communication via email or pre-filmed video.

– Ideally, use synchronous communication, as it allows real-time contact with teachers. This makes it easier for preschool and elementary school students to continue their learning while maintaining a relationship with teachers. However, the ideal is still in-person teaching, since, despite required distancing, students can socialize in person with others and better recognize the components of non-verbal communication.

– When communicating synchronously with preschool students, it's recommended to include visuals (videos, books, images, etc.) and sound elements (teacher's voice, etc.). It's also best to encourage learning through play.

– During communication, ask students questions and find out about their well-being. They will then feel respected; this will help build or maintain positive relationships.

– In addition to group meetings, it may be necessary to plan individual and personalized communications with each student, particularly those with special needs.

During the first videoconferencing meetings, take the time to explain to teens how the platform works. To provide students with all the tools possible, it's suggested that parents be sent a written document that summarizes how it works. At the beginning, establish the basic rules to be followed during meetings and clearly explain the expectations and limitations.

Pay attention to students' non-verbal communication. Identify what you perceive; ask students questions.

When wearing protective equipment, it's recommended to personalize interactions by calling teens by their first name and establishing eye contact with each child individually.

Open a chat room for the entire day to allow students to contact teachers at any time during their learning. If necessary, teachers will be able to communicate with students in a different way in order to provide them with additional support.

Use humour, praise good behaviour, smile, ask students questions and listen.

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