DURHAM DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

EARLY YEARS – GRADE 12

DDSB
Ignite Learning

Positive Youth Development empowers youth to reach their full potential by engaging their schools, families and communities to assist them in building skills, competencies, resiliency and healthy relationships.

Acknowledgements

January 2019

Dear Colleagues,

We are excited to share with you the release of the DDSB Positive Youth Development Strategy. This resource document is intended to consolidate the research on positive youth development as well as serve as a tool to align our work in schools with best practice, Ministry of Education policy and the evidence provided by current research.

The development of this strategy is the result of a two-year process and has been assisted, in large part, by the leadership of Professor Darlene Ciuffetelli - Parker at Brock University. We have worked carefully with a wide variety of stakeholders, including DDSB staff and students as well as a range of community partners, in order to shape its direction. We therefore believe that it will support the important work you do in our schools.

This document reflects our conviction that a positive future for our students is most effectively achieved through the implementation of ongoing research and best practice, our collaborative reflection on our actions, the honouring of student voice, and a continued focus on the alignment of these elements as part of our overall goal to improve student achievement. The well-being of our students and supporting their academic success is an important part of our youth strategy as we support their growth and preparation for the many pathways and opportunities in their future. With this in mind, we would like to thank you for all that you do to support the work in schools and for your ongoing commitment to improving student learning.

Sincerely,

Lisa Millar, Director

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DDSB YOUTH STRATEGY RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

Executive Summary:

In 2016, the Durham District School Board formed a collaborative research partnership with Brock University, working with principle researcher Dr. Darlene Ciuffetelli Parker. Dr. Ciuffetelli Parker works in the Faculty of Education and has written extensively on the impact of poverty on schooling, including the Ontario Ministry of Education Monograph, *Poverty and Schooling: Where Mindset Meets Practice,* February 2015. The scope of the partnership was to elicit student/youth voice as a primary data source from three secondary schools where poverty (multi-generational, new Canadian, and rural) were significant factors in the respective school communities. Dr. Ciuffetelli Parker conducted focus groups at each of the three schools, collecting narratives from secondary school students, as well as from educators, administrators, parents, and community members. These oral histories were collated, sorted and triangulated in order to shape a collective voice that highlights the complex realities of poverty and education in secondary school settings.

Key Findings & Recommendations:

The overall conclusions of the report identify three pillars of opportunity where the Durham District School Board could enhance programs and policies already in existence. The three pillar areas include: (i) Enhance Professional Practice; (ii) Build a School Culture of Care; and (iii) Develop Community Partnerships and Relationships. The following highlights are intended to provide a sampling of the findings and the recommendations. A single student quotation has been included in each of the following sections to indicate the richness of the narratives collected during this research partnership. Extensive quotations and fulsome discussion of the recommendations can be found in the full report.

PILLAR 1: Enhance Professional Practice

Enhancing professional practice must take root by challenging deficit conceptualizations and preconceptions/assumptions of poverty for youth and families, by educators at all levels of the system. The following recommendations are made:

1. Offer professional development as an in-service requirement on the topic of poverty, and related equity topics that intersect with students and families' experiencing economic disadvantage, and its effects on schooling (i.e., poverty, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual identity, disadvantaged learners, language, immigration, etcetera). This includes new educator knowledge for all educators in schools, school district staff, and leaders in schools.

2. Implement equity-based action research projects by practicing teachers alongside youth. Poverty is an issue of equity, and thus action research projects conducted by teachers alongside youth will promote an equity-rich and resilient-positive conceptualization of students and families.

3. Seek school-based inquiry learning opportunities for teachers, students, community, and families that challenge the values and assumptions society makes about students in schools, and how values and assumptions affect pedagogical choices (sometimes to the detriment of equitable learning and success for students). Such inquiry will promote new teacher and youth-led equity strategies on the issue of economic inequities as they affect schooling.

4. Offer tutoring and peer tutoring programs within schools, by teachers and high achieving students, for students requiring academic support in courses.

   "I went to parent teacher interviews with my mom last year. She talked to one of the teachers I had last year about extra help because I wasn't doing as well as I could in math, and they said that "I don't like to make a habit of helping people at lunch and stuff." But every other teacher does do that. So now I have a tutor for math whereas if the teacher actually helped or explained stuff better, it would be a lot easier. I have the same teacher now and it's still not working."

5. Educate with high expectations, rather than lowering the bar based on deficit views. Higher order teaching strategies must regularly and readily include lessons, discussions and in class participation and activities that engage youth to learn by: applying, problem solving, reflecting, critiquing, creating, analyzing connecting and interpreting.

"*A successful transition to adulthood requires more than avoiding drugs, violence, school failure, or precocious sexual activity. The promotion of children's social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development began to be seen as key to preventing problem behaviors themselves.*"

- Professor Richard F. Catalano, University of Washington

PILLAR 2: Build a School Culture of Care

Building a culture in schools begins with knowing intimately the environment, make up, and people within the community where educators service youth. To hold the view that it is a privilege to service a community of learners within a community where they live and their families reside, is a beginning step to understanding deeply the call of teaching and the ability to be able to create a safe, engaging, and inviting school culture. The following recommendations are made:

1. Reconsider school rules and policies that strip dignity from youth. Such discipline of power, including educator use of unintended or intended sarcasm, body language, yelling, punishment or unrealistic expectations are examples that impinge on a student's ability to learn successfully as well as a student's human right to learn in a healthy environment.

2. Address systemic barriers and discrimination as an educational system, and in classrooms. Pay attention to the life of students and offer reprieve for those living in traumatic circumstances. Adapt a resiliency rather than a deficit view of marginalized youth.

3. Seek to understand parents/guardians' life experiences and how families can be a part of the school culture. Do educators (including teachers, administrators, staff and community support staff) resist deficit ways of teaching and engaging youth, or do they assume and hold bias on what can be done for families living in poverty?

4. Consider resources and school policies that matter. For example, in all communities, lack of consistent and thorough academic and school process communication and, in some communities transportation, debilitated the link between home and school. Up-to-date and new literacy technology is needed in schools, and the expectation that they will be used in schools should be developed and applied diligently from school and district policies. Assumptions that homework, reliance on internet for homework assignment, or travel to locales such as libraries or 'Staples' to complete homework and criteria assignments, is not a viable solution for most youth in challenging circumstances.

   "I had a project the other day and it was a brochure. And the teacher was like if it's not in colour, then you lose marks. I don't even have a computer at home. I told her. And she was like "um," well that's not her problem. She said 'well you're going to have to find a colour printer if you want full marks.' And I'm like you guys don't provide a colour printer at school. I'm like where am I supposed to print? And she's like well you can go to Staples to get your thing printed. And I'm like are you going to drive me to Staples?"

5. Implement innovative school-based strategies for educators and leaders, such as professional reading clubs for teachers and families on issues that affect the school context (i.e., Black youth; Muslim and other religious families/youth; refugees, immigration, inclusive education, identity, etcetera).

6. Create, at a system-wide level, apprenticeship and hands-on programs, with high level expectations, that are student-centered and that garner post-secondary accessibility via technology, social media, internships, etcetera, in core courses.

7. Consider more funding for at-risk youth with learning disabilities in order to create a place that offers sustained learning and a place of well-being and care.

8. Develop and enhance arts-based programs (modern/classic music, dance, visual arts, digital humanities, drama) that are academic and skill-based, with accessibility for all students, in all areas across the system.

Pillar 3: Develop Community Partnerships/Relationships:

Creating partnerships in the community (i.e., universities, colleges, non-profit organizations, corporations, small businesses, community hubs, etc.,) has its foundation in the relationship that is built between schools and the larger community. The following recommendations are made:

1. Engage youth and families of youth with determination, continued effort, and importunate rigour at a school level led by teachers and administrators, within the community. Successful schools do not give up, despite some failed attempts at liaisons with families and communities that service the school.

2. Continue to build trusting relationships with communities that service youth and families entrusted to the care of the school community. Focus on an assets-based partnership for both youth and community organizations rather than a 'fix it' plan for youth, when developing and creating partnerships between families of youth, community organizations, and school. Remember that marginalized youth and families have experienced many injustices by traditional mainstream school institutions, which can leave them vulnerable.

3. Pay attention to the life narratives of youth, and embed higher order pedagogy, in partnership with community organizations, to add context-rich academic rigour and citizenship that is part and parcel of a partnership between youth, school, and community.

4. Enrich and foster social services and other health-related community agencies towards both the physical and mental health of youth. Socio-emotional health is directly correlated to academic achievement. The youth data of this research showed repeated patterns of trauma, isolation, and mental illness that affected academic achievement in dire ways.

    "The guidance department is pretty great. Like if you don't have the guidance to help you out, you're kind of screwed without the teachers. I'm always in guidance because there is always something going on in my house. I use the guidance teacher to communicate with my teachers. Like 'hey, I know we're in Pickering. Her life isn't the best at home, you need to relax with all these assignments. ...so then they can be like 'oh that's probably why she wasn't here for a week, that makes sense.' It bridges the gap."

5. Consider reforming policies on health services and screenings in all schools, including health hubs within school communities.

> "The better approach is to more deeply consider the social injustices that kids are experiencing, and to encourage kids to change the things that they see. Fostering that kind of critical reflection and that kind of action is actually a better way to go than to teach kids that the system is fair when, in fact, their experiences are telling them that it's not."

– Professor Erin Godfrey, New York University

MISSION

To develop a research-based positive youth development strategy that seeks to mitigate the barriers experienced by students living in poverty.

VISION

A comprehensive approach to positive youth development that engages youth, along with their schools, families, and communities in order to empower youth to reach their full potential and live healthy, productive lives. The hallmark of positive youth is that they are engaged and have the ability to develop strong positive relationships. When youth are provided with horizon-broadening opportunities in contexts that honour their multiple social identities, they demonstrate confidence, competence, compassion and optimism in a socially and globally responsive manner.

"School outcomes are affected by differences in childrens' family-based opportunities to learn. While schools help equalize these opportunities during the school day and school year, research clearly demonstrates that learning opportunities are highly unequal during non-school time. These inequalities influence children's eventual educational success."

– Professor Janice Aurini, University of Waterloo

DDSB POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

SHORT-TERM GOALS (1 Year)	INITIATIVES	SUCCESS INDICATORS
Development of the Positive Youth Development Strategy	» Board Report to Trustees and Public, followed by communication to system » Consultation with Make a Difference Steering Committee, student groups, and community members » Launch of the DDSB Positive Youth Development Strategy	» System awareness of Positive Youth Development and the strategy drivers, as reflected in school planning documents
Implementation & expansion of community hubs	» School–Community Hubs launched in six secondary schools (Ajax HS, Henry St. HS, Brock HS, GL Roberts CVI, RS McLaughlin CVI, Eastdale CVI)	» Responsive youth programs and services are implemented and fostered through constructive community partnerships and listening to the voice of youth
Educating for Youth Collaborative involvement and participation in provincial leadership work in the area of poverty	» Actively lead Educating for Youth collaborative and participate in provincial work with a view to informing DDSB Positive Youth Development Strategy » Organization and participation of provincial youth summit at Brock University	» identifying and mitigating barriers to student achievement and well-being as experienced by youth in poverty
Constructively expand and strengthen community partnerships to best support youth development (ongoing)	» Make a Difference Programs and initiatives » Make a Difference Steering Committee » Introduction of Positive Youth Development Steering Committee	» Schools and community partners work collaboratively to support student success and well-being » Youth engagement, youth empowerment, increase in pathways participation to post-secondary

LONG-TERM GOALS (2-4 years)	INITIATIVES	SUCCESS INDICATORS
Implementation of the Positive Youth Development Strategy	» Build system capacity, knowledge and skills through professional development series for teachers, administrators, and SCC targeting Positive Youth Development	» Support student development and celebrate community partnerships and best practices in schools » System awareness of Positive Youth Development and the strategy drivers, as reflected in school planning documents » Analyze School Climate Surveys to ensure that Strategy drivers are in place in schools and are having a positive impact on student success » Mitigating barriers to student achievement and well-being as experienced by children and youth living in poverty
Initiate Summer Learning Loss Program Study (4 years)	» Grade 7/8 Summer Learning Loss Program to be implemented with a view to track a targeted cohort for a four-year period (students to be selected based upon risk factors including poverty and student achievement)	» Improved student success for students in the 4–year study with a positive disruption in the EQAO correlation statistic (85% correlation between grade 3/6 EQAO and grade 9/10 EQAO); ease transition to secondary school
Launch Ignite Durham Learning Foundation **IGNITE** Durham Learning Foundation	» Provide financial support for programs and services in priority neighbourhoods » Host Annual Gala and Recognition Celebrations	» School Climate Surveys and Leaving Surveys (Pathways Tool) reflect improved student purpose, confidence and focus
Implementation launch of Pathways Tools	» Pathways tools launched for K–8 and 9–12 to support Positive Youth Development	» Schools and community partners work collaboratively to support student success and well-being
Constructively expand and strengthen community partnerships to best support youth development (ongoing)	» Expand Youth Steering Committee to elicit ongoing student voice	» Youth engagement, youth empowerment, increase in pathways participation to post-secondary

COMMUNICATION PLAN		COMMUNICATION STRUCTURES
» Continue to develop and refine structures to ensure regular communication with all stakeholders in order to share information and continue to implement research-based practices across the system.	» Make a Difference Steering Committee » Educating of Youth Provincial Collaborative » Professional Development Programs	» Newsletter Items » Parent Engagement Initiatives » Positive Youth Development Steering Committee » Board Reports » Board & School Websites/Social Media » SCC and Student Senate Communications

DDSB MODEL FOR POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

DDSB Ignite Learning
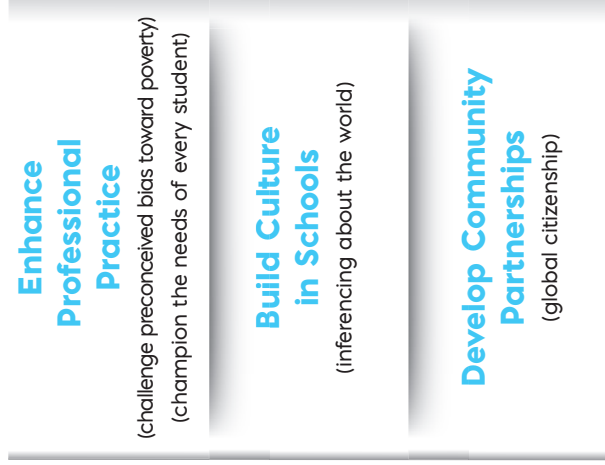
OUTCOMES

Youth have a well developed and caring support network.

Youth know they can influence their own lives by their choices and skills.

Youth are vibrant and optimistic.

Youth feel good about themselves and about what they can offer.

Youth know they can make a positive contribution to society and have opportunities to do so.

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

DRIVERS*

Enhance Professional Practice
(challenge preconceived bias toward poverty)
(champion the needs of every student)

Build Culture in Schools
(inferencing about the world)

Develop Community Partnerships
(global citizenship)

DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

EARLY YEARS
Belonging
Well-Being
Engagement
Expression

CHILDREN
Social Skills
Physical/Muscle Growth
Intellectual/Cognitive Skills
Creative Expression
Emotional Regulation/Well-Being

ADOLESCENT
Mastery/Competency & Achievement
Physical Activity
Self-Definition
Creative Expression
Positive Social Interactions With Peers and Adults
Meaningful Participation
Structure & Limits

The Cs of Positive Youth Development

○ CHARACTER
○ CONTRIBUTION
○ CONNECTIONS
○ COMPETENCE
○ CONFIDENCE
○ COMPASSION

Positive Youth Development empowers youth to reach their full potential through engagement with their schools, families and communities while building skills, competencies, resilience and healthy relationships.

*All Drivers take place in the context of quality relationships and require the consistent use of a strengths-based approach. They are dependent upon up-to-date, relevant information and resources. They presuppose that the work is done in the context of a broad understanding of the students' "big-picture" reality and that the young people are well connected, engaged and able to fully participate.

DRIVER 1   ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

» Expect all students to succeed; encourage students to set high expectations
» Foster a positive and inclusive environment; build classroom community
» Actively demonstrate respect for equity and diversity through inclusive education
» Involve youth as active agents in an intentional process through pathways and transitions work
» Develop socially responsible and engaged global citizens through social justice learning opportunities
» Demonstrate a commitment on the part of all members of the learning community to understanding the lived realities of their students
» Embed the use of pathways documents
» Recognize and celebrate students' multiple social identities
» Focus on skill-building and horizon-broadening
» Focus on the development of self-esteem, body esteem, self-efficacy and leadership ability
» Focus on developing resiliency, competency-building and making healthy choices
» Interrupt negative bias and utilize an asset-based mindset

DRIVER 2   BUILDING CULTURE IN SCHOOLS

» Engage families and encourage positive parental/guardian involvement
» Utilize positive talk; resist deficit language; talk about the students you teach, in positive ways
» Encourage a broad range of partnerships that constructively engage the community
» Utilize and develop student voice; students become leaders of their own destiny
» Enhance an understanding of poverty
» Develop supportive and empowering learning environments where youth can thrive
» Utilize a literacy perspective to develop awareness of local, global and social issues
» Encourage students to participate in local/global/social issues; have teachers incorporate social justice learning activities into their lessons

DRIVER 3   DEVELOPING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

» Develop community hubs in conjunction with community partners
» Promote healthy choices and horizon-broadening opportunities for youth
» Promote healthy and productive lives
» Engage in active suicide prevention programming
» Develop supports for the transition to post-secondary and emerging adulthood
» Provide ways for youth to be engaged in making strong connections with friends, family and community members so that there is a broad and diverse group of supporters and advocates providing each individual with a support network
» Provide opportunities for young people to thrive

RESEARCH ON POVERTY IN DURHAM

We know that there are pockets of poverty in every school community in Durham. The following information is intended to highlight the children in Durham schools who are vulnerable to the effects of poverty-related variables.

SRI Score	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
0	5491	7.88
1	10344	14.85
2	14057	20.18
3	14646	21.02
4	5630	8.08
5	5955	8.55
6	4491	6.45
7	4515	6.48
8	2912	4.18
9	1627	2.34

This table reflects 2016-2017 data and shows us where Durham students (both elementary and secondary) live in terms of key community factors. The Social Risk Indicators (SRI) reflect communities with multiple challenges. The higher the SRI score, the higher the number of challenges these communities face. As the SRI increases, the proportion of students meeting provincial expectations on EQAO decreases. EDI scores, reflecting early years school readiness, decrease in communities with high SRI scores. Additionally, health concerns, as noted by Durham Region Public Health, increase when community SRI scores are high. As the number of social and economic challenges a community faces increase, so too does the proportion of students who face academic challenges.

The following two maps reflect households in Durham with incomes below $30,000. Communities with large proportions of low-income households, also tend to be the communities with large numbers of challenges as measured on the Social Risk Index. It is important to recognize that low family income does not necessarily equate with poor academic performance, nor does high family income equate with high academic performance. There will also be variability within community profiles. This information is intended to highlight the intersection of challenges within the communities where students reside and may represent one of the many contributing factors impinging upon student success.

Percentage of Households With a Household Income Below $30,000

Legend

- 66% − 79%
- 53% − 65%
- 39% − 52%
- 26% − 38%
- 0% − 25%
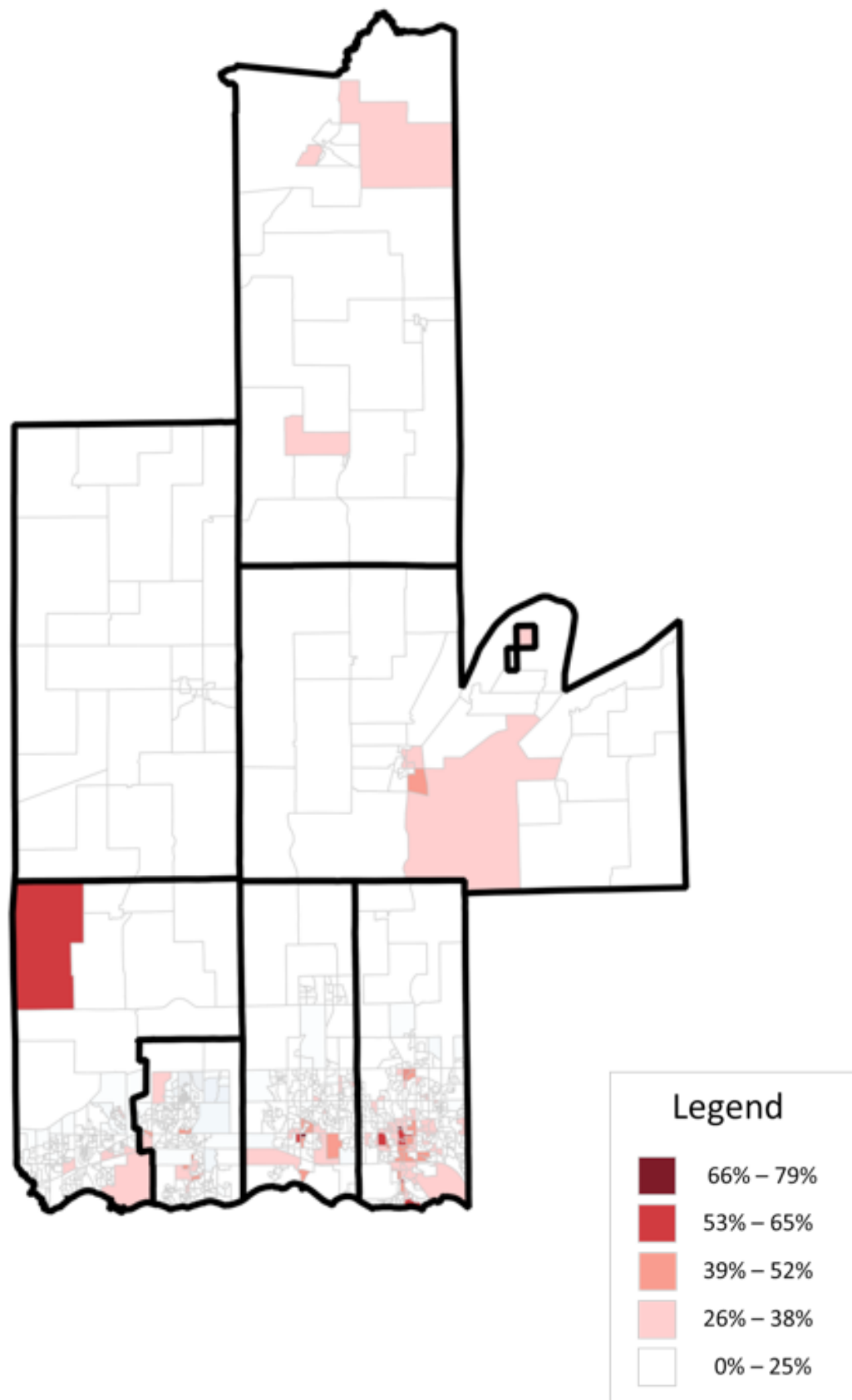
POVERTY & RELATED CHALLENGES FOR YOUTH

The many faces of poverty in DDSB schools incorporate a broad range of social identities. In Durham, poverty can be found in: families newly arrived in Canada; families living in multi-generational poverty; families living in rural areas with low socio-economic demographics; families experiencing temporary or short-term poverty due to illness, lay-offs, or economic recession. We recognize that poverty itself means different things to the individuals who are experiencing it. For some, poverty may mean not knowing if the essentials of food and shelter will be in place, while for others poverty may mean exclusion from elite opportunities such as hockey or music lessons due to a lack of disposable income. The impact of poverty on young people is evidenced in academic performance, personal choice-making, and relative ability to take on the challenging transitions to the world outside of secondary school.

In 2018 the Conference Board of Canada published a report indicating that one in seven children in Canada lives in poverty. In Ontario, the figure is slightly higher. The Homeless Hub identifies as many as one in six young people living in poverty in our province. Data from The Homeless Hub, March 11, 2015, informs us of the following:

» In low-income neighbourhoods, as many as 68% of children come to school without eating;

» The rate of poverty is 50% higher for aboriginal children, children of colour and children of female single-parents;

» 47% of new immigrant children live in poverty;

» 50% of youth who drop out of high school live in families earning less than $30,000 per year;

» Students in families earning less than $30,000 per year, score up to 30% lower on provincial-testing than students living in families that have a combined income of $100,000 per year.

"A good education prepares young people for success in life, gives them the tools and skills to find their first job, and leads them on the path to a prosperous future."

- Realizing Our Potential: Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy (2014-2019)

STUDENT VOICE

Student voice is a way of describing the methodology used to capture student engagement and increase participation in all issues related to their learning. In order to best understand the needs of student learners and focus pedagogical practice on connecting with them in authentic learning conversations, educators must pay careful attention to what students are communicating, whatever the form. Student voice can be expressed verbally, in writing, in artistic ways, through music, gesture, body language and silence.

Effective dialogue between teachers and students (as well as between students) can only take place in contexts where reciprocal learning relationships are valued, and where teachers become active listeners and guides. In such situations, student learning is allowed to flourish in ways that respect individual interests, differences and abilities. The resulting classroom culture is one that honours student voice and values meaningful peer interaction as part of the learning environment. Students are given choice and have the opportunity to participate in decisions about their own learning tasks.

The co-construction of learning goals and success criterion can become extremely valuable in this process. While the educators drive the overall big ideas and curriculum expectations, they do so in conjunction with constituent learners who are acquiring ownership of their own learning, and who believe that they have something of value to contribute to the teaching and learning environment.

In order to embed student voice within our curriculums, we need to cultivate the following:

- » Developing a pedagogy of listening
- » Developing pedagogical documentation
- » Developing a pedagogy of inquiry

Five essential interactions take place in school and classroom cultures where student voice is honoured:

- » Expression
- » Consultation
- » Participation
- » Partnership
- » Shared leadership

"I believe it is important to adults and educators to listen, understand, and apply what students are telling them about how schools and student life in general can be improved. The truth is that students are the ones who are in schools every day and know the issues with what is going on so they are the true experts on how schools and student life can be improved. When students are listened to and their ideas are applied, student well-being is bound to get better."

– DDSB Student

"It should be mandatory, upon forming strategies and implementing things within schools, to consult and listen to students. This does not only include students who are keen and eager, but also students who sit at the back of the classroom with their hood up and their headphones in."

– DDSB Student

CHARACTERISTICS OF POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The Characteristics of Positive Youth Development are seen as essential to the strategy. These components play a transformative role in schools in everything from bullying prevention to equity programs.

CHARACTER

Character is realized when an individual has developed respect for societal and cultural rules, follows standards for correct behaviours, has a sense of right and wrong and demonstrates integrity. Adults can assist young people in the acquisition of character by careful modeling, providing positive and constructive feedback, holding young people accountable for their actions and actively encouraging them to respect differing perspectives.

COMPASSION

Caring and compassion are built over time. Young people often exhibit empathy and sympathy for others and can continue to grow in this area as they develop life experience. Adults can assist young people by helping them to imagine what others feel like in certain circumstances. Encouraging young people to view life through an equity lens is critical. Emotional and social intelligence connections in the curriculum can also be utilized to develop compassion. Volunteer experiences help to develop compassion, particularly when adults prompt young people to debrief such experiences.

CONNECTIONS

Connections are built over time as relationships develop and grow. Youth develop connections when they are involved in making contributions to their school or their community. The relationship building that takes place within these connections will help to form a support network. Adults can encourage young people to be involved, to attend school and community events and activities, and to increase their connectedness.

CONTRIBUTION

The workforce provides an opportunity for young people, of all social and cultural backgrounds to participate in civic and democratic life. Work experiences help to equip youth with the acquisition of employability skills which can often assist with the transition from education to employment. These experiences, either can be paid or volunteer, will help youth to have a feeling of responsibility and inclusion. Adults can assist youth by encouraging them to participate in the workforce so that they may develop a sense of ownership for their contributions.

CONFIDENCE

Confident youth believe in themselves and in their ability to shape a positive future. Confidence is built on small successes: when young people do something and get positive feedback, they are likely to try something new in the future. Adults can provide experiences and opportunities for young people to take safe risks, can give them positive feedback, and help them to build confidence.

COMPETENCE

Competent youth have a positive view of their own agency with regard to interpersonal skills, conflict resolution, decision-making, school performance, nutrition, fitness, work habits, and career exploration. Adults can provide opportunities for youth to safely practice their skills and to succeed in these areas.

EQUITY IN EDUCATION

Socio-economic status (SES) is entwined with educational outcomes, financial security, health and well-being, social status and class. When low SES intersects with race, gender and ethnicity, the impact is seen across a wide spectrum that includes education, health and well-being, employment and social mobility. In particular, discrimination and marginalization effect the LGBTQ, Indigenous and racialized communities in ways that often result in socio-economic deprivation, and detrimental effects to well-being.

> *A comprehensive study of an Ontario school board clearly demonstrated that, Public school systems are structured to replicate the social stratification experienced by students who are poor, who are from minority groups, or who have disabilities... evidence show(s) that these students are being systematically streamed away from academic opportunities...*
>
> (**The Toronto Connection: Poverty, Perceived Ability, and Access to Education Equity,** Gillian Parekh, Isabel Killoran, Cameron Crawford, Canadian Journal of Education 34,3 (2011), 249-279.)

Incorporating the Six Threads of Inclusive Design in all levels of school planning is one method of ensuring that schools provide equitable opportunity for all members of their school communities.

> » Engaging Voice
>
> » Engaging Parent, Family and Community
>
> » Analyzing Data
>
> » Designing Instruction and Professional Learning
>
> » Environment as Third Teacher
>
> » Building Leadership Capacity

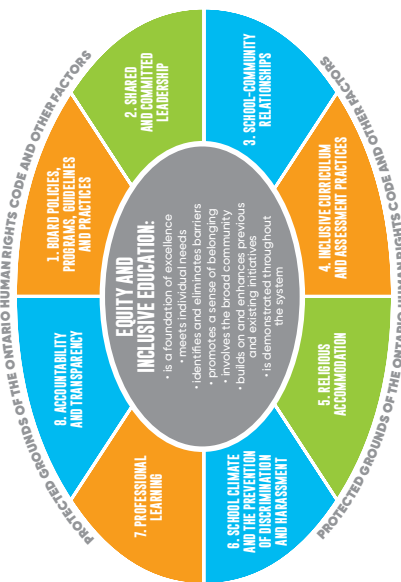# REFLECTING ON THE SIX THREADS OF Inclusive Design

INCLUSIVE DESIGN

DESIGNING INSTRUCTION AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

How can we ensure that programming is authentic and reflects the lived experiences and abilities of all learners?

We have a culture of high expectations for student engagement, learning, achievement and well-being for all students.

Literacy and numeracy (Curricular) instruction is culturally responsive, inquiry-based, intellectually challenging and developmentally appropriate for all students. We use an equity mindset to effectively identify and address barriers; this includes the active monitoring and analysis of the over or underrepresentation of our student groups in particular areas of achievement.

ESTABLISHING ENVIRONMENT AS THIRD TEACHER

What does the environment of our schools say about how we value our learners, communities and the process of learning?

Students need to see themselves reflected in their curriculum and their physical surroundings. What we value is reflected in what students, staff and families see, hear and do on a daily basis. When planning learning environments we must ensure that the diverse voices, stories, cultures and narratives of students, families and communities are an integral part of all learning spaces.

ENGAGING VOICE

How do we draw on the voices and realities of our students to make responsive programming decisions?

Students are at the centre of all that we do. Student achievement is conditional upon well-being. It is our professional duty to create classroom and school conditions that activate student agency so students find and use the power of their own voices to engage their peers and teachers in reciprocal learning experiences. We must ask and respond to several questions including, 'who are our students?', 'how are they reflected?' and 'how are we preparing them for the world they will live in, shape and lead?'. We must reflect on and respond to students' assets, needs and voices to transform them from passive recipients into active agents in molding their education and our shared future.

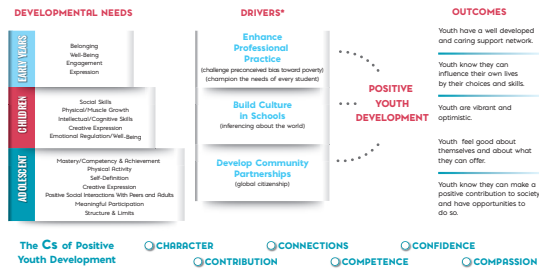## BUILDING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

How are we planning in our schools and our workplaces that builds the collective capacity and leadership of our students, staff and community?

By building the capacity of staff to challenge patterns of achievement aligned with social identities, and to identify and remove all forms of discrimination, we provide inclusive leadership to close achievement gaps. Setting high expectations for ourselves and for students and working collaboratively with students and communities will only strengthen and enhance teaching and learning.

ENGAGING PARENT, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

How do our classrooms and schools honour the voices and lived realities of parents, families and community members in local and global contexts?

Building relationships with members of the school community means actively pursuing the perspectives of all families, seeking out those who may be traditionally marginalized by the education system, and providing entry points for everyone to become fully engaged in the process of schooling. Research has shown that student achievement improves when families play an active role in their children's learning, and good schools become even better schools when families are engaged.

ANALYZING DATA

How well do we know who our students and staff are and how they are experiencing their learning and working environment? Do we know the patterns of success? Who is underserved? What questions are we not/asking? How do we ensure that our data is inclusive of everyone?

Educators, school and system leaders use achievement, perceptual, program, planning and demographic data to monitor the performance of all students, assess patterns of underachievement, identify learning gaps, and rethink directions. These data sets can be employed and critically analyzed to present accurate, transparent and comprehensive individual and collective stories of all the students we serve. These data types can also help us to understand the diverse realities of our staff.

EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:
- is a foundation of excellence
- meets individual needs
- identifies and eliminates barriers
- promotes a sense of belonging
- involves the broad community
- builds on and enhances previous and existing initiatives
- is demonstrated throughout the system

1. BOARD POLICIES, PROGRAMS, GUIDELINES AND PRACTICES
2. SHARED AND COMMITTED LEADERSHIP
3. SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS
4. INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES
5. RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION
6. SCHOOL CLIMATE AND THE PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT
7. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
8. ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

PROTECTED GROUNDS OF THE ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS CODE AND OTHER FACTORS

PLANNING FOR POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT WITH EQUITY IN MIND

Equity and Inclusive Education:

- » is a foundation of excellence

- » meets individual needs

- » identifies and eliminates barriers

- » promotes a sense of belonging

- » involves the broad community

- » builds on and enhances previous and existing initiatives

- » is demonstrated throughout the system

▶ Enhance Professional Practice
(challenge preconceived bias toward poverty)
(champion the needs of every student)

» How are we planning in our schools and our workplaces that builds the collective capacity and leadership of our students, staff and community?

» How can we ensure that programming is authentic and reflects the lived experiences and abilities of all learners?

▶ Build Culture in Schools
(inferencing about the world)

» What does the environment of our schools say about how we value our learners, communities and the process of learning?

» How do we draw on the voices and realities of our students to make responsive programming decisions?

» Do we have supportive allies in place for all students with an opportunity for them to make connections?

» Do we have a mentorship programme?

» Are we digging deeply with our data so that we know if certain groups of students are struggling with student achievement?

» Do we reflect on our data with a view to avoiding such things as bottom-level streaming?

» Do we provide enriched opportunities for students who may require them?

▶ Develop Community Partnerships
(global citizenship)

» How do our classrooms and schools honour the voices and lived realities of parents, families and community members in local and global contexts?

» How are we developing school-family relationships?

» Is our outreach accessible and are we open to dialogue?

» Are we involved with the Make a Difference initiatives?

» Have we reached out to our community partners to enhance our programming and supports?

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The lives of children and youth most often take place within environments that encompass the components of home, school, peers and community. When there are issues present in such environments, problems in the interplay between these components and mental health and well-being can be attributed, in part, to poverty-related factors. A child or youth living in poverty in Canada, is three times* more likely to experience mental health problems than a child or youth living in a financially-stable situation.

Risk factors for increased mental health problems in children and youth can present in three groupings: children or youth themselves, their families, and in terms of their interactions with their communities.

> » Within the child/youth grouping, learning difficulties and temperament issues are often manifested. These may include social anxiety and behaviour disorders, conduct issues or defiance disorders.

> » Within the family grouping, abusive, neglectful, harsh and inconsistent parenting practices may be present. Other possible elements within this grouping include the presence of alcoholism, substance abuse, and mental illness. Teen parenthood and an unstable home life also constitute key factors.

> » Within the community grouping, inadequate access to health care, educational opportunities and adult supervision are common. Isolation from supportive neighbours, allies or positive associations are also noted with many peer relationships demonstrating deviant behaviours.

The child/youth population that presents as being particularly in risk include those from single parent families; those with teenage parents; recipients of social assistance; children/youth who have been in foster care; those who are high-school drop-outs; and those with disabilities. Research indicates that 14.3% of children/youth* in Canada suffer from mental health disorders. Disorders presenting in children and youth are of particular concern since many of these will last throughout adulthood, causing significant impairment.


*Linking poverty and mental health: a lifespan view, September 2008, Ellen L. Lipman, Michael H. Boyle, The Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health at CHEO.

PLANNING FOR POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT WITH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN MIND

DDSB MODEL FOR POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
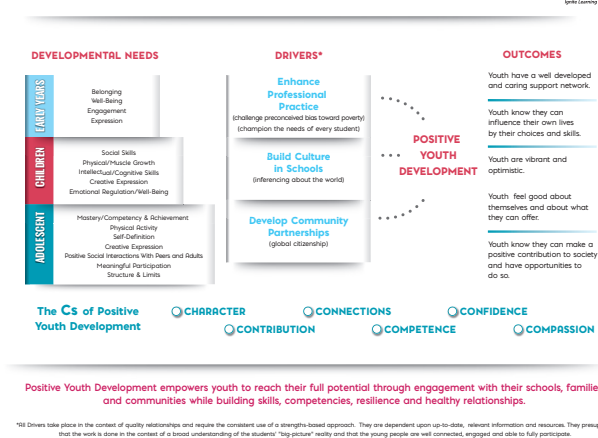
Aligned and Integration Model (AIM) for School Mental Health and Well-Being
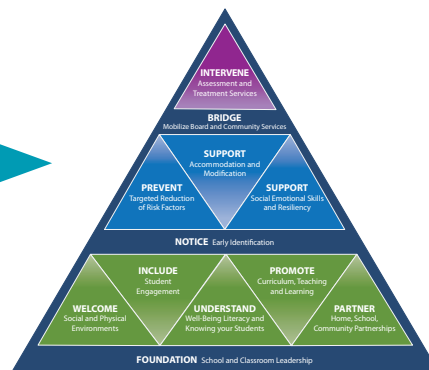
From: School Mental Health-Assist

Mental Health and Well-Being:

We believe our learning spaces need to support all students to:

» develop positive relationships

» feel a sense of belonging

» feel engaged in their learning with the opportunity to voice their feelings and ideas

» feel physically and emotionally safe in an inclusive, accepting environment

» develop a healthy mind and body to deal with challenging situations, make healthy choices, and to encourage positive mental health

» have a positive sense of self/spirit reflected in their sense of personal identity and self-worth, and an optimistic and hopeful view about life.

"*To offer hope, to have students' resiliency carry them forward, to believe that poverty is not destiny, must begin with teachers' beliefs, values, and hopes of the same.*"

– Professor Darlene Ciuffetelli-Parker, Brock University

▶ Enhance Professional Practice

(challenge preconceived bias toward poverty)
(champion the needs of every student)

UNDERSTAND Well-being literacy where staff, students and parents are understanding of well-being and staff know their students.

» Do we model and promote positive mental health and well-being through school improvement planning and co-learning opportunities?

» Do we have working and learning environments that are responsive to students at all points across the Mental Health Continuum?

» Do we understand the cultural realities of students, staff and families?

» Do we use evidence for informed decision-making for selecting wellbeing promotion programs, preventions programs and resources?

» Are our classrooms mentally healthy spaces?

▶ Build Culture in Schools

(inferencing about the world)

WELCOME Social, cognitive, and physical environments that are welcoming for the entire school community; students, caregivers, staff and community partners.

INCLUDE Focused and intentional student engagement practices that result in students who are engaged and feel included in school life; both in the classroom and the school.

PROMOTE Well-being and positive mental health promotion are considered in curriculum planning, teaching strategy selection and student learning perspectives.

» Do we have established practices that promote a positive tone, safety and belonging, acceptance, inclusion and respect?

» Do our classrooms build and sustain a positive, safe and accepting space where students experience belonging, inclusion and respect?

» Does our school engage all students, give them voice, allow them to feel included in school life both in their classroom learning and in the larger school?

» Do staff engage in practices that promote the social and intellectual engagement of all students through the principles of inclusive design?

» Do we engage students in decision-making processes?

» Do we implement DDSB curriculum resources designed to support Well-Being and Mental Health in students?

» Do we support instructional strategies and structures that support well-being and mental health?

» Do we utilize instructional strategies and structures to intervene and support student learning in a manner which is personalized for student needs?

» Do we implement DDSB curriculum resources designed to support culturally responsive Well-Being and Mental Health in students in our instructional practices?

» Do we utilize classroom structures and practices purposefully in a manner that considers and promotes student well-being?

▶ Develop Community Partnerships

(global citizenship)

PARTNER Collaborative Home, School, and Community Partnerships

» Do we respond to the mental health needs of all students by engaging the appropriate school, district and community supports and resources?

» Do we establish and/or enhance communication pathways in all transitions to facilitate information sharing for students who are or may be in risk?

» Do we access and utilize information available about students who may be in risk?

YOUTH HUBS

Youth Hubs provide a unique blending of services to a school community by providing a common point of access to services in a centralized location. Services may include access to health and social services, as well as cultural and recreational programming. Hubs are intended to be unique collaborations that are defined by the needs of individual communities and partnerships. Youth Hubs typically take place within the school. They provide places for people to access services, meet one another socially and participate in community planning. Youth Hubs play a critical role in building economic and social cohesion in a community.

By providing wrap-around services within a school setting, it is estimated that ninety-five percent of children and youth will have improved access to healh services. Youth Hubs can also support families with integrated service delivery. Accessibility to services is often challenging for members of Aboriginal communities, newcomers, and people with disabilities. Transportation in rural communities is also difficult and provides additional barriers to obtaining support. Youth Hubs are inclusive spaces that seek to mitigate some of these challenges by providing needed services in centralized, accessible spaces.

In Durham, Youth Hubs are operating, or are planned, for the following school communities:

» Brock High School, Henry Street High School, Ajax High School, G.L. Roberts C.V.I., R.S. McLaughlin C.V.I., and Eastdale C.V.I.

"Community hubs help build a sense of community and contribute to the social and economic well-being of its residents. They are a catalyst to bring people together, both residents and agencies within and outside the community. The community hub structure, which encourages collaboration and integration, can spark action to fill gaps in services where there may not be the will or adequate resources."

- Keeping it Local: Community Hubs and Integrated Human Services
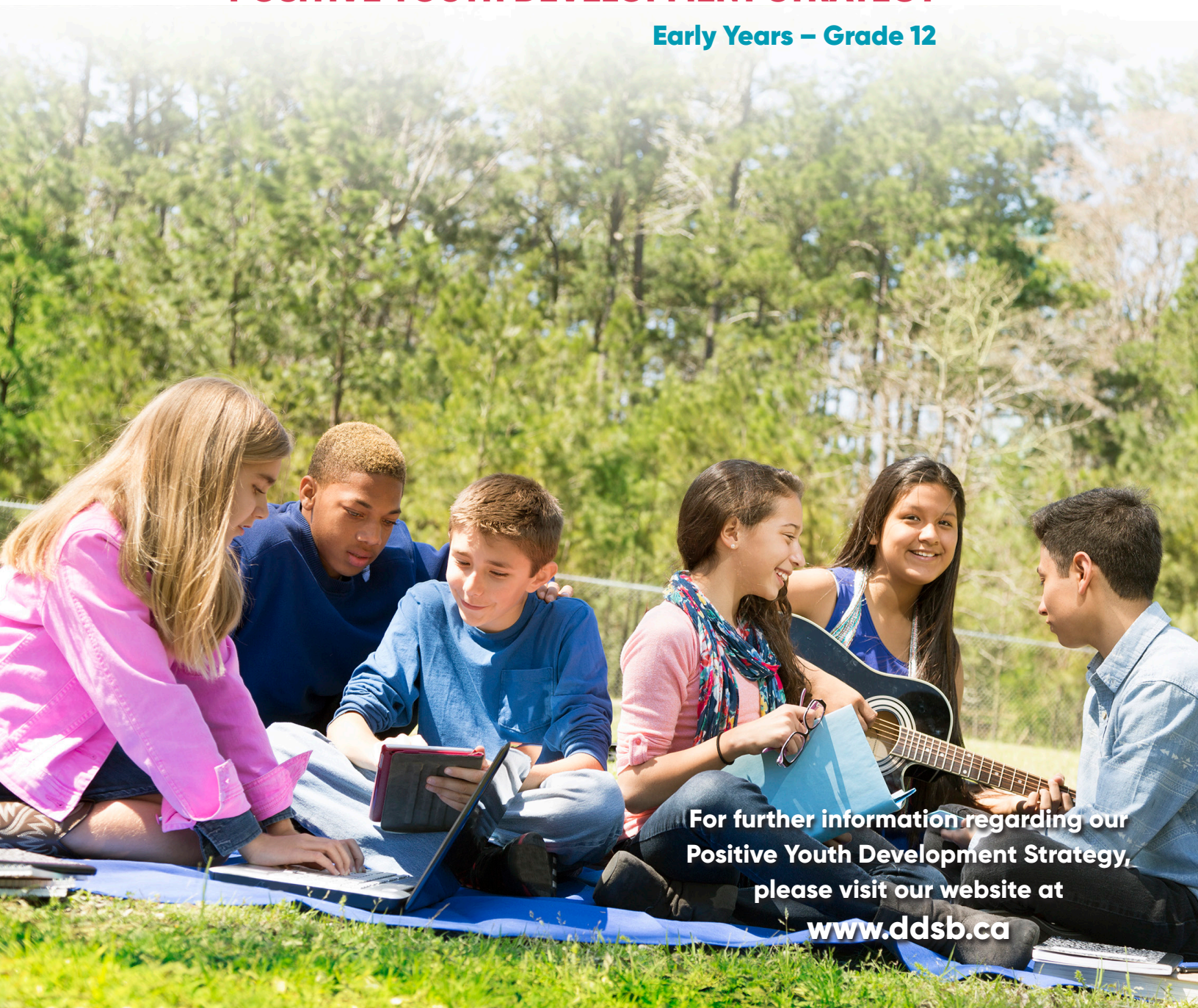
RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS

DDSB
Ignite Learning
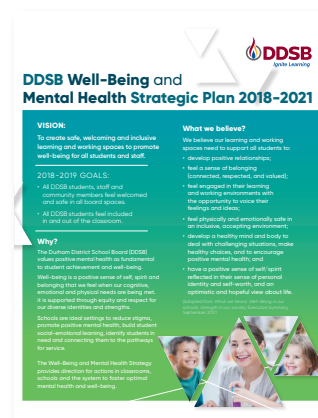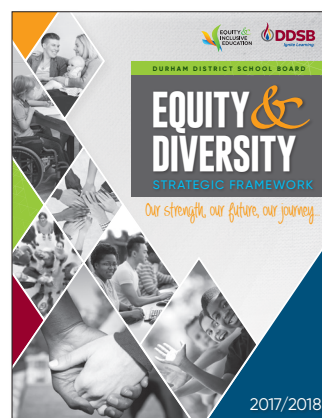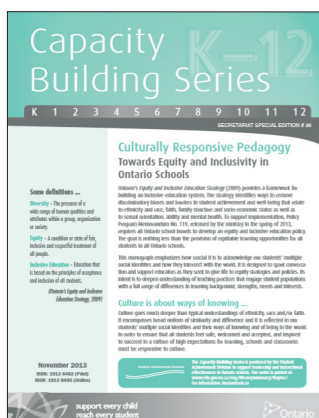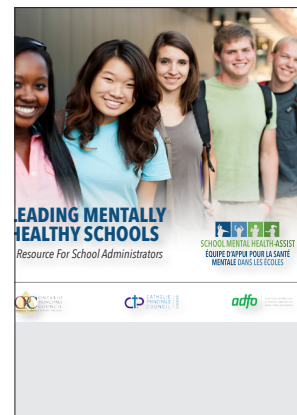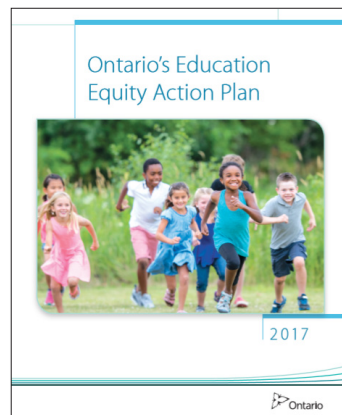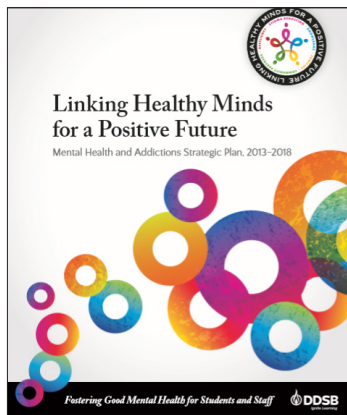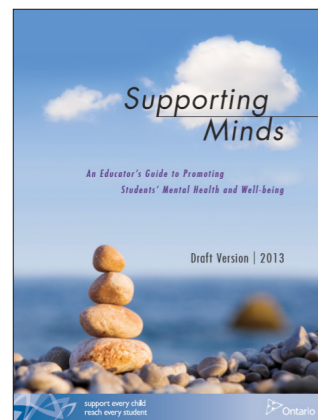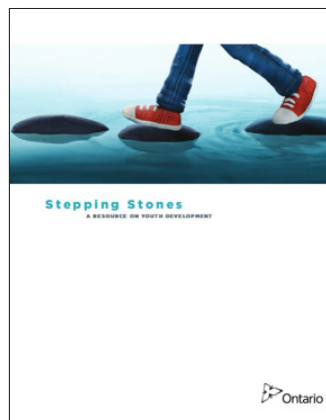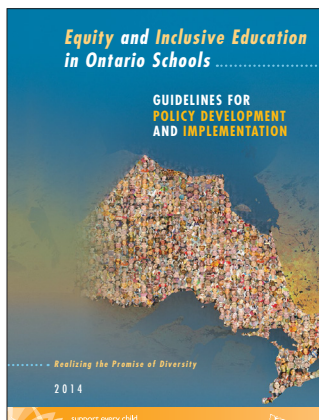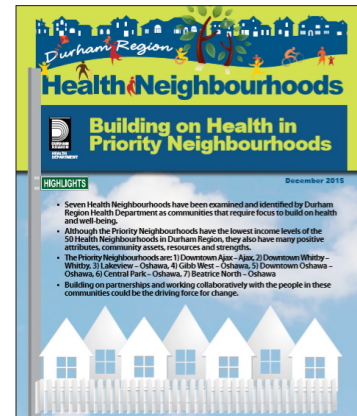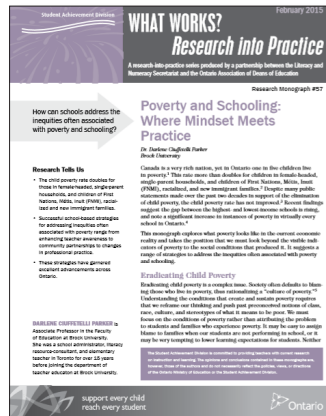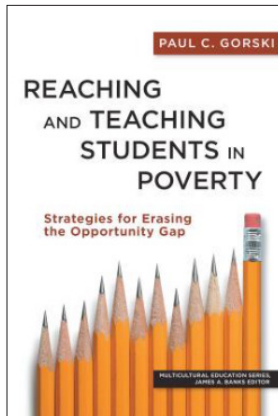
DURHAM DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Early Years – Grade 12

For further information regarding our Positive Youth Development Strategy, please visit our website at **www.ddsb.ca**