

Whole Child Model: Adult Wellness

Leader Moves to Build Community



Leader Moves to Build **Community**

First, check in with yourself:

- Reflect upon a group you've been a part of with a strong sense of community. What shared activities helped build that group identity? What shared activities helped you build connections with others within this group?
- Live out this value by...setting up **ongoing opportunities** for staff members **to share appreciation** with one another
 - *Example:* A Secret Buddy exchange can be set up by a Wellness or Sunshine committee. In this example, all staff fill out a [paper survey](#) at the beginning of the year, sharing their favorite beverage, favorite snack, etc. One member of the committee pairs up each staff member with one another (tip: keep a list of all the pairings!) Each month, Secret Buddies find a way to secretly share a special treat with their buddy. Gifts should be less than 5 dollars in value: a favorite bag of chips, a kind note, a \$5 gift card. At one designated point in the year, buddies share a larger gift with one another at a value of 20 dollars or less.
 - *Impact:* By making this an ongoing practice, staff members both give and receive a regular token of appreciation from a colleague. Staff who participated reported stronger connections beyond grade-level teams.
- Live out this value by...setting up **ongoing opportunities** for staff members **to gather in groups beyond their grade-level teams**
 - *Example:* Each staff member took a survey to share about their various extracurricular interests. A school leader used the results of this survey to create intentional small groups of staff members, based on shared interests. Examples included, Mystery Lovers, Crossword Solvers, Reality TV Fans, etc. Staff members had to work together to guess what their uniting interest was. Staff members gathered several times in these groups as part of meeting openers throughout the year to connect on their shared topic.
 - *Impact:* Staff members discovered new things they had in common that they were not aware of before and had an opportunity to connect outside their grade level of subject matter groups.
- Live out this value by.. Creating **ongoing opportunities** for staff members to **meaningfully connect across lines of difference**
 - *Example:* A teacher shared the power of participating in regular professional development opportunities focused on race and equity like those offered by [Kindred](#) or [The Equity Lab](#).
 - *Impact:* Teachers named that acknowledging differences in identity is important and allows people to show up to work as their full selves. Staff reported that regular participation in these conversations about identity allowed staff members of color in particular to feel acknowledged and seen.
- Live out this value by...using a portion of all-staff time for **Wellness Time**
 - *Example:* During pre-service, 45 minutes was devoted to Wellness Time. Staff opted into various wellness stations, with titles like: Nature Walking, Arts & Crafts, Group Games, Yoga, Rest, Zumba, etc. Staff participated in their chosen activity alongside a small group. Staff participated in these rotations again on a

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- January professional development day.
- *Impact:* Months later, staff recalled this time as one that helped them build relationships with other team members. Staff reflected that the built-in pause served to fill their cups during a busy time.
- Live out this value by...creating opportunities for staff to share with one another about their **lives outside of school**
 - *Example:* During pre-service, staff created a family photo wall. The activity was designed to directly mirror an activity that teachers could do with students during the first weeks of school. Staff were given craft supplies and spent about 15 minutes decorating picture frames. Staff were asked to send in a picture of their families and then had the opportunity to share their image with a small group. Family pictures in the frames were then displayed on a bulletin board at the front entrance of the school.
 - *Impact:* Staff reported that this was a powerful way to learn more about the personal lives of colleagues in a way that allowed all teammates to share as much or as little as they would like. Other staff reported that it brought them joy to walk in and see their family displayed at the front of the school. Still others shared that it helped families to see staff members as whole people with loved ones of their own. Finally, this helped illustrate to new staff some of the key principles of [Classroom Design](#) in an inclusive and approachable way.
- Live out this value by...creating **adult spaces that convey belonging**
 - *Example:* School teams devoted resources to making their staff lounges into inviting spaces. Some changes were as big as adding a vending machine or new seating and others were as small as adding a nice soap dispenser.
 - *Impact:* When staff had an inviting space outside of classrooms that was clean and comfortable, they reported being more likely to use break time as a meaningful time to recharge. They reported returning to classrooms feeling refreshed. They also noted that using this shared space allowed them to connect with staff members they might not regularly see on their hallway or floor.
 - *Example:* One school created a Wellness Basket to bring out at staff meetings. The wellness bucket contained simple items like chewing gum, Tylenol, an extra phone charger, hand sanitizer and lotion, etc.
 - *Impact:* Staff reported that this helped them to feel taken care of.
- Live out this value by... **planning experiences between school years for connection building**. Remember to invite and incorporate staff participation in the planning and execution of these events!
 - *Example: Summer Socials* - Arrange optional summer gatherings, such as picnics, barbecues, or informal meet-ups at local parks or restaurants.
 - *Impact:* These low-pressure, social settings allow staff to connect on a personal level, fostering a sense of camaraderie and strengthening relationships.
 - *Example: Staff Retreat* - Plan a staff retreat with a mix of team-building activities, relaxation, and professional development sessions. This could include icebreakers, group challenges, and collaborative workshops.
 - *Impact:* Retreats provide a dedicated time for staff to bond, share experiences, and build trust, leading to a more cohesive and supportive team environment.

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- **Example: Back to School PD** - Integrate community-building activities into back-to-school professional development days. This could include morning yoga sessions, mindfulness workshops, and collaborative goal-setting exercises.
- **Impact:** Starting the school year with a focus on community and well-being sets a positive tone, promoting a culture of support and mutual respect among staff.
- **Applying elements of the Whole Child Model** to intentionally build adult culture
 - **Example:** Lead by example by building a culture of greeting staff members by name in the morning. Encourage members of your Whole Child design team to take ownership of this too. At most schools, no formal process of adult greetings was implemented; instead, a small number of staff members committed to greeting others with warmth in the morning.
 - **Impact:** Staff members reported that just as we can observe the difference a warm greeting makes for students, they also felt the positive impact of a greeting from a peer, both as individuals and on their school culture.