

Book Review / Compte rendu

Reviewed by Synthia MacEachern, Graduate Student, University of Prince Edward Island

Flourishing Classrooms: A Deep Dive into Proactive Wellness for Grades 7-12 by Jeff Catania. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2023, 322 pages. ISBN 1475867468

As a society, we often interpret well-being through a deficit model, focusing on issues such as depression, substance abuse, and anxiety disorders among youth (ATA Research, 2019; Glowacki et al., 2023; Turpin et al., 2024). However, well-being is a multi-dimensional concept integrating a healthy mind, body, and spirit, guiding us toward optimal health and wellness (ATA Research, 2019; Mayer et al., 2020). In Canada, teaching about wellness and well-being has become a priority for school districts, emphasizing social-emotional learning, resilience, and mindfulness to combat bullying, fear of failure, anxiety, and feelings of purposelessness (Catania, 2023). *Flourishing Classrooms: A Deep Dive into Proactive Wellness for Grades 7-12* by Jeff Catania presents a new perspective, shifting the focus on well-being instruction to a proactive, positive psychology approach. The primary focus of positive psychology is to promote thriving rather than merely surviving (Alam, 2022). Catania incorporates this perspective into his wellness framework, structured around ten domains of wellness: safety, social well-being, eudaimonia, resilience, cognitive well-being, emotional well-being, environmental well-being, physical well-being, and spiritual well-being.

Each chapter of Catania's book begins with an overview of a wellness domain and concludes with key takeaways that summarize the main ideas presented. He also provides well-being activities specifically designed for instructors teaching students in grades 7-12. Each activity includes an objective statement, instructional time, and the trust level necessary for successful implementation. Labelled main moves, these lesson plans are essential to implementing the proactive, positive psychology approach and are the core of each chapter. Catania clearly outlines the implementation process, including teacher prompts and safety considerations. He encourages debriefing sessions and emphasizes recognizing magical teaching and learning moments (MTLMs). Additionally, he proposes integration strategies for using his framework as a school-wide initiative. He suggests how students can incorporate proactive wellness into their daily lives through "life play," and the author includes keywords, supplementary activities, and shareable cards, making it a resource teachers can use with minimal preparation.

Catania's work strongly emphasizes safety and trust in the classroom. Students often bring various challenges from their daily lives to school, which educators cannot control (Cata-

nia, 2023). However, teachers can choose how to respond to these challenges. Responding with empathy and understanding creates a safe and nurturing environment that promotes student wellness. Catania outlines three levels of trust associated with different suggested activities, which help address student vulnerability. A low level of trust indicates activities suitable for students and educators just beginning to build relationships. Examples of such activities include establishing classroom agreements and gathering anonymous feedback. Activities requiring a medium level of trust become safe only after a foundational level of trust has been developed. One example is having students listen attentively to their body, mind, heart, and soul. In this activity, students pair up and receive a prompt, allowing one student to speak for two minutes while the other listens without interruption. A high level of trust signifies activities designed for students who have built a significant sense of trust and safety over time. An example of a high-trust activity involves students reflecting on stressful events to gain a more profound awareness of their reactions to build resilience.

Catania's final domain of well-being is spiritual well-being; the interconnectedness of all well-being domains leading to a feeling of peace, unity, and transcendence (Catania, 2023). Effective implementation of spiritual well-being requires high trust between teachers and students. It is essential to note that spirituality does not necessarily equate to religion, particularly in a public-school context. Teachers need to choose wisely from the activities provided in this chapter. The tree of contemplative practices (Mind, 2021) provides a framework for potential contemplative practices, including journaling, contemplative arts, meditation, and quieting the mind (Mind, 2021). Teaching students to self-reflect can be integrated into core curricular content and promotes critical thinking. This strategy would be a positive way to nurture students' spiritual well-being. There are other activities, such as death dialogues, however that come with a content warning and educators should consider if the activity is appropriate for their students.

Catania expresses a strong passion for wellness and shares a journey toward proactive wellness in his work. He advocates for develo-

ping and implementing a wellness framework, presenting ideas and activities supported by solid processes throughout the book. He presents a framework for proactive wellness aimed at intermediate and high school levels. The writing style is easy to follow, and the consistent structure of each chapter allows for immediate implementation. Catania's emphasis on safety and trust throughout the book is innovative, demonstrating the understanding and empathy necessary to connect with students daily.

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