

# The Self-Reg Journey of

# Kim Smith



*and Lakeside Public School: Listening, Supporting, Persevering and Creative Thinking*

Lakeside is a public school about 100 km North of Toronto, struggled with violence, students in precarious living conditions, students who do not feel they belong at school, and less than ideal parent school relationships.

## Why Self-Reg

- “Children felt safe, happy and comfortable in their school”
- “Staff would see children differently and support them in ways that they needed”
- “Staff would be more relaxed and teach in creative ways increasing academic achievement”

## Big Picture

“We have learned that Dr. Stuart Shanker’s Self-Reg is a process that takes time and consistency and faith. It works, and we see that every day in the relationships that we have with our students. We see it in the way they talk about themselves and each other. We see it in the risks that they will take both academically and emotionally. We see it in the improved academic results of our students. We see it in the confidence that they have in themselves. We hear it in their conversations about options they have for their lives and what they might do as they get older.”

## Process at this Point

Lead by Principal Kim Smith, the staff, students, and families learned about Shanker Self-Reg using a variety of methods including book clubs, Shanker Method Professional Learning Series, direct instruction, meaningful situational conversations, and parent workshops. Staff and students then collaborated to reconsider every aspect of the school day from entry, to snacks, to recess, to the environment of the classrooms and principals’ offices, to staff wellbeing in order to support the goal of a “safe, happy, and comfortable school” for all.

## Challenges

“We felt that the students needed to be able to express how they were feeling and talk about what they needed. We discovered that they couldn’t describe emotions other than happy or sad, they often didn’t know how to describe how they were feeling or what would help them.”

“It was difficult for some staff members to change their thinking. Their default was to punish students for not following rules and routines and they were upset when we used different strategies when students were sent to the office. We were consistent with our messages about how we were going to support students and we paid attention to what staff were saying and showing frustration with so that we could reinforce the Self-Reg messages and show why we knew it would work. I was able to look at some of the resistant staff with soft eyes and find strategies that would reduce their stress so that they could be their best selves. I was able to reframe the behaviour of parents which was often explosive. By doing this I was able to be compassionate and offer support to them.”

## Fond Memory

Of Reframing: “One teacher said that it was like looking at a child with compassion instead of giving a reaction.”

## Hope!

“We get more comments about how the tone of the school has changed and that it is happy and comfortable and that kids love coming to school, so we don’t worry too much about the parents who expect kids to be punished.”

“There are a few students who we haven’t made good progress with and that’s frustrating but because of Self-Reg we keep trying and we want to have the student in our school so that we can keep trying with them.”