

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION STRATEGY

CONTEXT

The York Region District School Board (YRDSB) values positive mental health as fundamental to student achievement and well-being. Mental health can be viewed as a continuum from health to illness. Schools are ideal settings for mental health promotion, addiction awareness education, resiliency development, and connecting those in need to care pathways. Early identification and intervention are important because many mental health challenges manifest in childhood and appropriate care is not often accessed.

The Mental Health and Addiction Strategy provides direction for actions in classrooms, schools and the system to foster optimal mental health and well-being.

To support understanding of a specific school context, visit [tools to access school reports/data](#) and YRDSB's [mental health targets](#).

FOUNDATIONAL PRACTICES THINKING PROMPTS

The following three thinking prompts are designed to assist in fostering an Equity, Innovation and Leadership mindset. While reviewing the contents of the Mental Health and Addiction Strategy, these questions provide a lens through which decisions should be filtered.

1. Who might share leadership (Formal leaders/ Informal leaders/ Student leaders/ Other) in implementing an action? How might implementing this action both engage and develop leadership skills more broadly?
2. How will we ensure that our diversity strengthens our implementation of an action? How might we identify and reduce barriers in order to increase equity and inclusion in our implementation?
3. How might innovations in our practice (processes, technologies, resources) improve our implementation of an action? How might we consider local and global research in implementing this action?

To further support the implementation of the actions, visit the [foundational practices core resources](#).

MENTAL HEALTH THEORY OF ACTION

If we:

- build knowledge and capacity;
- develop mentally healthy environments;
- reduce stigma; and
- create collaborative care pathways,

then we will foster optimal mental health and well-being for all students.



BUILDING KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY

Building Knowledge and Capacity involves developing understanding, skills, strategies and resources that promote positive mental health and resilience.

ACTIONS

System

Build a collective understanding of the conditions of a mentally healthy environment using: Leading Mentally Healthy Schools; and [Supporting Minds: An Educator's Guide to Promoting Students' Mental Health and Well-being](#)

Increase system capacity to use the Mental Health and Addiction Continuums

Develop a systematic, tiered approach to professional learning

Use the School Mental Health Decision Support Tool to coordinate mental health and addiction-related system initiatives

Select and/or develop social emotional learning resources and implement them system wide using the School Mental Health Decision Support Tool – Evidence-Based Mental Health Promotion Programming

Establish a system Well-Being Steering Committee to support the capacity-building process and to make connections among Mental Health and Addictions, Caring and Safe Schools, Healthy Schools and Eco Schools initiatives

School

Build a collective understanding of the conditions of a mentally healthy environment supported by Leading Mentally Healthy Schools

Build the capacity of all staff members to model and promote positive mental health and well-being through professional conversations, school improvement planning and co-learning opportunities

Utilize the School Mental Health Decision Support Tool to support effective decision making on school-based mental health and addiction-related activities

Classroom

Apply new learning to program planning and practice to create the conditions for a mentally healthy classroom (e.g., classroom strategies within [Supporting Minds: An Educator's Guide to Promoting Students' Mental Health and Well-being](#))

Provide opportunities for students to learn about mental health and addiction and develop students' mental health awareness

Support the development of student learning skills and work habits through the teaching of [social emotional core competencies](#)



DEVELOPING MENTALLY HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

Developing Mentally Healthy Environments involves proactive and responsive approaches to create and sustain the conditions for optimal mental health.

ACTIONS

System

Align YRDSB mental health and addiction initiatives, guided by the Ministry's [Ontario's Well-being Strategy for Education](#) and Leading Mentally Healthy Schools

Review and refine assessment tool(s) to examine the mental health of learning environments in the district

Develop a Fostering Inclusive, Mentally Healthy Learning Environments resource for schools in order to examine their practices, processes, resources and spaces to support them in building and sustaining safe, inclusive, and welcoming environments

Review recommendations derived from the Resiliency Project and integrate appropriate recommendations into the Mental Health Strategy

Pilot public health model for school-based partnerships and evaluate for impact and scalability

School

Create working and learning environments that are responsive to supporting students at all points across the Mental Health and Addiction Continuums as well as the tiered model of support

Use Fostering Inclusive, Mentally Healthy Learning Environments resource to examine school spaces for their impact on student well-being to enable safer and more inclusive spaces

Implement, monitor, and refine practices to support bullying prevention

Classroom

Implement, monitor, and refine actions from Fostering Inclusive, Mentally Healthy Learning Environments that build and sustain a safe, inclusive and welcoming classroom environment for all students

Use YRDSB curriculum resources designed to support resiliency development in students

Promote and model digital citizenship with students, families and the community to support bullying prevention

Recognize and respond to the mental health needs of all students using early recognition and classroom strategies as described in [Supporting Minds: An Educator's Guide to Promoting Students' Mental Health and Well-being](#)



REDUCING STIGMA

Reducing Stigma involves broadening collective awareness about mental health and addiction, and challenging existing attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours.

ACTIONS

System

Design and implement a district-wide Stigma Reduction Plan

School

Collaborate with students, families, staff members and community partners to plan, implement and model strategies that increase awareness and reduce the stigma of mental health and addiction

Implement actions from the Fostering Inclusive, Mentally Healthy Learning Environments resource that build and sustain a stigma-free environment

Ensure interdepartmental communication and coordination for a comprehensive approach to stigma reduction

Classroom

Implement the strategies in the Fostering Inclusive, Mentally Healthy Learning Environments resource that build and sustain a stigma-free classroom

Use district-approved stigma reduction resources designed for the classroom

Engage students in learning about how stigma can hurt all people especially those struggling with mental health and addiction difficulties



CREATING COLLABORATIVE CARE PATHWAYS

Creating Collaborative Care Pathways engages all stakeholders in an inclusive community that provides clear access to mental health and addiction supports and services.

ACTIONS

System

Create and maintain a resource which identifies care pathways and district resources that deliver prevention and intervention services (e.g., Teacher Liaisons, Community Resource Facilitators, Psychology, Social Work, etc.)

Work with community partners to develop a community mental health and addiction plan

Work with community partners to develop a York Region Community Suicide Prevention/ Intervention/Postvention based on the ASIST and safeTALK model

Respond to specialized populations of students and proactively address mental health and addiction through collaborative work with key stakeholders

Strengthen working relationships and protocols with community partners by coordinating school-based mental health and addiction activities/programs to align with the School Mental Health Decision Support Tool

Develop an online partnership application process for agencies wishing to deliver mental health and addiction services in schools

School

Respond to the mental health and addiction needs of all students by engaging the appropriate school, district and community supports and resources (e.g., In-School Team, Interdisciplinary Team, Student Success, COMPASS, MHAN Nurse, Addictions Counsellors)

Use [Supporting Minds: An Educator's Guide to Promoting Students' Mental Health and Well-being](#) and School Mental Health Decision Support Tool - Evidence-Based Mental Health Promotion Programming to guide the implementation of evidence-informed mental health promotion and prevention programming

Establish and/or enhance communication pathways in all transitions to facilitate information sharing for students who are or may be at risk

Classroom

Access and utilize information available about students who may be at risk (e.g. IEP, Growth Plan, Transition Plan, Safety Plan)

Plan supports and interventions (in-class, in-school, outside school) for students who are or may be at risk and connect to additional support as necessary

Use [Supporting Minds: An Educator's Guide to Promoting Students' Mental Health and Well-being](#) to be aware of early indicators that a student may require further support

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Continuous professional learning is a crucial part of board and school improvement processes. The following principles have been identified to support planning for professional learning.

Principles for Effective Professional Learning

Professional learning is effective when it is:

- responsive to students' identities, thinking, learning, achievement and well-being as evidenced by a range of data gathered from and about students, including perceptual, demographic, program and achievement;
- developed through inquiry, as educators, facilitators, researchers, and/or partners engage in co-learning;
- based on high-quality, evidence-based research;
- built upon a collaborative culture of curiosity and risk-taking;
- differentiated by the educator's readiness and needs, recognizing that different people learn in different ways (e.g., experiential, social, formal) and through different modalities;
- an iterative approach, informed by ongoing analysis, reflection and feedback; and
- focused on developing, deepening and connecting both content knowledge, pedagogy and pedagogical content knowledge.

RESOURCES

Aligning resources effectively, purposefully and efficiently to focus on what matters most is a key leadership function. Resources have been identified to support the implementation of the Mental Health and Addiction Strategy.

They are organized into four categories:

- Core Resources (System, School, Classroom)
- Supporting Specialized Populations Resources
- Parent/Guardian/Family Resources

MONITORING

Monitoring is the ongoing gathering, reviewing and assessing of information to track and document progress towards goals. It is an integral part of board and school improvement processes. The following principles have been identified to support collective monitoring.

Principles of Effective Monitoring

Monitoring is effective when it is:

- shared collaboratively by those who are implementing the improvement plan and who have agency to act upon the results;
- reciprocal, involving a two-way flow of information across classroom, school and system to inform responsive action at all levels;
- based on criteria against which evidence from multiple sources (e.g., conversations, observations, products) can be examined;
- focused on the gathering and analysis of the evidence;
- a continuous loop of action, analysis, reflection and response;
- timely and ongoing while implementation is still in progress;
- able to yield timely, precise, and descriptive feedback to inform next steps; and
- rooted in professional discourse in which questions are drivers for deeper understanding of what makes a difference for student achievement and well-being.

TARGETS

Targets support the evaluation process. Clear identification and communication of the targets are key to board and school improvement planning. The following principles have been identified to support effective target setting.

Principles of Effective Target Setting

Targets are effective when they:

- are established through a collaborative process;
- are specific and based on identified needs;
- align with the collective and strategic efforts within the system, school and classrooms;
- identify the progress expected at specific checkpoints;
- are ambitious and attainable predictions of intended results;
- are motivational for continuous improvement; and
- evaluate the impact of strategic actions on student achievement and well-being.

Three Types of Targets: Implementation, Perception, Achievement

Implementation targets are established to measure whether strategic actions in the BIPSA are being implemented as intended.

Perception targets are established to measure the perceptions of students about their school environment with regard to their learning and well-being. Revised school climate survey questions will be implemented in 2017 to gather baseline data specific to the current BIPSA and to set targets for the mid-cycle and five year checkpoints.

Achievement targets are established to measure whether desired results are being realized with regard to student achievement.

[Mental Health and Addiction implementation and perception targets](#)