

Administrator Implementation Tip Sheet

Bridges: a **Tier One** identity-affirming mental health promotion resource **for secondary students** which prioritizes 2S/LGBTQIA+ student mental health and well-being through **small group** facilitation (e.g. through Gender and Sexuality Alliances, or GSAs).

This tip sheet provides administrators with information and strategies to support the implementation of Bridges in schools.

Consider alignment and fit

Before implementing Bridges, consider your school plan, census data, school climate survey and how this resource can help respond to identified student mental health needs. Consider the cultural and community contexts within your school.

Have you...

- looked at the [Student modules at a glance](#) and supportive materials?
- reflected on the needs of students?
- considered how you might connect this resource to other school initiatives and priorities (e.g. an existing GSA within the school)?
- thought about how this resource adds to other mental health efforts both in the past and underway, ensuring alignment?

Note: Bridges is primarily meant to be used within a GSA space. It is recommended that schools **have an established GSA** to effectively implement Bridges. If schools are interested in starting or reigniting a GSA, please consider utilizing School Mental Health Ontario's [Starting or Reigniting GSA Spaces](#) resource.

Show your commitment

As a school administrator, you play a critical role in leading mentally healthy schools by striving to set the conditions that support student mental health in the school community. Find ways to convey and model your commitment to supporting 2S/LGBTQIA+ students by sharing resources and supports dedicated to their mental health and well-being.

Support implementation

AS AN ADMINISTRATOR HOW MIGHT I....	
support an awareness of the Bridges program?	• Introduce Bridges as a resource at an all-staff meeting. • Include information about Bridges in school-wide initiatives and program information. • Communicate about Bridges with parents/caregivers.
encourage uptake of Bridges within my school?	• Identify and connect school facilitators with board staff who can support your shared goals. • Provide time and resources (e.g. time, space, technology, etc.) for staff to complete self-directed training and prepare. • Collaborate with current GSA facilitators to incorporate Bridges into their group gatherings. • Ensure staff have access to resources (e.g. physical space, printing, etc.) that support the implementation of Bridges. • Coordinate the delivery of Bridges student modules with 2S/LGBTQIA+ students (e.g. consider strategic delivery times, allow student engagement in decision-making and align Bridges modules with the current structure of the GSA). • Check in and offer support to facilitators throughout the school year regarding implementing Bridges.
support staff concerned about how to address student needs?	• Provide information on school board protocols and supports related to student mental health and well-being. • Ensure school staff know the available school and community supports and have this information readily available for students. • Remind staff that informal supports are also inherently valuable (e.g. faith leaders, chaplains, Elders and family members). • Encourage staff to engage in professional learning (e.g., MH LIT: Mental Health in Action learning modules).



AS AN ADMINISTRATOR HOW MIGHT I....

collaborate with my board's implementation team?

- Stay connected with the board implementation team throughout the school year to support implementation at the school (e.g., help identify staff facilitators, consult with implementation team as needed, etc.).
- Identify and leverage enablers; anticipate and address barriers at the school level.
- Reach out for support as needed (e.g. equity lead, mental health leadership team, superintendent, community partners, etc.).

Embrace student leadership

Student engagement is an ongoing process committed to co-creating conditions and opportunities *with* students, so they can meaningfully participate and influence outcomes that may affect them. True engagement centres on valuing and amplifying the perspectives and experiences of every student. This requires practicing critical reflection by school and system staff on personal and positional biases, and systemic barriers that impact engagement. Student leadership is embedded within Bridges through encouraging:

- students to select which modules they wish to engage with
- group discussions supported by facilitators
- group-based activities
- creating and executing student leadership initiatives

Students involved or engaged in their GSAs may provide important insights on how to effectively promote Bridges alongside other mental health and well-being resources within the school. Allow opportunities for students to explore alternate forms of promotion and/or uptake within the school community.

Please consider referencing the [Student Engagement Toolkit](https://smho-smso.ca) (smho-smso.ca) for further reflection. As you are considering how to engage students, consider how to engage parents/caregivers and your school council, too!

As administrators, you play a critical role in supporting 2S/LGBTQIA+ [student mental health and well-being](#). Thank you for your time and intention for this work!



Student modules at a glance

The information below provides a preview of the Bridges Student Modules content for administrators and implementation teams.

Bridges is an identity-affirming resource for secondary students that prioritizes 2S/LGBTQIA+ student mental health and well-being through small group facilitation. The content of Bridges has been informed by the unique and valuable experiences of students, staff and key community partners. The title of Bridges was chosen intentionally to represent connections. This resource includes a variety of guided discussion topics and activities that focus on 2S/LGBTQIA+ student mental health and well-being and that intentionally foster connections between students and among the community. These modules are intended to serve as a basic guide; however, it is students that will lead the experience and co-create unique opportunities to engage in different conversations and actions – facilitators can create the space and build the relationships that allow for this.

This document provides a preview of the student module content and objectives.

MODULE TITLE	ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSIONS WITHIN THIS MODULE FOCUS ON...
Introduction and group guidelines	• cultivating relationships • setting intentions for the group • building/gauging communication skills and perspective-taking early on • understanding how to conclude group meetings with supportive transitions
Exploring sexual orientation, gender identities and expression	• understanding and embracing one's sexual orientation, gender identities and expression • allowing space for students to lead with their experiences and/or be grounded in activities that are not centred around self-disclosures • highlighting how the 2S/LGBTQIA+ community changes over time
Communication skills and building supportive relationships	• exploring skills that are foundational to cultivating healthy relationships and communication (e.g., understanding the role of relationships in how we communicate, interpret messages, ways of receiving information, etc.). • exploring elements of digital literacy and being conscientious about what students may view online (e.g. misinformation, disinformation, malinformation, genuine information) • equipping students with approaches to navigate conflict/difficult conversations

MODULE TITLE	ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSIONS WITHIN THIS MODULE FOCUS ON...
Coping strategies	- identifying and building on existing coping strategies that students are engaging in - exploring how students may adapt their coping strategies/skills to support them in various environments - discussing potential internal and external factors that influence our need/ capacity to cope
Intersectionality and anti-racism in 2S/ LGBTQIA+ spaces	- teaching the importance of intersectionality and intersectional justice - exploring identity through creativity and allowing students to engage in identity-affirming interactions - inviting students to begin exploring how creative outlets and artistic expressions contribute towards social justice
Knowing and upholding your rights	- differentiating between rights and responsibility - helping students to engage in support-seeking actions - supporting facilitators and students with knowing where to access information about student rights at school
Community organizing and collective action	- supporting students as they explore their strengths individually and collectively - encouraging community engagement (e.g. school, wider community) - facilitating opportunities for students to work together and cultivate a shared sense of accomplishment
Student learning dialogue	- engaging students in open contemporary discussions - students leading and initiating conversations that are relevant to their current experience(s) in a supportive environment

