

# Inclusive Student Services Impact Update

2023-2024 • Volume 5

## Student Mental Health and Well-Being

Schools are an ideal place for mental health promotion, the prevention of mental health concerns, and the early identification of mental health concerns through school-based prevention and intervention services. Schools provide students with the knowledge and skills to be aware of, care for, and advocate for their own mental health and well-being.

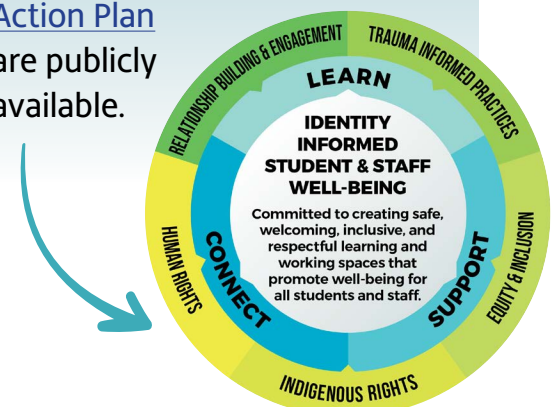
The Ministry recently launched [Policy/Program Memorandum 169 Student Mental Health](#) outlining eleven expectations of Boards whose goals result in students having the knowledge and skills to understand and support their mental health, provide ongoing access to high quality mental health services with appropriate supports for their individual needs when and where they need them across the provincial mental health continuum of care.

### Joint Local Planning with Community-Based Child and Youth Mental Health Providers

District leaders responsible for mental health participate on joint local planning tables in order to support the school board and the local community-based child and youth mental health agencies to provide coordinated mental health care that ensures there are strong pathways to, from, and through mental health supports and service. Examples of participation in joint community planning include, but are not limited to, active membership on Durham's Children and Youth Planning Network, Durham Youth Suicide Prevention working group, Infant Mental Health Committee.

### Three-Year Mental Health Strategy and One-Year Action Plan

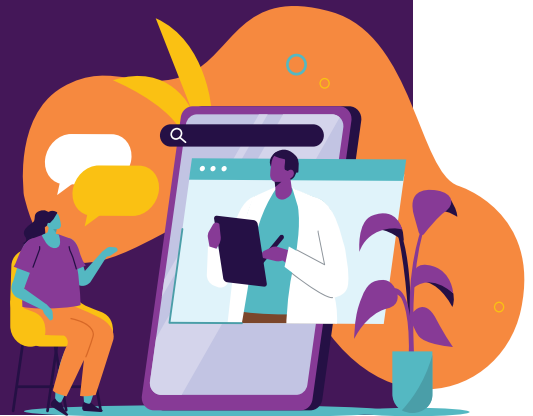
The DDSB three-year [Mental Health and Well-Being Action Plan](#) and [2023-2024 Action Plan](#) are publicly available.



## Multi-Tiered System of Supports:

The DDSB continuum of services: mental health promotion, early identification, prevention and early intervention, and service pathways/clinical support provided by members of the Psychological Services and Social Work teams for more intensive mental health needs including crisis and trauma.

- Within the previous school year, 5832 students served (both virtually and in-person) by school-based regulated mental health professionals; includes 1:1 consent-based plans of care.
- The data above does not include number of students served through mental health promotion (Tier 1) and targeted prevention (Tier 2), school supports through consults, traumatic incident responses, child/youth protection consultations, crisis suicide intervention Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)/Violent Risk Threat Assessments (VTRAs) and other adult to adult care consultations for proactive and group (e.g., class) support.



**"I wanted to reach out to you to tell you how thankful I am for all your support, wisdom, and kindness this year. I think about you and your role in our journey all the time. I truly know that you were the pillar of strength (and my family) in our darkest hours... "**

**—Parent/Caregiver**

**"Our mental health team plays an invaluable role in supporting students who are navigating a complex world. Our Team provides a safe space where students can practice strategies, think aloud challenges and then take those strategies and put them into practice. We see students using their breathing strategies and mindfulness as they go about their day. These practices allow our students to have more successful days where they can engage in their learning. For our families, Team provides connections to services that can support families in the broader community and this helps to centre the school as the hub of the community."**

**—Principal**

**"Our Social Worker continues to support a student who is transitioning. This student had attendance and engagement challenges but connecting them with the service of our school Social Worker has resulted in the student engaging in the school work and achieving at high levels and every day attendance. This student looks forward to their Monday Morning check-ins with our Social Worker."**

**—Parent/Caregiver**

## **Consistent Use of Evidence-Informed Brief Interventions and Standardized Measurement**

Inclusive Student Services professionals utilize evidence-informed interventions that align with their scope of practice, relevant legislation, and regulatory colleges' obligations for privacy and reporting. Interventions are also in keeping with client centred care and the needs, goals and individual plans of care.

**"I wonder where the school social workers were in my life when I was growing up."**

–Parent/Caregiver

## **Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention Protocols**

The DDSB has developed a board suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention protocol with the most recent version released in September 2022 to include postvention content and to reflect consultation with our Indigenous Education Department. Since 2014, Psychological Services and Social Work staff have been offering applied suicide intervention skills training and ongoing communication to school administrators and educators regarding the protocol to ensure they know how and who to reach out for help immediately on behalf of students.

**"After I took the ASIST, I felt far better equipped to support the students and staff, whether I'm the person having the conversation directly, or supporting someone who is."**

– Secondary Administrator

## **Virtual Care Delivery**

Our professional mental health staff utilize an in-person mode of delivery for mental health services; a virtual option is available to ensure accessibility for students and their families through Microsoft Teams which is compliant with legislative and regulatory college's obligations for privacy.

**"Our School Psychometrist makes a difference for our all the students she serves. The impact of her service for one family has been invaluable. She works alongside the educators, Special Education Resource Teacher, administration and family to help this student navigate his school day. Moreover, to best support this student she has worked tirelessly to meet the family where they are in seeking community services."**

–Administrator

## **Enhanced Educator and Staff Mental Health Literacy**

Learning opportunities are being provided to District staff to ensure that they can embed mental health promotion, prevention, and early intervention into the education experience for students and help to foster safe, and welcoming environments. Examples include: Mental Health Promotion, Positive School Climates Learning Series and Mental Health First Aid-Youth.

## **Mandatory Mental Health Literacy Learning for Students**

Intermediate educators responsible for health curriculum to facilitate the mandatory mental health literacy modules for Grades 7 and 8 which will support student learning on mental health and mental illness and build awareness of the impact of the stigma associated with mental illness. The modules are aligned with the existing curriculum expectations in the Grades 7 and 8 Health and Physical Education curriculum.

## Family Mental Health Literacy and Awareness

Families (and students) who may be struggling can access support in partnership with their school team or directly through the "Connect with the Mental Health Team Button", an online form used to reach out to an Inclusive Student Services team member supporting mental health. Staff continue to look at connections to the Parent and Community Engagement department in support of enhancing educational and engagement opportunities for families.

## Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

While SEL skills are embedded in the Ontario curriculum and include identification and management of emotions, recognizing sources of stress and coping with challenges, maintaining positive motivation and perseverance, building healthy relationships, developing self-awareness and confidence, and thinking critically and creatively, the District also has a team of Child and Youth Support Workers who provide direct classroom SEL programming along with SEL capacity building for Educators through consultation and professional development opportunities.

"Overall, the SEL experience and delivery was great for our students. Students learned new strategies to cope with stress, as well to as help build on strategies they already had."

—Elementary Educator

"Thank you for helping me and my friends think of all the ways we can help each other and how to cope with stress. I think you helped everyone in this class. I appreciate everything you do and I hope I get to see you again. I learned how to take so many different ways to take deep breaths and calm myself down. I liked how you could get to know us and make us feel comfortable talking."

—Student

## Mental Health Absences

In June 2023, the District adjusted absence code procedures to "(AI) Illness: Health and Well-Being". The addition of 'Well-Being' to the illness code for student absence is a way to honour the importance of self-care and restorative personal practices and how these approaches bolster health and overall well-being. The code provides an opportunity to acknowledge the many ways personal wellness can promote a healthy and resilient lifestyle.

"The work you do is so essential to our students, you have no idea"

—Principal

For more information about the  
DDSB Inclusive Student Services Impact Update,  
please visit [DDSB Inclusive Student Services](#).

