Well-Being Shared Measurement Database
Program-level Belonging Project

The Well-Being Shared Measurement Database (WBSMD) Task Group includes representatives from various organizations in Waterloo Region, connected through the Children and Youth Planning Table (CYPT). The objectives of the group are to promote shared measurement tools and to support standardized evaluation practices to better inform evidence-based decision-making for community-based programs.

The current project of the WBSMD focuses on measuring and increasing belonging for children, youth and families who participate in programs in Waterloo Region.

Why does belonging matter?
Extensive empirical research demonstrates a relation between lower rates of belonging and disproportionately negative well-being outcomes (e.g., mental health, physical health), whereas higher rates of belonging are associated with more positive outcomes.[1] Recent work in Waterloo Region, such as the CYPT Youth Impact Survey, point to a relatively negative picture of belonging, social connections and general well-being amongst young respondents. While this information is very valuable, the WBSMD Task Group recognizes that those on the front line need information about the specific impact of their programs on the youth and families they serve. This requires collecting and sharing both community and program-targeted data on belonging.

What obstacles prevent collecting and sharing program data on belonging?
Collecting data on how to improve program outcomes related to belonging remains a challenge for many organizations for a variety of reasons: (1) Existing data on belonging is limited to high level trends–there is no way to answer the question "what works and what needs to be changed?" (2) Individual agencies may lack the data literacy, time and/or financial resources to develop their own measurement framework for exploring belonging. (3) The complexity of the concept of belonging poses further obstacles to any agency wishing to explore it on their own, but currently no infrastructure exists for data collaboration between organizations. (4) Finally, there is limited infrastructure available for disseminating, sharing and mobilizing what they have learned.

The CYPT's Well-Being Shared Measurement Database Belonging Project is a grassroots project developed to address and solve these challenges through ongoing support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the University of Waterloo and LogicalOutcomes. We envision a community of local organizations and agencies supporting each other in collecting and understanding data, sharing insights and innovations to build a set of programs that can affect and adapt to changes in well-being in Waterloo Region.

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[1] For more information, please check out the CYPT's resource webpage, where you can read Building a Case for Child and Youth Belonging: Insights from the Children and Youth Planning Table of Waterloo Region.

Critical to this vision is the capacity for collecting data on belonging at the level of individual programs, but this requires solving the data challenges mentioned above. The WBSMD project aims to solve these problems in the following ways:

➔ *Tool Development:* Explore existing research, community needs and pilot data collection in order to develop and validate a questionnaire for the measurement of program-level and community-level belonging.
   ◆ Consultation with similar shared measurement initiatives
   ◆ Literature review on belonging and demographic data collection
   ◆ Focus groups with participating organizations to better understand needs
   ◆ Piloting data collection with key organizations, including extensive debriefing
   ◆ Exploring factor analysis using pilot data, revising questionnaires, etc

➔ *Capacity-Building:* Develop a data storage platform and offer research supports in order to facilitate the effective use of a validated belonging survey across programs in the community.
   ◆ Share validated research outputs, such as belonging questionnaire
   ◆ Develop tools for understanding belonging and how it may impact program monitoring and evaluations
   ◆ Foster a safe and secure mechanism for storing data, with industry standard data sharing regulations and protocols
   ◆ Work directly with participating organizations to facilitate data collection and to explore additional research interests

➔ *Data Exploration and Collaboration:* To analyze and share data in order to explore effective interventions and fruitful collaborations in the area of belonging.
   ◆ Support in analyzing individual organizations data through partnerships between local organizations and University of Waterloo researchers
   ◆ Launch learning opportunities and discussions to share learnings and consider future project phases
   ◆ Dissemination of results to date through open community data, website dashboard for visualizing results, etc

Interested in this work?
If you are interested in learning more about our work, please feel free to reach out to any of us:
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