



B.C. Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association

MEMBER UPDATE

ReFresh

Wednesday June 16, 2021



Refreshing Through Recognition

In the BCPVPA Thriving in Education Survey, we asked the following open-ended question: *“What are one or two things in your working environment or working relationships that positively impacts your health and/or success in your role?”* A common theme in the responses was being appreciated, valued, and recognized. In fact, research has found that being valued in the workplace can be a tremendous boost to our mental health.

Research on workplace wellness confirms that employers who provide positive recognition and rewards contribute to higher levels of employee engagement, higher quality of employee performance, and more workplace stability. In addition, staff recognition and reward matter more than compensation, indicating that management’s skill and ability to provide verbal and written recognition are more meaningful than increasing salaries.

Survey responses did show that many of members receive — and appreciate — recognition from staff, parents, and/or leaders. However, unfortunately, there seems to be a higher percentage of respondents who are not receiving much — if any — recognition. Let’s be honest: ***this finding is disheartening***, given what it has taken for our members to keep schools running safely this year.

As this bumpy and chaotic year ends, we do hope you receive some recognition for your efforts and sacrifices. Remember as well to extend your own appreciation and recognition of the efforts of those around you, as this will not only boost the recipient's mental health, but yours as well!

The Link Between Recognition and Mental Health

We experience good mental health when we have a sense of self-worth and contentment. Being socially recognized is good for our self-esteem.

The better our self-esteem, the better we feel.

The better we feel, the more improved our mental health is.

The better our mental health is, the better our work ethic and commitment becomes.

The social and mental well-being of a school or District is at its best when everyone feels that they are making a valuable and valid contribution towards that community's objectives. Ideally, recognition is frequent, sincere, and inclusive. If leadership — either your leader or you as a leader — is detached, then recognition from the leadership will feel remote.

Interestingly, peer-to-peer recognition can have a different role to play in creating a more cohesive, positive environment within the everyday workings of a team. This can help improve social well-being, as well as reducing stress by, for example, publicly celebrating and reminding colleagues of the support available from their team members. A key to boosting mental health resilience in the workplace is the sense of belonging that can come when good work is recognized.

We know that psychosocial factors have an impact on employees' psychological responses to work. That includes the way work is carried out — like deadlines and workloads — but it also covers the context of that work: the relationships and interactions with managers and peers.

An interesting observation about how recognition can potentially enhance well-being is that it is not only the people being recognized who feel the benefits. ***Being the giver of recognition also appears to be a fundamental part of the well-being equation.*** Givers benefit from being part of a culture where expressing their own gratitude and appreciation of others is an accepted and encouraged practice.

There could be a few factors at play here. One is a sense of connection with peers at work. If you are able to savour a sense of being appreciated while also being able to express your own feelings of appreciation, it builds bonds. Evidence suggests that if you feel closely connected to peers at work, you're likely to be physically and mentally healthier as a result.

Go Forth and Foster

As the year winds down, take the time to recognize those who ‘gave it all’ for students, who stayed positive when many others were not, or who may not know how much they supported or motivated *you*! That could include:

- **Your staff:** from the teachers who flowed with the ups and downs of the year and were appreciative of your challenges, to the custodial staff who had to go over and above to keep everyone safe.
- **Your Administration team and peers:** the Survey results reveal the strong support and connection experienced between Administrators who helped each other to weather the storm this year. Reach out to those mentors, confidants, and cheerleaders who helped carry your burden.
- **Students and parents:** those that were supportive and helped out however they were could.
- **Your family:** for being understanding of the time and demands that interfered with your personal life this year.
- **Your leaders:** for their support, understanding and trust in your ability to constantly meet the challenges and ever-changing demands, and for keeping people calm.
- **And ...** anyone else who may not know what a positive impact they’ve had on you this year!

It goes without saying that we at the BCPVPA see your efforts and are in awe of how you have navigated the waves, been the lighthouse for so many and have remained committed to your staff, students, and community. ***Thank you!***

If you would like to contribute, or have ideas about what you would like to see in the [ReFresh](#) series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcvpva.bc.ca.

Sources:

- [“Why is Employee Recognition Important?”](#) | Mental Health America

- [“How can workplace recognition impact employee mental health and wellbeing?”](#) | Nic Pacton (Employee Benefits UK)
- [Employee Recognition](#) | Workstars