



How they got started:

Erin Mills Connects (EMC) and The Dam partnered for program delivery in the Peel Region as part of their aim to amplify youth voices and support wellbeing. Twelve youth met weekly online over the school year until July 2023.



The challenge:

During program activities, youth explored their collective expertise and centred on **the barriers to positive wellbeing posed by the stigmatization of mental health.**

Here's how they made a difference:

1. Building a network



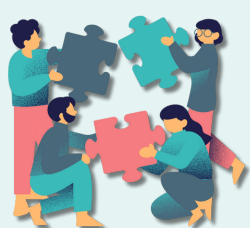
Youth were from diverse schools, backgrounds and grades, expanding their social connections. They reached out to peers via a survey they developed to gather experiences and test their ideas about the issues affecting youth.

2. Finding key allies



The group interviewed allies from the youth-serving community in the health and non-profit sectors to gain information and explore recommendations for change. They also participated in organization meetings to raise awareness about their work.

3. Focusing their efforts



Based on survey results, their experiences and the information they gathered, the group aimed to impact school- and community-based approaches to mental health.

4. Crafting a powerful message



They developed an infographic to advocate for the promotion of a strengths-based understanding of mental health in schools to foster safe and inclusive conversations about wellbeing along with calls to action.

Their change action:

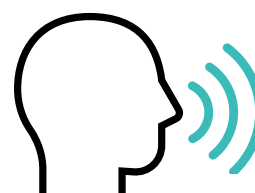
The program culminated with the youth **hosting a community youth panel event** to present their infographic and calls to action. A podcast produced from this event, alongside the infographic produced are **available** on the Erin Mills Connects website.

Ripple effects:



Youth Mentorship Opportunities

Youth volunteered and were trained to mentor the next program cohort.



Amplified Youth Voice

These youth went on to be invited to other community-based and national youth voice opportunities.