



Excellence | Equity | New Evangelization



TOGETHER FOR MENTAL HEALTH 2014–2017

Mental Health and Addiction Strategy



Durham Catholic District School Board
Catholic Education: Learning and Living In Faith



Our Mission

We are called to celebrate and nurture the God-given talents of each student as we serve with excellence in the light of Christ.

Our Vision

Each student in our Catholic learning community embodies excellence and equity by embracing the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations—to be:

A discerning believer formed in the Catholic Faith community who celebrates the signs and sacred mystery of God's presence through word, sacrament, prayer, forgiveness, reflection and moral living.

An effective communicator who speaks, writes and listens honestly and sensitively, responding critically in light of gospel values.

A reflective, creative and holistic thinker who solves problems and makes responsible decisions with an informed moral conscience for the common good.

A self-directed, responsible, lifelong learner who develops and demonstrates their God-given potential.

A collaborative contributor who finds meaning, dignity and vocation in work which respects the rights of all and contributes to the common good.

A caring family member who attends to family, school, parish, and the wider community.

A responsible citizen who gives witness to Catholic social teaching by promoting peace, justice and sacredness of human life.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light: and there was light.""

(Genesis 1:1–3)



Overview Statement: Message from the Director of Education

The Durham Catholic District School Board believes that student well-being plays a significant role in student success and academic achievement.

Our Mental Health Strategic Plan was developed with the Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations in mind as we aim to educate all learners about the mental health continuum, how to recognize when help is needed, and how to access support.

While the Durham Catholic District School Board has had much success in raising mental health awareness, reducing the stigma that is often associated with mental illness, and educating school communities about the impact of well-being on student achievement, this plan identifies short, medium and long term goals that will further enhance our mental health initiatives.

In keeping with the board's mission, vision, values and the five-year strategic plan, the Mental Health Strategic Plan is reflective of Catholic education; promoting Excellence, Equity and Evangelization. It is also driven by the Student Well-Being and Achievement Board Improvement Plan, which is built on the concept of educating whole child; mind, body and soul.

We are pleased to provide our Catholic communities with this document as a view of our vision for improving and sustaining mental wellness for all.

Yours in Catholic Education,
Anne O'Brien, Director of Education

Our Together for Mental Health Mission

To create caring and supportive Catholic school communities that promote well-being and maximize achievement for all learners.

Our Together for Mental Health Vision

Every school community in the Durham Catholic District School Board will inspire students to **believe, belong** and **become**:

Believe: All learners believe with faith in their ability to achieve to their God-given potential; they are physically, spiritually and mentally healthy.

Belong: All learners feel they belong to an inclusive and caring community where the stigma surrounding mental health concerns is eliminated; they are engaged in their learning and feel a strong connection between home, school and parish.

Become: All learners become caring and resilient members of society, contributing their God-given talents in service to others; they are aware of the importance of mental health and well-being and know how to access supports.

Commitments

As a Catholic learning community, we believe that mental health and well-being are an essential component of academic achievement, hence we are committed to:

- Instilling a belief in the worth and dignity of every person.
- Sharing responsibility for creating collaborative and inclusive learning communities.
- Recognizing the inextricable link between student mental health and student achievement, as the foundation for productive, well-rounded, contributors to our community.
- Believing that all children have a right to attend school and reach their full potential.
- Developing our system's capacity to understand and support the mental health and well-being of all learners.
- Focusing on the implementation of evidence-based programs and services to support all learners.
- Engaging with our community mental health and healthcare stakeholders as partners in achieving mentally healthy schools.

"And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day." (Genesis 1:4-5)



Our Key Messages

We all have mental health. Mental health is similar to physical health, in that it exists on a continuum which can vary for individuals over time, depending on many factors. Mental illness, like physical illness, exists with a range of severity and treatment options.

Schools are optimal settings to:

- Promote positive mental health;
- Build social-emotional learning skills;
- Prevent the onset or worsening of mental health problems in high risk groups; and
- Reduce stigma associated with mental health problems.

Teachers are uniquely positioned to help identify students who may need more intensive mental health support and to support them along the pathway to service.

Student well-being is essential for optimal academic achievement. Much of what we do in schools everyday—teaching, caring, helping—is foundational to good mental health.

Think in Tiers

Tier 1. Universal Mental Health Promotion:

- Support for all students;
- School/class-wide social-emotional learning; and
- Mental health promotion programs.

Tier 2. Targeted Prevention:

- Support for some students; and
- Prevention and intervention programs and strategies for students at-risk.

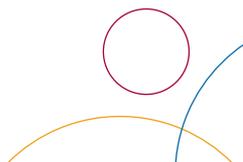
Tier 3. Indicated Intervention:

- Support for few students; and
- Specialized interventions and pathways to community care.



Our Priorities

- to develop the organizational conditions to support school mental health;
- to raise mental health awareness and literacy for staff, parents and students;
- to select and implement mental health promotion and prevention programs and strategies that are based on evidence;
- to establish key working relationships and protocols with community stakeholders in coordinating school-based mental health efforts; and
- to ensure a suicide safety net is in place, through development and implementation of clear protocols, and through staff training.





Acknowledgements

Together for Mental Health was developed in consultation with a diverse Mental Health and Addictions Steering Committee, including representation from School Board staff, including system leaders, school-based staff and professional Student Services personnel. The priorities and goals were developed based on school-level, system-level and community-level consultations.

For further information contact:

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