

Evaluation of the Practice Support Coaching Program

Thriving School Communities Team
BC Children's Hospital

2025/2026

SUMMARY REPORT

August 2026



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Summary of Key Findings

1

REACH & PROGRESS. The Practice Support Coaching Program continues to grow, with strong district retention, increasing demand, and the majority of participating districts now moving into implementation.

2

PROGRAM STRENGTHS & SATISFACTION. Participating districts continue to rate the program very highly. Satisfaction is anchored in the quality of coaching relationships, the structure and flexibility of the planning process, and the distinctive pairing of District Coaches with BCCH Health Promotion Specialists.

3

PROGRAM EVOLUTION. The program is maturing as more school districts move from planning to implementation. Coaching is also evolving alongside districts to support implementation, problem-solving, and continuous improvement.

4

IMPACTS. As more districts transition into implementation, participating districts are reporting promising changes across their systems, such as greater staff clarity about how students access mental health supports, increased student mental health awareness, and stronger coordination between schools and community partners.

Background

The BC Children's Thriving School Communities Team offers the Practice Support Coaching Program, which partners with school districts across British Columbia to strengthen district capacity for planning, implementing, and sustaining comprehensive mental health and well-being activities and approaches. The program was developed in response to common challenges districts face in advancing this work: competing priorities, limited capacity for system-wide implementation, time required to navigate and apply available evidence and resources, and the complexity of coordinating efforts across departments, schools, and community partners. Through individualized coaching and evidence-informed tools, districts review local data, engage key partners, and develop Mental Health Strategies and

Annual Action Plans tailored to their local context. Each participating district works with a District Coach, who brings education-sector experience, and a BCCH Health Promotion Specialist, who brings mental health expertise and supports the coaching relationship throughout. These plans provide a roadmap for embedding mental health and well-being across their school communities.

Since 2023, an ongoing evaluation of the program has supported continuous quality improvement and assessed progress toward intended impacts. This report summarizes findings from the third year of evaluation, covering the 2025/26 school year, along with conclusions and actionable recommendations for next steps.

Data Collection

- Surveys with 19 participating school districts in 2025/26¹:
 - Mid-point Check-In Survey: 14 of 19 districts responded (74%), 21 respondents in total
 - Impact Survey: 18 of 19 districts responded (95%), 20 respondents in total
- Interviews with participating districts (n=12), including three implementation case studies
- Two focus groups: one with District Coaches (n=2) and one with Thriving School Communities Team staff (n=4)
- Review of program administrative data

¹ In the surveys, some school districts were represented by more than one respondent; others did not respond. Districts were also asked different survey questions depending on their phase of work, so the number of districts behind each figure varies.

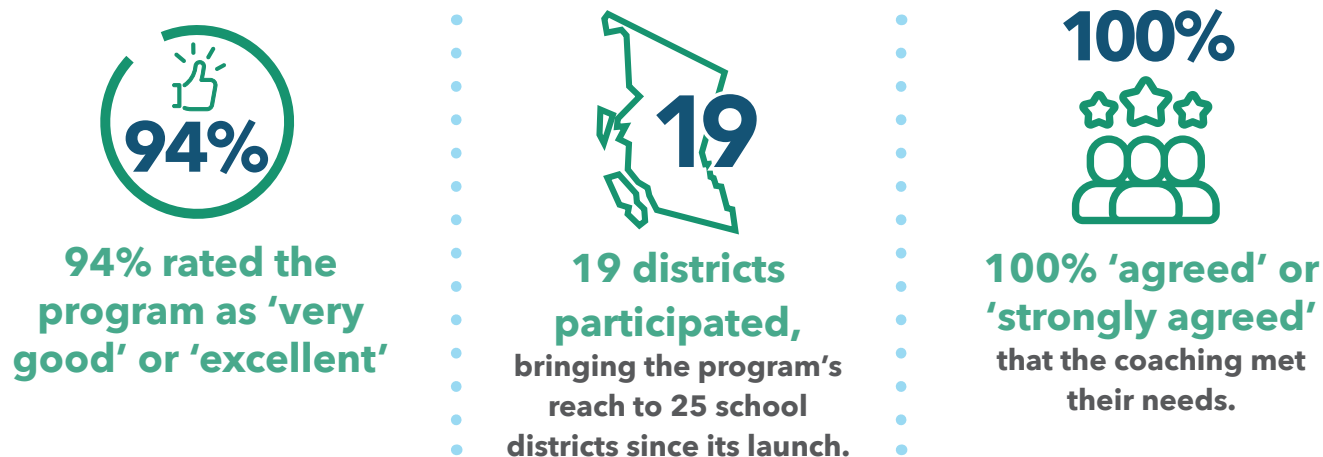
Key Findings

1. The program continues to grow and build provincial recognition.

In the 2025/26 school year, the program supported 19 school districts across all five BC health regions. Since the program began, 25 school districts across the province have participated. Demand remains strong: of the 19 districts participating in 2025/26, 7 were new to

the program and 12 were returning for a second, third, or fourth year of coaching. The program is also gaining provincial recognition, supported by growing awareness and ongoing collaboration with regional health authorities, research organizations, and the provincial government.

In the 2025/26 program year:



2. Coaching is helping districts build the capacity needed to advance mental health and well-being.

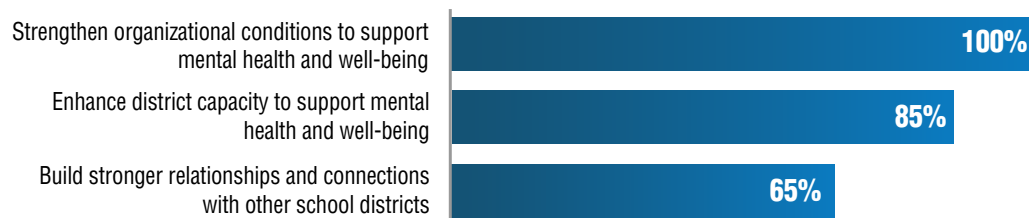
Participants consistently identified responsive, relationship-based coaching as the program's greatest strength and a key driver of district progress.

Coaches provided strategic guidance, structure, accountability without pressure, and practical problem-solving that helped districts analyze local data, identify priorities, engage partners, and develop actionable Mental Health Strategies and Annual Action Plans. Survey results reinforce this: 100% of responding districts agreed or strongly agreed that coaching helped them synthesize

and use mental health data and identify priority areas for mental health, and 90% that it helped them develop and refine their Annual Action Plans. Many participants described accomplishing more this year than they had thought possible, crediting coaching with helping them maintain momentum despite competing priorities, staff turnover, and demanding portfolios.

How has coaching strengthened district capacity? (n=20)

% of districts that 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that coaching helped them:



“ They gave us a structure, and templates that helped the work ahead of us come to life. They came alongside and created essentially a plan for us, and then held us to it and talked us through it. The coaching made this work all possible.”

- Participating District

3. The program is maturing as school districts move from planning to implementation.

The program reached an important milestone this year: districts are increasingly putting their Mental Health Strategies and Annual Action Plans into action.

Implementation activities span many areas, such as expanding social-emotional learning and mental health literacy, strengthening community partnerships, creating clearer referral pathways, and building more coordinated approaches to mental health and well-being across schools. Several districts reported progressing further with implementation than they had anticipated at the start of the year.

Coaching has adapted, alongside this shift, to support plan implementation. Coaches are

helping districts translate plans into action by troubleshooting barriers, maintaining momentum, adapting plans as priorities evolve, and connecting districts with practical tools and examples from other districts. Participants described coaching as the critical bridge between planning and implementation - providing the structure, accountability, and flexibility needed to sustain progress while responding to local context.

100% of districts in plan implementation “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that coaching helped them:

- Implement their action plan or strategy
- Stay on track, and monitor and refine their plans over time
- Implement district-wide changes that support mental health

4. Mental health and well-being is becoming embedded within broader district planning.

With support from program coaches, districts are increasingly integrating their Mental Health Strategies and Annual Action Plans with their district strategic plans, operational plans, and cross-departmental work, elevating mental health from a standalone initiative to a district-wide priority.

Participants described this integration as strengthening leadership commitment, broadening ownership beyond the district mental health team, and improving the long-

term sustainability of the work. Among districts implementing their plans, 100% agreed or strongly agreed that coaching helped them integrate their mental health plans into district strategic plans.

5. Positive changes are emerging for staff, students, and school communities.

As participating school districts implement their Annual Action Plans developed through the program, they are reporting promising changes across their school systems.

District & School Staff

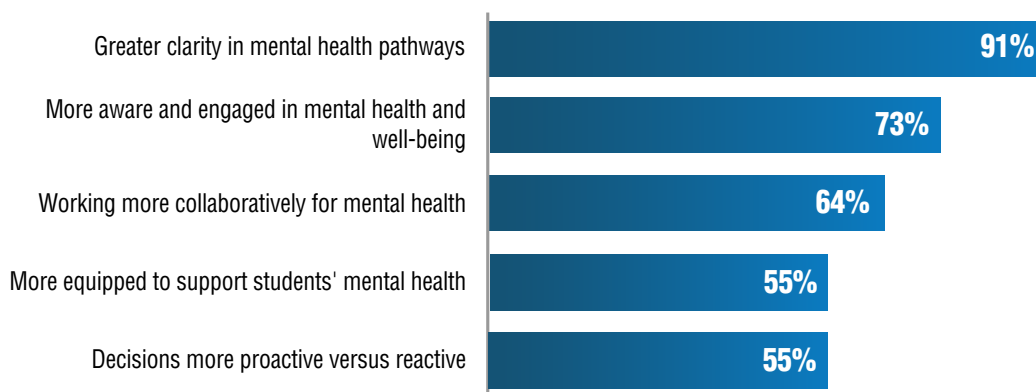
Districts described growing staff awareness, confidence, and collaboration in supporting student mental health and well-being.

Mental health is becoming more embedded in everyday practice through professional learning, shared planning, and greater awareness of available supports and referral pathways. Staff

are increasingly working together across roles to promote well-being and intervene earlier, rather than relying primarily on crisis response.

What changes are participating districts noticing for staff?² (n=11)

% of districts reporting change to a moderate or great extent following plan implementation:



“What we’re trying to do with our strategy is reinforce that alignment across our Indigenous, inclusive education, and mental health departments — making sure that information isn’t being siloed and that we’re looking at it cohesively.”

– Participating District

“Within the last month and a half, I’ve had two meetings with our student advisors and counselors across the district, and I saw a shift from that first meeting to the second — an increased sense of community, that they’re not alone in the work. I think that will be highly protective for them with the sometimes hard things that they’re supporting students with.”

– Participating District

² % of participating districts reporting change to a moderate or great extent.

IMPLEMENTATION SPOTLIGHT:

Building Clearer Pathways to Support in Chilliwack School District (SD33)



Navigating mental health supports was a challenge in this district of 30 schools. Staff knew many supports existed for students, but reported uncertainty about where to go, who to contact, and how to access the right help. With support from program coaches, SD33 developed a Resource Navigation Tool that maps district teams, referral pathways, and community mental health services. When it was first presented to district administrators, the tool was met with spontaneous applause, and within weeks it was embedded in collaborative planning between case managers and classroom teachers.

“ They held us to a path. Without that structure, we wouldn’t have a mental health strategy, and we certainly wouldn’t have a navigation resource.”

– SD33 Coaching Participant

Students

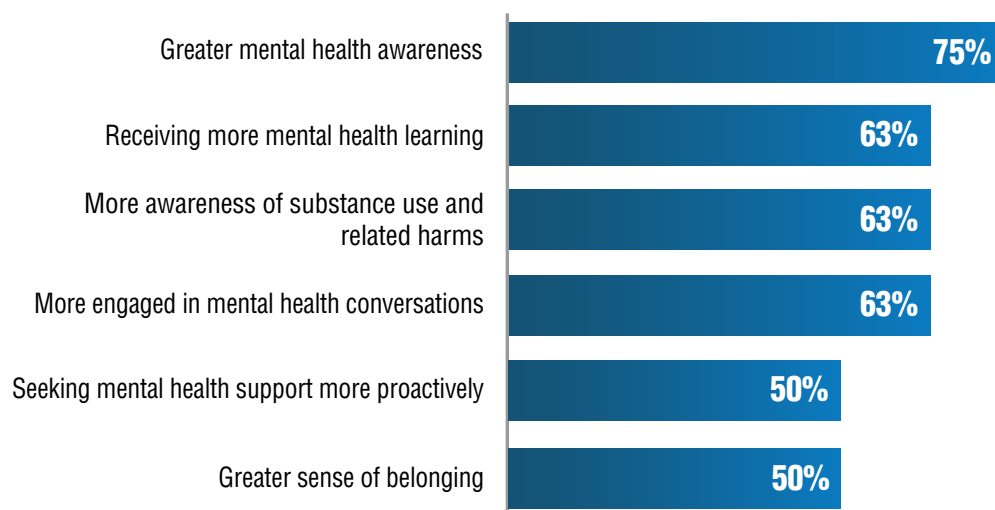
Districts are reporting early improvements in students' awareness of mental health, access to supports, and willingness to seek help.

Universal mental health promotion, well-being initiatives, and stronger partnerships with community organizations are increasing opportunities for students to learn about mental health and substance use and related harms,

strengthen their own well-being, and connect with supports when needed. Schools also described creating safer, more connected environments through restorative practices, digital safety initiatives, and relationship-based approaches.

What changes are participating districts noticing for students? (n=8)

% of districts reporting change to a moderate or great extent following plan implementation:



“Kids are more connected. They know where they can go to get help, and they get connected to services where they wouldn't have otherwise.”

- Participating District

IMPLEMENTATION SPOTLIGHT: Prioritizing Digital Safety in Coast Mountains School District (SD82)



Working with their coach, digital safety was identified as a mental health priority for this northwest BC district through a review of local data and engagement with students, staff, and families. SD82 is now implementing consistent phone-use expectations, classroom digital literacy supports, and human trafficking prevention education for Grades 6 to 12, delivered through a community working group with RCMP and Northern Health. Due to this work, students are now reaching out to trusted adults earlier, reducing the likelihood that concerns escalate into more severe mental health concerns.

The coaching program is credited with turning an overwhelming landscape of urgent needs into a manageable plan. Coaches helped the district use its data to identify digital safety as the priority, kept implementation realistic for local capacity, and sustained momentum through regular check-ins.

“ Having BC Children’s on board saved me. Mental health and well-being work was becoming an overwhelming concern, and they made it doable.”

– SD82 Coaching Participant

IMPLEMENTATION SPOTLIGHT:

Expanding School-Based Wellness Centres in K'wsaltktnéws ne Secwepemcúl'ecw School District (SD83)

Access to timely mental health and wellness services was a key challenge for this rural, geographically dispersed district, where many students cannot reach community services outside of school hours. In response, SD83 expanded its school-based Wellness Centre model, bringing medical care, counselling, public health nursing, and community connections directly into secondary schools.

Although the Wellness Centres existed before coaching, the additional coaching provided by the Practice Support Coaching Program changed the district's ability to sustain and grow the centres. Coaches helped SD83 link student well-being data to the model, position it within a district-wide mental health strategy, and make a strong case for coordination, staffing, and expansion to senior district leadership and the Board.

“ The coaching helped me clearly articulate why Wellness Centres mattered and how they directly addressed what students were telling us in the data. It gave us the language, structure, and confidence to advocate for sustaining and expanding the work.”

– SD83 Coaching Participant

School Communities

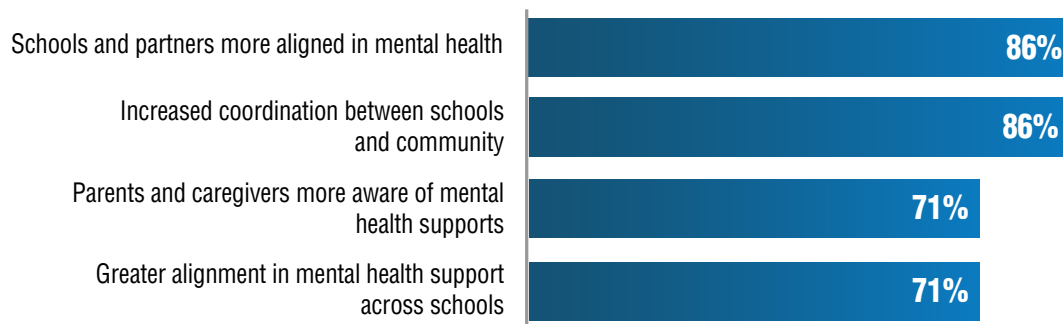
Districts described stronger coordination between schools, families, and community partners as mental health initiatives become more integrated across local systems.

Districts explained that schools are building more formal relationships with community and health partners – connections that are becoming part of everyday practice, with clearer referral pathways for students who need support. Within

districts, greater consistency in priorities and shared approaches is helping align mental health supports across schools. Districts also described parents and caregivers becoming more aware of available supports and how to navigate them.

What changes are participating districts noticing in their school communities? (n=7)

% of districts reporting change to a moderate or great extent following plan implementation:



“Schools are strengthening partnerships with health authorities, Indigenous organizations, community agencies, and youth-serving organizations. Community partners are becoming more integrated into school-based service delivery – helping reduce barriers to accessing care.”

- Participating District

6. Sustaining coaching quality while meeting growing demand is the program's central challenge.

Districts continue to face implementation barriers, including competing priorities, limited staff capacity, and staff turnover. Participants consistently described the coaching as what sustains momentum through these pressures, making coaching quality the program's most important asset to protect as it grows.

Program staff and coaches themselves identified team capacity as a key risk to expansion. The coaching model depends on in-depth, relationship-based support, and scaling up will require recruiting and onboarding skilled coaches, maintaining staff involvement in

coaching relationships, and ensuring incoming districts are ready to engage meaningfully. Sustained, multi-year investment will be essential to support districts through the implementation phase and respond to growing provincial demand.

Conclusion

The 2025/26 evaluation shows the program entering an important new phase as more districts move from planning to implementation. Coaching continues to build district capacity and support implementation, with promising changes emerging for staff, students, and school communities. Sustaining high-quality coaching as the program grows will be key to supporting continued progress and longer-term systems change.

Key Recommendations

1. Continue to refine and strengthen implementation support.

As more districts move into the implementation phase, ensure that coaching approaches evolve to match. Focus coaching sessions on problem-solving rather than progress updates to help districts work through barriers, adapt their plans, and access practical tools and examples.

2. Expand current opportunities for cross-district learning.

Create even more ways for districts to learn from one another. Options to explore include matching districts with peers further along in the work, convening small groups of districts at a similar stage, and building a shared library of district-developed tools and resources.

3. Support long-term sustainability.

Continue to support districts to embed mental health and well-being within their strategic plans, policies, and organizational structures. Develop a clear approach for strategy renewal as early districts complete their first strategies and begin a second cycle.

4. Continue demonstrating program impact.

Further strengthen measurement of implementation-phase outcomes for staff, students, and school communities. Support districts to monitor and communicate their own progress, and consider publishing evaluation findings to further build program credibility.

5. Sustain and expand provincial reach.

Respond to growing demand by expanding the program to additional BC school districts, while protecting the coaching quality that has driven its success. Key steps include formalizing district readiness criteria, investing in coach recruitment and onboarding, and securing stable, multi-year funding.