

HOW TO BE WELL

Kent Place's ambitious new Learn. Live. Health and Wellness Program helps students build healthy community connections and personal resilience at every age.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
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Bleary-eyed students in early-morning classes? Not if Michelle Stevenson, Department Chair of Health, Wellness, and Physical Education, has anything to say about it.

Many students in Kent Place's Health and Wellness Program don't just slide into classroom chairs first thing in the morning. Instead, they start their school day by practicing sun salutations or walking a loop near campus, says Ms. Stevenson. "We offer classes across the board starting at seven thirty, when they can do yoga, meditate, or move their body."

For Ms. Stevenson, it's one of the simple but profound ways that Kent Place helps set students up for success both in the classroom and beyond it. "By the time students get into the classroom, they're ready to engage," she says.

These before-school activities are just the beginning. Learn. Live. Health and Wellness Program, officially launched during the 2020–21 academic year, uses an array of tools to holistically support and strengthen students' physical, mental, and social-emotional well-being. It represents a key pillar of the "Thriving in Community" priority within the strategic plan.

The program, designed for students' needs at different ages, is divided into three tracks, one each for Primary, Middle, and Upper School students.

In the Primary School, for example, students are in the Learn. Live. *Wonder*. (Learn through inquiry, live a life of curiosity, and wonder and explore) track. They participate in activities that will help them improve their leadership skills; begin to learn about ethics; forge healthy connections with their classmates; practice body positivity; experiment with learning styles and strategies; and take part in initiatives linked to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB).

Middle School students continue in the Learn. Live. *Grow*. (Learn to find your voice, live a life of creativity, and grow the heart–brain connection) track. Among the themes are self-esteem; conflict resolution; drug awareness; body positivity; healthy decision-making; and puberty and human reproduction.

By the time students reach the Upper School, they're ready for more sophisticated programming in the Learn. Live. *Lead*. (Learn about yourself and others, live a life of balance and joy, and lead others to do the same) track. They practice goal-setting and self-awareness; stress management and mental health; leadership and ethics; DEIB; and holistic nutrition.




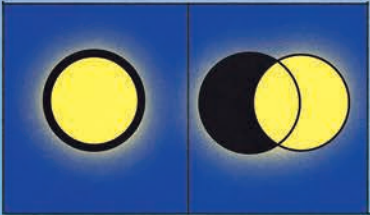



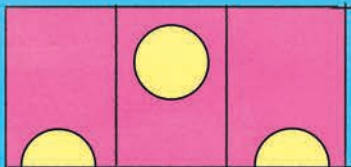

If it sounds like a lot — well, it is. Concepts of health and wellness are more than "nice to have" as part of a well-rounded education: They're essential for successful learning and leadership. The Learn. Live. program is one of the most powerful tools to bring those ideas to life. At Kent Place, faculty and staff are committed to helping students internalize the ideas within the program, not only because they'll help during their school years, but also because they'll be useful for the rest of their lives.

"Our overarching goal is to help them find and feel their sense of self," says Ms. Stevenson. "We want them to lead from that place."

So, what does this big vision look like from year to year — even day to day? How do Kent Place teachers and outside experts help students learn, grow, and thrive from the moment they step on campus in the early grades to the time they toss their caps at Commencement?

In this grid, we capture some of these big themes within each track and display a tiny sampling of the ways that Kent Place transforms those high-level ideas into concrete and joyful activities that make an impact.

As part of the Learn. Live. Health and Wellness Program, students learn about and implement healthy-living strategies in age-appropriate ways. The program addresses areas such as mental and emotional health, physical health and safety, DEIB, relationships, and community building.

	PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARN. LIVE. WONDER.	MIDDLE SCHOOL LEARN. LIVE. GROW.	UPPER SCHOOL LEARN. LIVE. LEAD.
LEVEL 1: PERSONAL WELL-BEING	<p>Through a national HeartSmarts Adventure Program, students learn to identify their emotions. They use simple “Heart Warmer” breathing techniques to manage upsetting emotions and learn emotional self-regulation. Primary School Psychologist Marie Hays helps students understand how to make friends and maintain friendships, and in second grade, students develop and sign a “friendship promise” that reminds them to be inclusive and to respect others.</p> 	<p>Cup stacking helps students improve their motor skills while staying steady and calm. They learn techniques to stay calm and prevent cups from tipping over. Middle School Social Worker Joan Wilson P '25 offers a virtual counseling room where students can submit questions to the Anonymous Question Box. Last year, more than 70 questions were asked on topics such as gender expression, friendships, and drug awareness.</p> 	<p>Through programming developed by Upper School Counselor Barbara Smith, students use gratitude journals to respond to weekly prompts, a practice shown to decrease stress. To improve on five areas of physical fitness identified in the Presidential Fitness Test, students take a benchmark test, analyze their results, and build personal workout programs. At the end of the trimester, they measure their progress in the areas they sought to improve.</p> 
LEVEL 2: INTERPERSONAL WELL-BEING	<p>Teachers use “goodbye lines” to help kids transition in and out of classrooms. Students assume leadership roles as line leaders — and also cede such roles when their turn is up. Through this simple ritual, students learn about being good listeners, sharing, and being responsible.</p> 	<p>Students learn interpersonal communication techniques, such as interpreting subtle body-language cues (like “blading,” in which someone turns their shoulders and chest away from a speaker to show lack of interest). They learn to identify their feelings (Sad? Proud? Nervous?) and ask for what they need. (“Would you be willing to help me with this project?”)</p> 	<p>Through the “Senior Sisters” tradition, seniors are matched with ninth-graders to serve as mentors to the new Upper School students.</p> 
LEVEL 3: COLLECTIVE WELL-BEING	<p>As part of Kent Place’s Be Ethical Everywhere programming, students in each grade create their own community rules. They work together as classes to determine how they will speak to one another, what they need to feel safe, how to ask for a moment if they’re upset, and how to get support from a friend.</p> 	<p>Last year, Kent Place screened <i>The Social Dilemma</i> documentary and brought in one of the highlighted experts, Max Stossel, to talk about the dangers of social media. Middle School students on the Well-Being Committee supported a campaign to encourage everyone to turn off their phones — and social media — for a day.</p> 	<p>The annual Health and Wellness Summit, offered in September, gives students a sneak peek at the many offerings the school has to support well-being. Organizers requested feedback to further tailor offerings, and this year, students have been especially eager to bring back members of the larger Kent Place community — alumnae and experts — to speak to them on a range of topics.</p> 

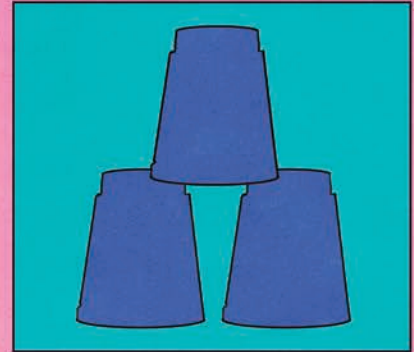
Cut out this page here and take our activities on the go!

TRY IT YOURSELF

HEART-WARMER TECHNIQUE. Feeling upset? Put your hand over your heart to bring attention to this area. Pretend to breathe in and out of your heart area with three slow breaths. Imagine that your body feels warm from sitting in the sunshine, and breathe in that feeling.



CUP STACKING. Set up three stacks of three identical plastic cups (nine in total). As quickly as you can, stack each set of cups into a pyramid with two cups at the bottom and one cup at the top. Then return the cups to their original positions. (Think you're fast? The Guinness World Record is 1.322 seconds!)



GRATITUDE JOURNALING. Write your answer to one of these three prompts:

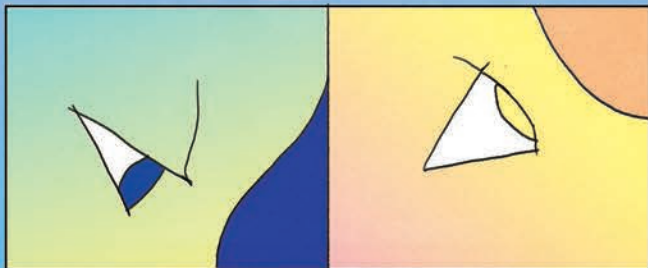
When was the last time you enjoyed a genuine belly laugh and what amused you so much? What have you done in the last month that you're proud of? What random act of kindness from another person did you benefit from?



INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES. Students aren't the only ones interested in boosting their communication skills; Ms. Stevenson has led parent workshops on this ability.



TURN OFF YOUR PHONE. Research shows that limiting social-media use to 30 minutes a day leads to significant improvements in mood, productivity, sleep, and anxiety.



SENIOR SISTERS. What do you remember about your "senior sisters"? We want to hear how yours influenced you! Please send us a note at communications@kentplace.org.

