"Start with your own hope": Teachers’ Experiences During the Pandemic of the Strengths, Hope and Resourcefulness Program for School Mental Health (SHARP-SMH)


**Hope is...**
- An important component of resilience, consistently related to life satisfaction and subjective well-being, and necessary for healthy living.  
- Vital and sustaining when in demanding and stressful workplace conditions, specifically in educational contexts.  
- An essential resource for adults working with youth, particularly in maintaining a sense of purpose in their work.  
- A key enhancer of performance across a broad spectrum of domains, including areas related to teaching and learning, such as physical health, academics, well-being, and psychological functioning.

"A process of anticipation that involves the interaction of thinking, acting, feeling and relating, and is directed toward a future fulfillment that is personally meaningful."  
(Stephenson, 1991, p.1459)

**Research Question**
How did teachers’ participation in the implementation of a novel hope and strengths-focused program during the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic support their well-being and professional development?

**Methods**
- SHARP-SMH occurred in three phases as a participatory action research (PAR) project.

**Phase I – Psychoeducational Intervention**
- 35 teachers participated in the empirically supported strengths, hope, and resources-based psychoeducational intervention (SHARP) [1].

**Phase II – SHARP-SMH Development**
- Five teachers (two elementary and three high school) joined the SHARP-SMH research team and worked collaboratively to adapt SHARP activities into SHARP-SMH lessons for use within classrooms and/or schools.

**Phase III – SHARP-SMH Implementation**
- Teacher researchers implemented existing and newly developed, hope-focused activities and lessons within their classrooms and/or schools.

**Findings**
- Six key means of supporting teacher mental health, and most specifically hope, were identified through the implementation of SHARP-SMH:
  - University team engagement in the classroom
  - Hope-focused community of practice is supportive
  - Hope interventions with teachers
  - Hope-infused lessons spark teacher hope
  - Professional learning and hope literacy
  - Collaborative agency via knowledge mobilization

**References**

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**Affiliations**
1. Faculty of Education, University of Alberta; 2. Edmonton Public School Board ; 3. Edmonton Catholics School Board

**Discussion**
- **Hope is fostered through relationships and shared purpose**
  - SHARP-SMH teachers’ researchers described engaging with the project positively, impacting their teaching experiences and fostering hope and well-being.
- **Explicit, Intentional, and Contagious**
  - SHARP-SMH takes an intentional and explicit approach to engaging with hope in educational contexts.
- **Professional Learning**
  - Meeting to discuss the implementation of hope within classrooms and schools bolstered and strengthened team members’ sense of hope through shared difficulty, new perspectives, inspiration, community, and support.
- **Agency and Social Action**
  - Being a PAR project allowed for collaborative and integrated knowledge mobilization activities uniquely responsive to teacher researchers’ needs.
  - While the importance of teacher well-being heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic, this project highlights the importance of teacher well-being both inside and outside of pandemic conditions.

**Explicit, Intentional, and Contagious**
- With SHARP-SMH, teacher researchers increased their own hope literacy in order to seamlessly incorporate hope-focused activities and lessons into their classrooms and work.

**Agency and Social Action**
- "... [it was] one of my most hopeful things of the year. It brought me a lot of joy and happiness and reminded me of my teacher impact...bringing hope into lessons when you’re tired and burnt out was one of the ways I coped with teaching during the pandemic and struggling with your own mental health because you get that hope kick from students.”  
  - Teacher Researcher #2