

come as you



IMPLEMENTING A GRADE 9 TRANSITION PROGRAM TO ENHANCE SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS



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Come As You Are: Implementing a Grade 9 Transition Program to Enhance School Connectedness

Executive Summary

WHO THIS GUIDE IS FOR

- This guide is directed at adult allies at the school board level and within high schools who have the responsibility for grade 9 transition and positive school climate – administrators, mental health leads, student services staff and teacher champions.
- Providing students with an effective elementary to secondary school transition is a student success strategy of the Ontario Ministry of Education.
- This guide describes the results of a pilot project called **Come As You Are** conducted at a Thunder Bay high school to support grade 9 students transitioning to high school, and offers a step-by-step process for schools who want to begin or build upon a youth-engaged grade 9 transition program.

WHY FOCUS ON GRADE 9 TRANSITION

- The literature points to school connectedness -- a strong sense of belonging and positive relationships (school connectedness) as protective factors that help students manage transitions successfully.
- Schools can support connectedness as part of promoting a positive school climate.
- Because the transition is fundamentally social in character, **Come As You Are** focuses on schools as a critical social environment for young people.
- The project used a youth engagement approach to enhance school connectedness as a protective factor for students starting grade 9.

WHAT COME AS YOU ARE CAN DO FOR YOUR SCHOOL

- A grade 9 transition program will look different in every school. Schools can undertake a full **Come As You Are** program or adopt some of the best practices described in this guide, and adapt these to their school setting.
- High schools can use the **Come As You Are** program to:
 - Help grade 9 students to make new friends and acquire a sense of belonging
 - Engage and facilitate student participation
 - Support the development of positive learner identities and attitudes

HOW WE CAN HELP

This guide includes:

- An introduction and background on the pilot project
- An evidence summary and key themes from the literature
- A case study description of the **Come As You Are** pilot project and key findings
- Steps for implementing a grade 9 transition program (page 12)
- Resources for schools including:
 - A sample action planning template and evaluation tool
 - A list of **Come As You Are** materials available upon request
 - A detailed description of the Ambassador Program (peer mentor program)
- The Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) is able to assist schools in the district only by supporting the youth engagement and planning process and providing **Come As You Are** materials.

Contact: Family and School Health

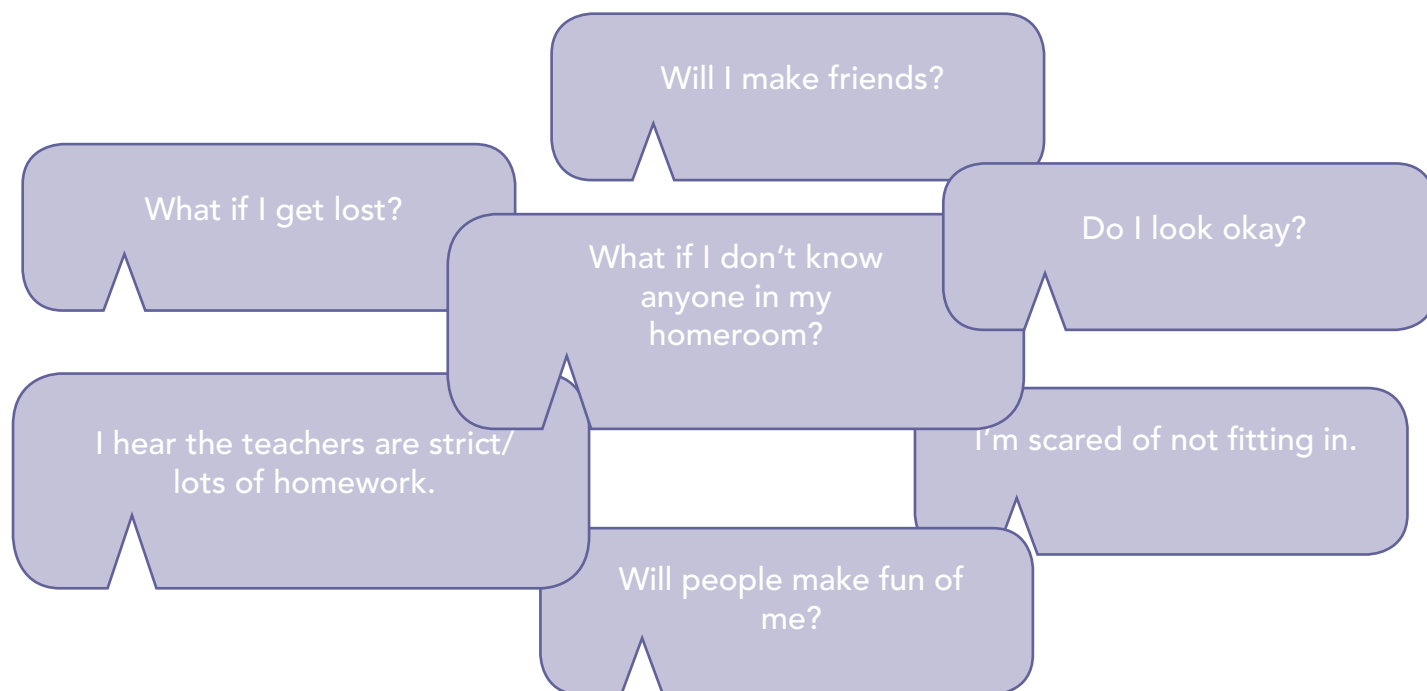
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INTRODUCTION

Many educators understand how important those first days of high school are to setting the stage for the entire year. As the first day of school approaches, students and teachers both are aflutter with anxieties and expectations. But, students starting grade 9 are especially adrift and open to possibility. They are making a major transition at a vulnerable time. Some things are mastered fairly quickly, such as finding their classes and understanding the bells or other routines. But, when thinking of a school as a critical social environment, other questions come to mind.

When students were asked what was on their mind coming into grade 9, this is a typical sampling of what they said¹:



Social inclusion at school is critically important to developing successful, healthy and engaged citizens. However school success is described, positive and inclusive social relationships are at the centre. The transition to high school is not an event, but a process of inclusion and engagement that extends well beyond the first days of school.

The grade 9 transition program described in this guide began with students. Young people in transition to high school identified their needs. Peer leaders developed solutions and worked with adult allies in and out of school to put their ideas into motion. This guide is directed at adult allies at the school board level and within high schools who have the responsibility for grade 9 transition and positive school climate – administrators, mental health leads, student services staff and teacher champions. It is hoped that the lessons learned from the **Come As You Are** pilot project will help other schools begin or build upon their own student-engaged approaches to supporting grade 9 students in transition to high school. The aim of this guide is to assist schools to improve the transition to high school and enhance school connectedness.

This guide was put together by members of the **Come As You Are** project team at the Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU), Thunder Bay Drug Awareness Committee (DAC) and Sir Winston Churchill Collegiate and Vocational Institute (CVI) with Lakehead Public Schools. The original project team included a teacher champion from the student services department of the intervention school, a health promotion planner, a public health nurse and a youth engagement specialist.

¹These results are drawn from four workshops held in the fall of 2011 to better understand how students feel as they start high school. The first three were held at the Thunder Bay District Health Unit, with grade nine students representing three high schools in Thunder Bay. The fourth workshop was conducted with the Leadership Class at the intervention school.

BACKGROUND

Beginning in December 2011 and culminating with the launch in September 2012, **Come as You Are** was a joint project between the students and staff of Sir Winston Churchill CVI, the DAC and TBDHU. The pilot project was funded through a grant from the Thunder Bay Community Foundation.

The intent was to engage students in creating a more inclusive, welcoming environment for students starting high school through a youth engagement strategy. The team began by talking to grade 9 high school students in December of 2011 through workshops led by TBDHU staff to find out what mattered most to young people starting high school. Over the ensuing months, TBDHU staff worked with Sir Winston Churchill CVI youth and teacher, Ryan McDonnell, to explore the issues, develop advocacy and leadership skills and create a school-based campaign to enhance the transition to high school. A smaller group of students volunteered over the summer of 2012 to complete the campaign preparations.

Come As You Are was introduced in September 2012 and was immediately embraced by students and staff at the intervention school. A description of the campaign and success factors is found in the **Come As You Are Pilot Project** section of this document.

Seeing the benefits of the pilot project, Sir Winston Churchill CVI continued the program.

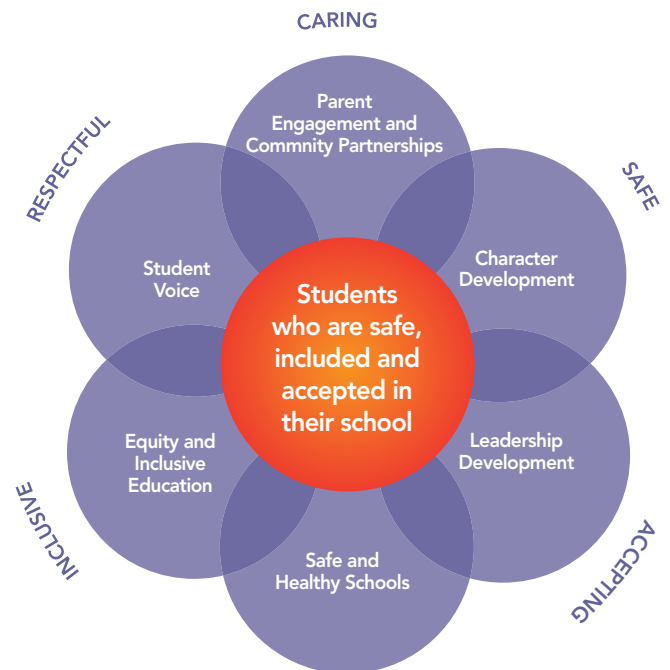
Come As You Are (2013) built upon the success of the first year, incorporating new ideas and enhancing the program even further. Year two of the program was funded by the school with support from TBDHU.

Come As You Are as a brand has since been adopted by the school as a way to encompass a number of inclusion and diversity initiatives for students in any year of high school, but retains its focus on grade 9 transition. It is a recognizable and repeated message within the school that reminds students and staff of the value of positive relationships and a connected school culture.

Come As You Are means a lot of things. It means we think everyone should be accepted for who they are. It means no judging and finding friendship anywhere. It means caring less about how you look and how others look. It means standing up for others who find themselves being judged or excluded. It means being yourself, because everyone else is taken.

WHY FOCUS ON GRADE 9 TRANSITION?

People experience important changes throughout their lives, and are more vulnerable to risk factors as they navigate through developmental and life transitions. The literature points to a strong sense of belonging and meaningful relationships as protective factors that help individuals manage transitions successfully. Both of these protective factors can be supported in the school environment as part of promoting a positive school climate. Grade 9 students who feel safe, included and accepted in their school are more likely to feel a sense of belonging, develop positive relationships and experience academic success as they transition into high school.



Building healthy relationships among all members of the school community

Source: The Ontario Ministry of Education framework for promoting a positive school climate
edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/IntroDocEng.pdf

KEEPING STUDENTS CONNECTED AND LEARNING

This project aimed to enhance school connectedness as a protective factor for new students entering high school, using a youth engagement approach. Providing students with an effective elementary to secondary school transition is a student success strategy of the Ontario Ministry of Education.

A grade 9 transition program is focused on supporting the positive development of new students starting high school including social well-being, mental health and academic success. A number of overarching themes from the literature including school connectedness, converge when looking at schools as a setting for positive mental health ²:

School connectedness: Students' feelings of whether they are accepted, respected, included and supported by others in the school community.

Social emotional learning: An area of development that focuses on opportunities for young people to develop skills such as managing emotions, setting goals, developing empathy, having positive relationships and dealing with conflict.

Positive youth development: Engagement and empowerment opportunities that focus on youth as active participants and decision-makers.

Resiliency: Describes the ability of people to adapt and flourish in their environment; internal and external assets help young people succeed. Creating an "asset rich" school environment supports youth resiliency.

Protective factors: Internal and external factors that contribute to young people's positive development and resiliency. Related to this concept are "risk factors" that pose a challenge to positive development. For adolescents, protective factors in the school setting include a sense of belonging, caring adults and positive relationships with peers.

Strength-based practices: An approach that emphasizes that youth have strengths and gifts that support their capacity to learn and grow.

Mental fitness: The degree to which an individual has the capacity to think about, plan and act on personal decisions that affect their social and physical development.

Student success: A term that encompasses academic achievement, social and physical well-being.

SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS

School is a critical social environment for youth. The literature suggests that as youth move into their early and later teen years, teacher support and peer networks in the school setting have a powerful influence on youth (Joint Consortium, 2010).

Youth who lack a positive connection to their school environment are at a disadvantage when it comes to acquiring personal and social skills that help them adjust and mature. Risk-taking and substance use can then become an option that compensates for this deficit (Griffen, 1999).

Research shows school connectedness is an important protective factor. Students who feel connected to school are less likely to use alcohol or drugs, engage in violent behaviour, become pregnant or experience emotional distress (McNeely, 2002). It has also been positively associated with academic performance and students' sense of belonging and self-esteem. (Juvonen, 2007).

Factors that can increase school connectedness are:

- Adult support
- Belonging to a positive peer group
- Commitment to education
- A positive school environment

² For a useful summary of themes from the literature, see *Schools as a setting for promoting positive mental health: Better practices and perspectives* (Joint Consortium 2010 January).

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

One of the key factors in the development of the **Come As You Are** program was the project team's youth engagement approach. Youth were meaningfully and actively engaged in the development and implementation of the initiative. Evidence shows that engagement can provide opportunities for young people that are associated with many positive health outcomes for both the young person, the people they interact with and the communities and systems in which they live, learn and play. Young people engaged in structured, meaningful activities are less likely to engage in risk behaviour or experience depression, and are more likely to achieve higher grades and have a positive sense of self and commitment to others (Centre of Excellence, 2003).

There are many benefits to engaging youth in the development of programs targeting individuals in their own age group. Youth are in a prime position to provide insight and develop a creative program that will more effectively meet the needs of and communicate optimally with their peers. More importantly, by empowering youth to take ownership of the project and giving them key decision-making roles, they are able to develop leadership skills, increase self-confidence and build resilience. By empowering youth as peer mentors, the development of healthy peer networks is supported.

YOUNG PEOPLE IN TRANSITION

In 2010, the Ontario Ministry of Education released results from a three-year study examining transition to high school in Ontario: *Fresh Starts and False Starts: Young People in Transition from Elementary to Secondary School*. The researchers reviewed the literature, collected socio-demographic data and spoke with students, teachers and parents in numerous focus groups and interviews. Themes from report's findings include:

- Starting high school creates stresses that can be addressed through a community of helpers to support transition
- The transition process extends past grade 9
- The transition is fundamentally social in character; friends are a critical aspect of transition and can make transition easier
- Students experience paradoxical emotions during transition, for example, feeling simultaneously excited and anxious, hopeful and fearful
- Young people want safer schools and better school spirit

The report goes on to recommend a number of ways that schools can improve the transition, some of which have been adopted by the **Come As You Are** project:

- Support young people to make new friends and acquire a sense of belonging
- Engage and facilitate student participation
- Support the development of learner identities and good attitudes (e.g. be yourself, make good choices, join activities)

The *Comprehensive School Health Framework* provides a model for planning interventions across four domains. The **Come As You Are** project focused on the social and physical environment but also addressed factors in the other domains.

DOMAIN	ACTIVITY
Social and physical environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a welcoming environment for grade 9 students • Physical: visual branding of Come As You Are in the school, youth-friendly maps posted, bulletin board created • Social: Video and a bulletin board created, Ambassador program facilitating relationship-building through team-building and events with participation of grade 9 homeroom teachers
Teaching and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Icebreaker Toolkit for Teachers created and used by grade 9 teachers; making friendship the focus of early home room classes
Partnership and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community partners in pilot project development; services and helping resources included in the Unofficial Grade 9 User Handbook

How all the activities across the domains came together as a program is described in the next section, **Come As You Are** Pilot Project.

COME AS YOU ARE PILOT PROJECT

Using a youth engagement approach allowed for an organic, responsive process of development, best captured as a case study narrative presented in the pages that follow. As the project progressed, the team learned about how youth experience their transition to high school and what strategies work to engage students in creating a more inclusive school environment. Insights into what was learned over the two years of implementation are found in the sidebars.

SETTING THE STAGE

Step One – Listening to Student Voices

The team began in December of 2011 by gathering qualitative data from high school students about their experience starting high school. Three focus groups were held at TBDHU and were open to any grade 9 students in Thunder Bay. This data gathering process continued with student leaders at Churchill CVI. In total, about 50 high school students were involved. The kinds of concerns that they reported regarding starting high school were consistent across the groups and were distilled into six key statements:

- I'm worried that I won't make friends.
- Do I look okay?
- I'm scared of not fitting in.
- What if I get lost?
- What if I don't know anyone in my classes?
- What if the work is too difficult?

Responses from students showed that social concerns are paramount to students starting high school. These concerns became a focus for the next phase of development.

Step Two – Exploring the Issues

The six key statements above are loaded with meaning for students. The next step was to explore these issues with students. The team turned to teacher champion, Ryan McDonnell and his peer leadership class. Four in-class workshops were held from December to March, leading to an overnight retreat at Fort William Historical Park in March. The key statements led to conversations about social inclusion, friendship, discrimination and racism, body image, bullying, substance use, stress and success in school. Students explored the issues and built advocacy skills and chose **Come As You Are** as the project slogan.

Keys to Success

Positive change happens because students and teachers who know their school community best build from existing strengths. This project tapped into an existing peer leadership class and a teacher champion who was already working to improve school climate.

For the program development to reflect a diverse student community, outreach was used to invite other students to join the existing peer leaders in the process and bring different perspectives to the planning process.

A student-involved engagement process seemed to work best, so that both students and adults were meaningfully involved in the project. The resources and experience of adult allies are very important to clarify and bring student-generated ideas to fruition. It also found that a collaborative effort embodied the principles of inclusion and highlighted the role of both students and teachers in building a positive school climate.

Students appreciated opportunities to pool their energy and ideas in the context of an experiential retreat away from school. A small investment in going off-site had a big impact on learning and helped to build relationships between students and teachers.

PLANNING

Step Three – Action Planning

Following the retreat, an Action Planning Workshop was held involving a core group of peer leaders to develop the action plan for **Come As You Are**. The workshop was facilitated by TBDHU staff.

The peer leaders and adult helpers identified **7 objectives** to enhance grade 9 inclusion:

1. Create a visual brand for **Come As You Are**.
2. Create a welcome video featuring older students and alumni remembering themselves in grade 9.
3. Develop an Ambassador Program engaging older students to model inclusive behaviour, support and mentor grade 9s and build relationships among grade 9s and between grade 9s and older students.
4. Create a youth-friendly grade 9 handbook with content developed by students.
5. Hire an artist to create a youth-friendly map of the school.
6. Engage grade 9 teachers in supporting the project through wearing branded buttons, working with the Ambassador Program and using inclusion activities in their classrooms; and create an inclusion activities toolkit for teachers.
7. Continue and expand grade 9 programming throughout the year and involve ambassadors.

Once objectives were agreed upon, the group set about action planning for each objective, identifying actions, timelines, resources and responsibilities.

Sample action planning worksheets are found in the resources section of this guide.

Step Four - Getting Ready

This was the working phase of the campaign development where the planning team worked on the actions to meet the objectives. In this phase, the visual brand was created, the Ambassador Program was developed, students were recruited, the handbook and video were created and branded materials were produced.

Keys to Success

Teacher involvement was important not only to support the delivery of the program but in also projecting a whole-school approach to building an inclusive culture.

Planning tools were important for identifying possible activities and choosing the ones that were the most exciting and realistic for the school. A dotmocracy method was used to select the main activities and an action planning template set out the plan.

Having a clear action plan made getting ready much easier! Students could take ownership of the program elements that interested them the most.

Understanding that grade 9 transition lasts more than a few days or weeks, it was important to plan for the first weeks of school and beyond. While the first days of school can set the stage for a student's experience at their new school, the focus on inclusion should extend into the weeks and months that follow. The peer leaders and teacher champion continued to plan additional activities throughout the year.

All the activities and outputs of the project had a clear student voice so that grade 9 students and the school at large knew that this campaign was coming from their peers.

TAKING ACTION

Step Five – Taking Action

Even before the first day of school, “taking action” began with a special training session with teachers before the arrival of students and distribution of the *Icebreaker Toolkit for Teachers*.

The campaign was launched in September of 2012, including:

- A large **Come As You Are** banner painted by students in the main lobby
- A *welcome video* featured in the grade 9 assembly
- The *Ambassador Program* which matched each grade 9 student with a senior peer mentor
- The *Unofficial Grade 9 User Handbook* given to all grade 9 students
- The youth-friendly map of the school posted in halls and also on the back of each student’s timetable
- **Come As You Are** buttons worn by grade 9 teachers in support of the campaign
- Ongoing grade 9 programming throughout the year

On the first day of school, grade 9 students were met by teachers wearing **Come As You Are** buttons, watched a video created by the leadership group about starting high school, and received their *Unofficial Grade 9 User Handbook* featuring youth-developed content, helping resources and a youth-friendly artist-rendered map of the school.

The *Ambassador Program* was also launched on the first day of school. A team of about 50 senior students wore **Come As You Are** t-shirts. Each ambassador was dedicated to mentor approximately five new grade 9 students through their orientation week and beyond.

Ambassadors were an essential component of the project. They developed activities and icebreakers, acted as “brand” ambassadors and were active leaders in implementing the campaign. This was the most successful and critical component of the project.

For a more detailed description of the Ambassador Program initiated by teacher, Ryan McDonnell, check the resources section at the end of this guide.

I think that this program is a great initiative. Schools need more programs like this one. It helped make the beginning of the year an easier transition, and made it more enjoyable. I believe that the more we break down the barriers, especially between the juniors and seniors, the more all of our students will understand and sympathize with one another. I also believe that the grade 9s need a transition to settle in and call our building home. The more they feel welcome and settled, the more they will succeed.

Erna Daze, grade 9 teacher

Keys to Success

*It was important to start the first day of school on a high note that highlighted the message (**Come As You Are**) and the messengers (Ambassadors and teachers).*

The ambassadors, as a team of senior peer leaders, were critical to the implementation of the project.

*Social media was one way for peer leaders to communicate with each other and get the word out about **Come As You Are** activities.*

*The social branding of **Come As You Are** depended on it being visibly endorsed by senior students and teachers. Ambassadors wore t-shirts, teachers wore buttons, and other materials, such as the map and Grade 9 User Handbook, were branded with **Come As You Are**. Students and teachers reported feeling good about promoting a positive message.*

The Unofficial Grade 9 User Handbook is most effective if it is incorporated into activities in the first days of school, rather than just handed out. Ambassadors and homeroom teachers used the handbook for inclusion and orientation activities.

Printing the youth-friendly school map on the back of timetables was a simple and very effective support for new students.

MEASURING AND SHARING SUCCESSES

Stage Six – Measuring Success

Evaluation of the pilot project focused on three questions:

1. What are the feelings of students entering high school? Were the feelings of students in the intervention group similar to the top concerns identified in earlier focus groups?
2. How well did the pilot program address student concerns and assist grade 9 students in their transition to high school? How did grade 9 students rate the pilot program activities and link these to their concerns about entering high school?
3. Did the pilot program influence students' connectedness to school? As an indirect measure, how do the intervention group scores on school connectedness compare to the non-intervention group?

To answer these questions, the project gathered qualitative information through focus groups, interviews and anecdotal feedback from students and teachers at the intervention school. Using a survey tool developed by the team, quantitative data was gathered from the intervention group and a comparison group. Survey results were restricted to responses from those students starting high school who had **not** come through the senior elementary hub within the school in order to improve equivalency between the intervention group and the comparison group.

Overall, student and staff responses to the campaign were very positive. Throughout the development phases peer leaders signed onto the project and by the launch date there were over 50 peer leaders involved. Feedback was solicited from teachers and focus groups were held with Grade 9 students and ambassadors to gather feedback on the program.

A summary of key findings from the **Come As You Are** grade 9 survey is found below.

For a sample evaluation plan, the methodology and limitations of the **Come As You Are** pilot evaluation and final version of the grade 9 survey, see the resources section at the end of this guide.

I came from a very small elementary school and was very nervous about coming to high school. I was really scared that I would get lost and that I would be all alone, but the Come As You Are program and the ambassadors helped me to find my way around and make friends as soon as I walked in the door. I felt so comfortable right away, that I joined the junior concert band, student government and the curling team.

Robyn, grade 9 student

I was very nervous coming into high school. I was really scared that I would not be able to find my way around and that I was going to be freshied by older kids. From the time I walked into school I knew that I was going to be ok. The ambassadors wore maroon t-shirts and helped to show me around and I always felt as though they were looking out for me. It was nice to know that the older kids cared about us Grade 9s.

Julia, grade 9 student

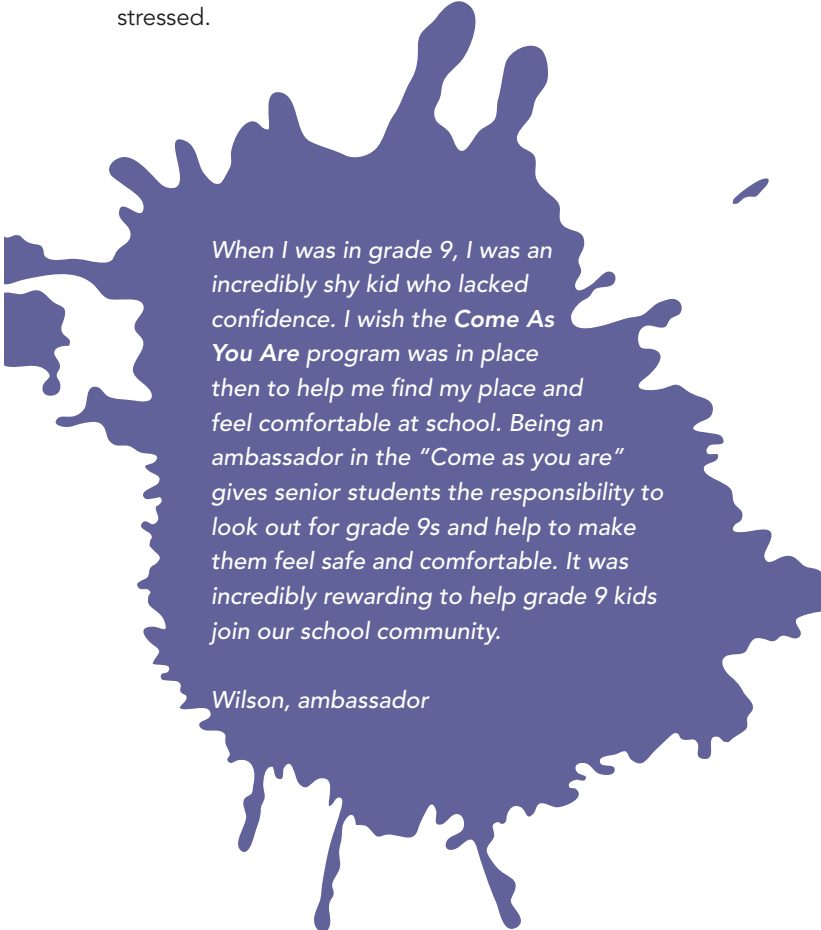
The most important thing is to just be yourself and be confident in who you are. Because if you shy away from yourself, you're just not going to fall into the right group and you could stray away from things. It's very difficult... and you need peer help. You need your friends to be there with you.

Ambassador, grade 12 student

KEY FINDINGS

The following are key findings from the year one survey results:

- Both groups showed improvement in their feelings after school started, however, the intervention group showed greater improvement of their feelings on six of the nine measures:
 - I'm worried I won't make friends.
 - Do I look okay?
 - What if I get lost?
 - I'm excited about starting school.
 - I'm excited to meet new people.
 - I want to try new things in high school.
- The intervention group had higher average scores on school connectedness on all measures, though "getting good grades" was important to both groups. The measures were:
 - I enjoy being at school.
 - My school is a friendly and welcoming place.
 - My school building is an inviting place to learn.
 - I feel accepted by students in my school.
 - Teachers are interested in students.
 - Teachers are good at helping students get to know each other.
 - I feel safe in my school.
 - Getting good grades is important to me.
 - Extra help is available at my school when I need it.
- Students in the two groups who reported feeling unwelcome or uncomfortable at school identified different reasons for feeling this way. For the intervention group, "Aboriginal background" and "appearance" were the top two reasons, followed by "my grades or marks." For the comparison group, "appearance" and "my grades or marks" were the top two reasons, followed by "family's level of income."
- Of the program activities delivered at the intervention school in year one the three highest-rated program elements were: the youth-friendly map of the school, the Ambassador Program and in-class team building activities, the grade 9 breakfast event followed by the Unofficial Grade 9 User Handbook and the **Come As You Are** video.
- For the intervention group, the majority of students (>80%) reported that grade 9 orientation activities helped them to learn people's names, find their way around school, make new friends and feel more comfortable in class. Just over half of respondents reported that the activities helped them feel less stressed. Agreement that grade 9 orientation activities helped students was higher on all measures among the intervention group.
- Results from year two of the survey (administered to a new cohort of grade 9 students at the intervention school only) showed similar results with some differences:
 - Measures of school connectedness were at similar or slightly higher levels from the previous year.
 - Students who reported feeling unwelcome or uncomfortable at school identified similar reasons for feeling this way. The top three reasons were the same as the previous year: "Aboriginal background" and "appearance" and "my grades or marks."
- New program elements were introduced in year two. A grade 9 retreat at Fort William Historical Park made the top three for highest-ranked program activities. Also, the youth-friendly map was printed on the back of student timetables in year two, and was rated "awesome" or "helpful" by 94% of respondents.
- In year two, students reported a higher level of agreement that grade 9 orientation activities helped them in their transition to high school. A majority of students (>90%) reported that grade 9 orientation helped them to learn people's names, find their way around school, make new friends, and feel more comfortable in class. Just over three-quarters of students reported that the program helped them to feel less stressed.



*When I was in grade 9, I was an incredibly shy kid who lacked confidence. I wish the **Come As You Are** program was in place then to help me find my place and feel comfortable at school. Being an ambassador in the "Come as you are" gives senior students the responsibility to look out for grade 9s and help to make them feel safe and comfortable. It was incredibly rewarding to help grade 9 kids join our school community.*

Wilson, ambassador

IMPLEMENTING A GRADE 9 TRANSITION PROGRAM AT YOUR SCHOOL – STEP BY STEP

Inclusion programming for grade 9 students will look different in every school. Whether you adopt **Come As You Are** as a model and campaign brand for your school, or simply use some of the ideas and learnings from the pilot project, it's hoped that this document will assist you in strengthening support of grade 9 students at your school and enhancing school connectedness.

Based on the **Come As You Are** pilot, the following steps are recommended to taking a youth engagement approach to a grade 9 inclusion program:

1. **Find an in-school champion.**
An in-school teacher champion with support from the school administration can initiate the project.
2. **Determine the overall goal of the project.** What is the purpose of the project? What change do you want to see? For example, to enhance grade 9 transition to high school.
3. **Form a team to work on the project.** Share the goals of your project with others and find out how they can help move the project forward. Your team should include staff from your school and school board (for example, the mental health lead, school administrators, student services staff and other teachers), student leaders and even parents. Student leaders may come from an existing leadership group or class, or be developed as part of the project. Also invite the healthy schools nurse (TBDHU) to assist in the development of the project. Discuss what team members can offer to the project and determine roles.

4. **Take stock of the situation and available resources.** Gather information to form a picture of the current situation in your school. Information can include school climate data, profile of the student population, academic information, and previous and/or current grade 9 transition programs or activities. Also list available resources that your school or board or community stakeholders can offer (e.g. meeting spaces, transportation, graphic design, printing, youth development activities or expertise) and budget.
5. **Decide on your youth engagement strategy.** How will the project engage with students in creating the program to achieve the goals? Different types of engagement can be used at different stages of the project, but students should be meaningfully involved from the very beginning on your planning team and through your activities. See the references section at the end of this guide for more tools and resources related to youth engagement.
 - **Student-directed:** Students make decisions about strategies and activities and take ownership of the project with support from a teacher champion and other adult allies.
 - **Student-involved:** Students join adults in making joint decisions on the strategies and activities of the project. Students have an equal voice in decision-making.
 - **Student-informed:** A working group made up of adults gathers information from students to inform decision making (e.g. through focus groups, consultations).

Key Roles for Adult Allies

Teacher Champion

- Establish overall goal of the project.
- Form the project team.
- Lead information-gathering process.
- Lead youth engagement and youth development process.

Mental Health Lead

- Provide information regarding school climate and student voice data.

Healthy Schools Nurse

- Summarize information to assist in planning.
- Facilitate exercise with planning team/student leaders to identify strategies and develop objectives.

6. **Develop objectives and actions with timeframes and budget.**

With students, develop the work plan. There are a variety of frameworks and tools that can be used. An example of an action planning template is included in the resource section at the end of this guide.

7. **Plan for evaluation.** How will you know you've succeeded? What information do you need to collect, and from whom? Plan for evaluation early in the planning process.

8. **Take action.** Put your plan into action. Having a detailed work plan (step 6) will make implementation easier.

9. **Share successes!** Build support and excitement for the project at every stage, with school staff, the whole student body, and with the community. Invite media to cover the activities, and ask students to speak or present about the project at meetings or learning events inside and outside of the school.

10. **Evaluate and grow.** Evaluate the delivery of the program and how well it met your goals. Use results to adjust and improve your program and help plan for the next year. Share results with your stakeholders.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT COME AS YOU ARE

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit supported the original pilot project. Are Health Unit staff available to help with developing our own grade 9 inclusion program?

Yes. You can invite the Health Unit to join your working group and help with planning and implementation. Contact information is below.

We want to use the Come As You Are logo but develop our own grade 9 transition program and materials. Can we do that?

Yes, the logo is intended to be used in different schools to promote inclusion initiatives, particularly for grade 9 students. Contact the Health Unit to request the logo for use in your campaign or program.

We want to adapt The Unofficial Grade 9 User Handbook for our school. Is that possible?

The *Unofficial Grade 9 User Handbook* is best used as a school-specific resource for students. If you would like to include this in your plan, it is best to develop it with students at your school. You may want to approach your school board about assisting with design and printing.

Can we get copies of the Icebreaker Toolkit for Teachers?

Yes, the healthy schools nurse from the Health Unit can provide copies of the toolkit.

Can we get a copy of the Come As You Are video to use in our program?

Yes, copies are available from the Health Unit. Or you may want to create your own video that is reflective of your school.

Do we have to use the Come As You Are survey with our own program?


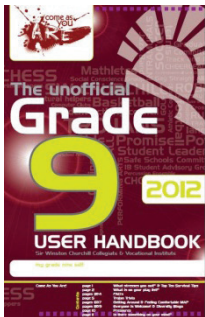

You can use or adapt the survey included in this guide as part of your own evaluation plan, but it is up to you what evaluation tools you will use for your program.

See the resources section at the end of this guide for information on **Come As You Are** materials available upon request.

Contact: Family and School Health
Thunder Bay District Health Unit
christie.hovi@tbdhu.com or call
(807) 625-5972

RESOURCES

Come As You Are materials are available from the Thunder Bay District Health Unit upon request:

Item	Description
Logo 	<p>Logo files are available from the Thunder Bay District Health Unit.</p>
Video (DVD) <i>Message To My Grade 9 Self</i>	<p>DVDs are available from the Thunder Bay District Health Unit.</p>
The Unofficial Grade 9 User Handbook 	<p>This is available in electronic format as an example if you are planning to create a youth-friendly guide for your school and are looking for ideas.</p>
Icebreaker Toolkit for Teachers  <p>Icebreaker Toolkit for Teachers</p>	<p>Copies are available from the Thunder Bay District Health Unit.</p>

ACTION PLANNING WORKSHEET

Steps	Things to Consider...
Step 1: Define the issue	<p>What is the goal or purpose of this strategy?</p> <p>What change do you want to see?</p>
Step 2: Be specific	<p>Who do you want to reach?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers • Coaches • New students • Senior students • All students • Administration • Other
Step 3: Choose a strategy	<p>What strategy will be used to accomplish your objective?</p>
Step 4: Develop a plan	<p>What will this strategy “look like?” What are the elements or activities?</p> <p>When will you implement this strategy?</p> <p>Where?</p> <p>Have you created a “Planning Timeline” (on back)?</p> <p>What needs to be completed by June?</p> <p>What needs to be completed by September?</p> <p>Do you need anything from school administration?</p> <p>Is there a budget?</p> <p>What resources are needed?</p> <p>Do you have a plan to evaluate your project?</p>
Step 5: Spread the word	<p>How will you promote this strategy?</p> <p>What resources are needed?</p> <p>Who will create or design the promotional materials?</p>
Step 6: Take Action!	<p>Are you ready?</p> <p>Does everyone know what their tasks are?</p>
Step 7: Evaluate	<p>How will you know if this strategy is successful?</p>

Planning Timeline: List the planning steps of this activity, key dates to have planning steps completed and the names of people responsible for each step. Please attach a separate piece of paper if there is not enough space below.

Tasks What Needs to be Done?	Person Responsible By Who?	Key Dates By When?

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Inclusiveness: Acceptance and embracing of diversity including opinion, religion, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, image, ability, age, geography and mental health. This includes the removal of barriers, including economic barriers, to enable youth engagement.

Positive youth development: Alignment with a positive youth development approach.

Accountability: Developing standards of practice and accountability for youth engagement/development work, including responsibility for reporting back to youth. Include evaluation and monitoring as appropriate.

Operational practices: Commitment to operational practices that sustain youth engagement and enable youth development workers – including approaches to meet the needs of youth. These may include:

- Adults as allies/partners with youth
- Youth-led and/or peer-to-peer initiatives
- Approaches that provide opportunities to youth for meaningful action
- Recognition of mutual benefit for adults and youth
- Demonstration that youth contribution is valued

Strengths-based approach: A commitment to working with youth to identify needs and build upon youth assets. This includes skill development and capacity building i.e. education, training, on-going professional development, opportunities for group knowledge, skills and networks. Also includes a commitment to facilitate/provide opportunities for ongoing feedback, peer-review and self-reflection.

Flexibility and Innovation: Commitment of youth and adults working with youth to be open to new ideas, and have a willingness to take risks and challenge existing established processes and structures. Includes flexibility to hear and respond to youth initiated ideas.

Space for youth: Ensuring caring and supportive environments where youth feel safe. Includes both policies and practices that make space available to youth and enable youth to feel safe in that space.

Transparency: Being clear about the purpose of engaging youth, using youth friendly approaches when interacting with youth and ensuring youth understand outcomes and products of their engagement.

Sustainability of resources: Sustainability of financial resources for best practice youth engagement initiatives can help to ensure youth engagement initiatives are not limited.

Cross-sector alignment: Youth engagement has been embraced across agencies of government at all levels (i.e. federal, provincial and municipal) and many non-governmental organizations. Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) is committed to working with other ministry partners and stakeholders to ensure alignment where possible of its youth engagement approach.

Collaboration: A commitment to working with others doing similar work to share knowledge and facilitate action while fostering development of strong and lasting relationships. An example could include a youth engagement community of practice.

Youth Engagement Principles developed by the Youth Engagement Advisory Group for the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport. (December 2010) Now part of MOHLTC.

mhp.gov.on.ca/en/youth/Youth-engagement-principles.pdf

AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

In 2012, the Ambassador Program was initiated at Sir Winston Churchill CVI and again in 2013 with some enhancements. The key components of the program are described below with reflections from teacher champion Ryan McDonnell who implemented the program.

Ambassadors as peer mentors and relationship builders

Peer mentoring is not a novel idea, and many schools are implementing peer mentoring programs. The evidence shows that the influence of peers takes on greater importance during adolescence. What the Ambassador Program does is engage influential peers - senior students - as mentors for a particular audience - grade 9 students starting high school.

Early focus groups with grade 9 students revealed that they frequently worry about being "freshied" by older students in the school. Having a large, visible and involved ambassador group helps to minimize these fears.

If we have older students facilitating, whether it's games or whether you see a kid sitting alone, and you go talk to them, it creates that social comfort, or helps kids to step out of their zone and talk to other kids.

The fact that we could have fifty kids there, who are senior students and who have volunteered to be ambassadors, shows that there are all these older kids who want to help and want them to feel comfortable, that have pride in their school.

Peer mentors help to build relationships among students and between students and teachers. The ambassadors very purposefully facilitate the project of making new friends that is so important to grade 9s starting high school.

By year two, recruitment was quite simple. It has become the "thing to do" for grade 11s and in this way a new cohort of leaders can get involved in the project each year.

Recruitment

Recruitment for the Ambassador Program began with existing student leaders in the school and rippled out from there. In the case of **Come As You Are**, the initial group of ambassadors was recruited from an existing peer leadership class and this group was augmented with student leaders from student government, sports teams and clubs. Students in grade 11 or higher were sought.

Once a core group was established, the process of enlarging that group was somewhat organic as word of mouth spread the idea and more senior students asked about getting involved. The core group actively reached out to a diversity of senior students so that the ambassadors represented the diversity of the school.

AMBASSADOR TRAINING AND PREPARATION

In year one, the ambassadors had minimal training for their role in the **Come As You Are** project, but they had a great deal of enthusiasm in the implementation. In focus groups after the year one implementation, ambassadors said that they wanted more leadership training and planning time, and that they would be willing to come in before the start of school to get ready for the launch.

In year two, ambassador training and preparation had the following components:

Leadership Retreat

A leadership retreat was held at Sleeping Giant Provincial Park the spring prior. At the retreat, the ambassadors trialed several icebreaker activities that had been developed by the peer leadership class and made decisions on which activities would work best for inclusion in

The Unofficial Grade 9 User Handbook and which were best suited to the ambassador-led inclusion activities for the first week of school.

Pre-launch Preparation

Ambassadors reunited for a 2-hour meeting just before school started in September to go over the program and revisit best practices for implementation. They received their assigned mentees (list of grade 9 students assigned to them), the homeroom teacher for those students and their **Come As You Are** t-shirt.

Ambassador-to-Student Ratios

Each ambassador was assigned to four or five grade 9 students in the same homeroom. Each homeroom class had three to six ambassadors in it, depending on the size of the class. In higher risk classes, the ratio was smaller: about three students to an ambassador.

The kids take it seriously, they have fun with it but they recognize they're a role model and I think they behave differently because of it.

FIRST WEEKS OF SCHOOL – PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Lead Ambassadors and the Morning Check-in Meeting

Each home room had a lead ambassador. This person was responsible for meeting with the other lead ambassadors and the teacher champion before school as the point of contact for their group of ambassadors and for gathering supplies for the activity that day. The lead ambassadors would then relay information to the other ambassadors.

First Day of School Welcome

On the first day of school, the ambassadors gathered in the gym in the morning for the grade 9 assembly. They had a fun activity organized in advance. In year one the Ambassadors sat in the bleachers with the grade 9s and led a flash mob on cue.

As grade 9s left the assembly with their class schedules and school map, they joined their ambassador groups and met their ambassador. Together the group went to their homeroom class where their ambassador and the others assigned to that homeroom led team building and icebreaker games focused on building relationships and having fun.

The ambassadors got to know their names, they took them to class, they would say hello to them in the hallway, they made sure that they had somewhere to eat at lunch, and that sort of thing.

Homeroom Circles and Team Building

Focus groups with grade 9 students indicated that they wanted hands-on activities that were social and not necessarily academic on the first day of school so that they could become comfortable with people and learn names. The Ambassador Program tried to meet this need by going into homeroom classrooms to lead inclusion activities. Every day for the first week of school and into the second week, ambassadors went to their assigned grade 9 homeroom

and did a check-in circle with their mentees. Extending the daily, hands-on attention of ambassadors into the second week of school helped create the conditions for making friends and enhancing school connectedness.

Ambassadors would go to their assigned home room class for the last 20 minutes or so, check in with their kids, and do a restorative type circle, ask what went well yesterday, what didn't go well and then they would lead a whole class in an icebreaker/team building activity.

Informal Mentoring

In addition to the organized activities like the first day of school welcome and the homeroom team building activities, ambassadors were asked to look for ways to informally connect not only with their mentees but with all new students, and be available to them. Just saying, "hi" in the hallway can open the door to helping out a new student as they figure things out. And, in the process, ambassadors model the kind of school climate and student behaviour that grade 9s will want to emulate.

So, the ambassadors become a friendly face that grade 9s see over and over again. One of the stories that was shared by an ambassador was the grade 9 student who couldn't open his locker. He saw a student who had their ambassador t-shirt on and she helped him out. Another student was struggling to find their class, they saw an ambassador, and asked them for help. The ambassadors provide a support network within the building in that first week, but it also carries on throughout the first year.

ONGOING GRADE 9 ACTIVITIES

The ambassadors as peer mentors were most active in the first two weeks of school, but once activated, they became a group of student leaders ready to become involved in all manner of school activities including additional grade 9 programming through the year. Brainstorm and choose creative and fun activities that work best for your school. Some examples from the intervention school are below.

Grade 9 Breakfast

A grade 9 breakfast was held during the second week of school. All grade 9 students again met with their ambassadors who led a restorative type circle, asking the questions:

What has gone well for you since school started?

What could be improved?

What are you looking forward to this school year?

During the breakfast, ambassadors and teachers ran activities that taught students about stress and healthy mechanisms for dealing with it. Guidance counselors and school support staff also helped to facilitate the breakfast, which was a great chance for students to be introduced to them in an informal setting. In addition to providing an opportunity for ambassadors and grade 9 students to check in with each other, the breakfast showcased the co-curricular experiences that the school had to offer, as well as introduced students to the coaches and advisors who ran these programs. The school had adopted a policy to not have team try-outs or start clubs until the second week of school so that grade 9 students would have the chance to settle in and feel comfortable and confident before the activities begin.

Fort William Historical Park Field Trip

Focus groups indicated that students had a strong desire to participate in non-assessment tasks during the first months of school to help them become comfortable with their teacher and the students in their classes. The team building activities held in homeroom classes during the first week of school helped to facilitate this. However, to help foster social connection with students in other classes, opportunities that involved multiple classes were needed. To accomplish this, all grade 9 classes attended a day-long team building retreat at Fort William Historical Park in late September. This field trip involved competitive and non-competitive games and activities where students were required to work together to solve a problem or overcome a challenge. In addition to fostering community in the grade 9 class, this outing provided the chance for teachers to meet and interact with students outside of the classroom setting.

End of Semester Study Skills Workshops

At the end of semester one, the ambassadors re-visited grade 9 homeroom classes to host workshops on study skills and exam preparation. These engaging and student-directed workshops helped to ease the stress and concerns that come with writing exams for the first time, while also introducing students to valuable test writing strategies.

Human Library

In the fall of 2014, a “human library” for grade 9 students will be piloted. This diversity and inclusion building activity will introduce students to people from our community who represent groups that are often misrepresented or misunderstood. Throughout the morning, grade 9 students will rotate through stations where they will hear stories and participate in engaging workshops directed by people representing the Muslim, LGBTQ, immigrant and police communities, as well as people who are living with mental illness, struggling with homelessness and members of the school administration team.

COME AS YOU ARE PILOT PROJECT – EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

The pilot project used a quasi-experimental design, comparing an intervention group (Sir Winston Churchill CVI) with a comparison group (another high school of similar size).

A survey was developed for grade 9 students to assist in answering the following questions:

1. What were the feelings of students entering high school? Were the feelings of students in the intervention group similar to the top concerns identified in earlier focus groups? How did feelings improve?
2. How well did the pilot program address student concerns and assist grade 9 students in their transition to high school? How did grade 9 students rate the pilot program activities? Did program activities help to address their concerns about entering high school?
3. Did the pilot program influence students' connectedness to school? As an indirect measure, how do the intervention group scores on school connectedness compare to the non-intervention group?

The survey gathered both proximal (direct) and distal (indirect) information related to the program intervention.

The first section gathered demographic information (questions #1-5). The second section asked about students' feelings before and after starting high school followed by measures of school connectedness (questions #6-10). The third section assessed students' response to program activities and how well these activities helped in their transition to high school (questions #11-14). The comparison group were asked question #12 only, while the intervention group had additional questions about the specific program implemented at their school.

Relying on research in the realm of school connectedness and on prior instruments, the survey questions were drawn from the following sources:

- School Climate Survey, Ontario Ministry of Education
- H. Libby, Measuring Student Relationships to School: Attachment, Bonding, Connectedness and Engagement

The survey was administered to students four to six weeks after the start of school. Most surveys were completed online using Survey Monkey, but some were completed by hand using hard copies and then entered into Survey Monkey. There were 102 respondents from the intervention group.

The survey in year two was slightly modified from year one, eliminating a flawed question regarding participation in extracurricular activities. The results presented in this report do not include this question. The survey included here is the version used in year two with the intervention group.

Limitations

- Because a youth engagement approach was used, process evaluation for this pilot study is limited. To assess implementation fidelity, anecdotal information and interviews were relied upon to illuminate and share the process in the form of the narrative case study presented in this guide.
- The survey tool was not pre-tested with students. One flawed question from the survey regarding participation in extra-curricular activities was later eliminated and is not included in the results presented in this report.
- Allowing for both online and paper surveys to be administered allowed for a greater response rate, however, this mixed-mode approach introduces greater likelihood of mode change effects.
- A pre-survey with grade 9 students was not able to be conducted before school started. Students' reflections on their feelings before school started should be interpreted with caution as they were being asked to characterize their feelings from a time before their feelings had changed. Because feelings improved, it is possible that students downplayed earlier negative feelings. It is not possible to say the improvement in feelings is a direct result of the program intervention, as other factors may be influencing the students' feelings.
- The intervention and comparison group are different cohorts in different high schools. While they are similar in many respects, being mid-sized urban high schools from the same board of education, data was not gathered to assess equivalency. The comparison group was selected on the basis of availability and willingness to participate. The intervention high school is unique in that it has a senior elementary (grade 7-8) hub attached to the school. To control for this, responses from grade 9 students who started high school via the senior elementary hub were excluded from the survey results.
- The evaluation tool surveyed students six to eight weeks into their school year. Because the main elements of the program occurred within the first six weeks, surveying at this time was useful for collecting feedback for program evaluation. It is not known whether measures of connectedness were maintained over the school year. This would be useful to better understand how "transition" looks throughout the school year and beyond for this cohort of students.

EVALUATION PLAN TEMPLATE - SAMPLE

Objective	Activity	Evaluation Question(s)	Method	Indicators	Timeline
With student leaders, implement a multi-component inclusion campaign in the fall of 2012 to enhance school climate and engage grade 9 students in their school community	Create a video featuring older students and alumni: Message to My Grade 9 Self	Did seeing the video on the first day of school reduce their stress and contribute to a positive feeling about their school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> grade 9 survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> survey measure of program effectiveness 	September
	Staff orientation (teacher PA day)	Did school staff support the Come As You Are campaign?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> observation teacher feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # staff wearing their buttons # staff using toolkit in their classroom 	September
	Ambassador program & first week of school activities	Was the Ambassador program effective in creating a welcoming environment for grade 9 students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> grade 9 survey observation ambassador feedback post-intervention focus group with grade 9 students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> survey measures of program effectiveness and school connectedness 	September
	Unofficial Grade 9 User Handbook	Was the handbook effective in addressing the concerns of grade 9 students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> grade 9 survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> survey measure of program effectiveness 	September
	Overall Campaign	Was the campaign effective in enhancing school connectedness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> grade 9 survey post-intervention focus groups with grade 9 students and Ambassadors teacher feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> survey measures 	September - October

Come As You Are Churchill Grade 9 Survey 2013

***1. Are you in grade 9 at Churchill this year?**

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

***2. Where did you attend grade 8?**

- ☐ At Churchill Elementary
☐ At another school in Thunder Bay
☐ Outside of Thunder Bay
☐ Outside of Canada

3. Are you male or female?

- ☐ male
☐ female

4. Did you attend the first day of school at Churchill?

- ☐ yes
☐ no

5. How many school days in September did you miss?

- ☐ 0 days
☐ 1-3 days
☐ 4-5 days
☐ 6 or more days

Come As You Are Churchill Grade 9 Survey 2013

6. How did you feel in the days LEADING UP TO (before) the first day of school?

	I totally felt this way	I sort of felt this way	Maybe just a bit	I didn't feel this way
I'm worried I won't make friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do I look okay?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm scared of not fitting in.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What if I get lost?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What if I don't know anyone in my classes?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What if the work is too difficult?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm excited about starting high school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm excited to meet new people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want to try new things in high school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. How do you feel NOW about being in high school?

	I totally feel this way	I sort of feel this way	Maybe just a bit	I don't feel this way
I'm worried I won't make friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do I look okay?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm scared of not fitting in.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What if I get lost?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What if I don't know anyone in my classes?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What if the work is too difficult?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm excited about being in high school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm excited to meet new people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want to try new things in high school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Come As You Are Churchill Grade 9 Survey 2013

8. How do you feel about your school?

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
I enjoy being at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school is a friendly and welcoming place.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school building is an inviting place to learn.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel accepted by students in my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers are interested in students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers are good at helping students get to know each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel safe in my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Getting good grades is important to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Extra help is available at my school when I need it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*9. So far this year at school, have you ever felt unwelcome or uncomfortable?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

10. If you answered yes, have you felt unwelcome or uncomfortable because of any of the following? (Please check all that apply to you.)

- ☐ My sex (male / female)
☐ My ethnocultural or racial background
☐ My Aboriginal background (First Nation, Métis, Inuit)
☐ My language background (my first language)
☐ My grades or marks
☐ My appearance
☐ My religion or faith
☐ My family's level of income
☐ A disability that I have
☐ My sexual orientation

Other reason(s)

Come As You Are Churchill Grade 9 Survey 2013

11. How well did the Grade 9 Orientation activities help you feel more comfortable and welcome at Churchill?

	Awesome, keep it in!	Helpful	Not helpful	Don't know
Ambassadors (senior students helping with Orientation)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Video "Come As You Are" on the first day of school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unofficial Grade 9 User Handbook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Map of the school on your timetable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Team Building Activities led by Ambassadors or teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grade 9 Breakfast	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Team Building at Fort William Historical Park	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Do you think that the Grade 9 Orientation activities helped you to:

	Yes, a lot	Sort of	Not really	Not at all
learn people's names	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
find your way around	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
make new friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
feel more comfortable in class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
feel less stressed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
connect to things that interest you	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Were you able to find all your classes on your first day of school?

- ☐ Yes, all
☐ Most of them
☐ A few
☐ None

14. What could we do to make next year's grade 9 orientation better?



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