

Professional Development Program for Teacher Candidates

Mental Health and Well-Being

Webinar Goals & Outcomes



By the end of today's session, you will:

- Increase your confidence as an educator related to mental health and well-being
- Build your understanding about practical tools, strategies and ideas to increase your understanding about resources to support mental health and well-being with special consideration of the implications of emerging from a global pandemic
- Reflect about how to take a culturally responsive and relevant approach to instruction and learn about targeted supports for students and families who may have been impacted more greatly by the pandemic and who have been traditionally underserved within the education system
- Explore practical strategies for working with parents as partners
- Identify 2 or more support resources to continue your personal professional learning journey on this topic

Acknowledging Indigenous Lands and Beyond

Some key questions to consider:

- Do I understand the history of how colonization in these lands has displaced and denied the inherent rights of the original people of the land?
- What are my treaty responsibilities?
- How am I upholding my treaty obligations?



Overview

1. Mentally Healthy Schools Post Pandemic
2. Mental Health and Well-Being Supports
3. Targeted Supports
4. Parents as Partners

1. Mentally Healthy Schools Post-Pandemic

What is mental health?



Often, when we think about mental health, our minds turn to images like this one....



What is mental health and well-being?



When really, mental health and well-being looks something more like this.

It is a positive state of flourishing and balance.



Paying attention to:

- Healthy mind and body
- Meaningful learning experiences
- Sense of belonging
- Safety – physically and emotionally
- Supportive relationships
- Positive sense of self and spirit



Why Mental Health in Ontario Schools?

70%

of mental health and addictions issues begin in childhood and adolescence (Source: Mental Health Commission of Canada)

1 in 5

Ontario students ages 4-17 meet the criteria for a significant mental health issue (Source: Ontario Child Health Study, 2019)

84,062

Students received school-based services for mental health challenges (between Sept 2020-June 2021 in 65/72 boards) (Source: SMH-ON)

Good mental health is fundamental to a student's ability to learn, succeed, and reach their full potential.

Schools are part of a **comprehensive mental health and addictions system** that provide students with the knowledge and skills to care for their mental health and provide high quality mental health and addiction services when they need them.

In Ontario, school-based services are reported as the **most prevalent setting for students with a mental health issue to initially seek help**. For any mental health disorder, the first point of contact for students are schools: about 45%, vs. 26 % mental health agencies. (Ontario Child Health Study, 2019).

Available evidence demonstrates that promotion, prevention, and early intervention initiatives for mental health and addictions leads to **better health outcomes** and show **positive returns on investment**.

The **COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities** and greatly impacted students from equity seeking groups (e.g., racialized, low-income, LGBTQI2S, and students with disabilities).

Prioritizing student mental health is critical to **addressing these inequities and supporting the learning recovery of all students**.

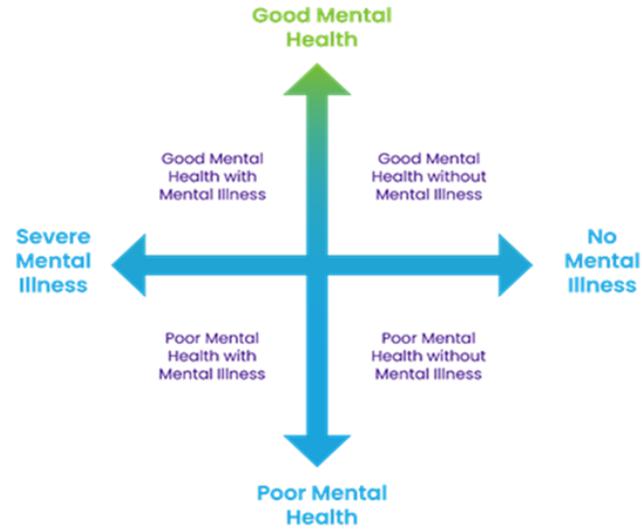
Understanding mental health and mental illness

Mental Health



...a positive sense of emotional well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections and personal dignity.

Thinking about mental health on a Dual Continuum shows how you can have a mental illness, but still be mentally well, just as you can have a physical illness and still live fully.



Mental Illness



...a wide range of mental health disorders characterized by alterations in thinking, mood or behaviour associated with significant distress and impaired functioning.

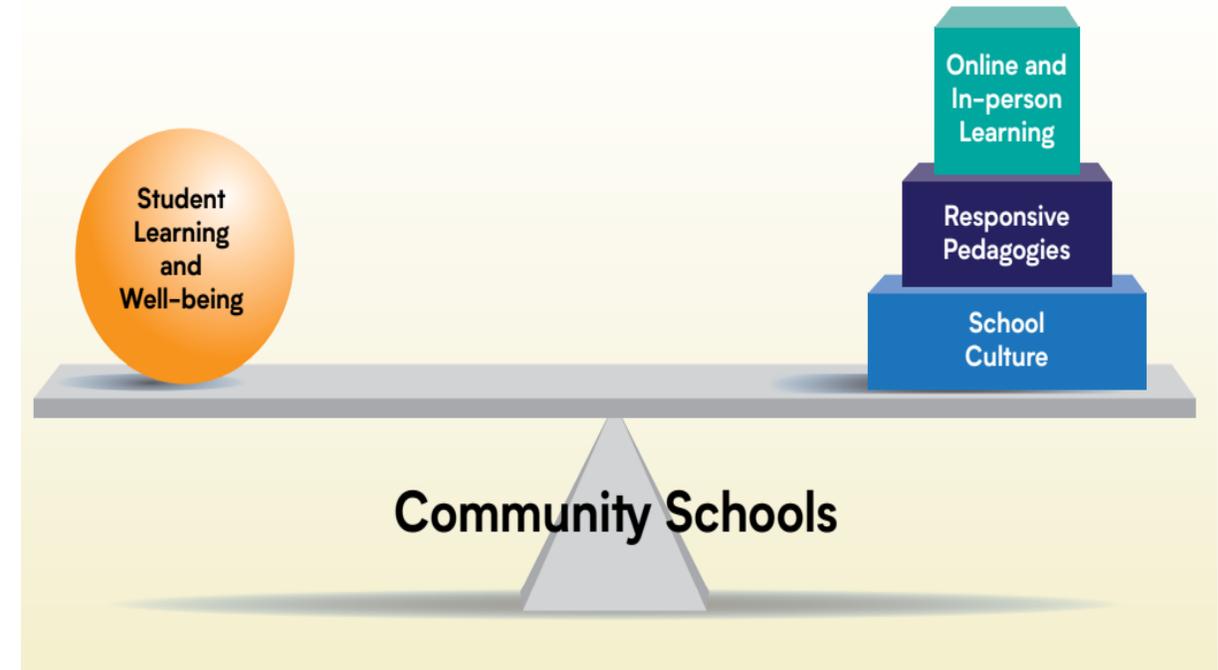


Did you know?

- ✓ The Education Act requires that all school boards “promote student achievement and well-being and promote a positive school climate that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils” (Section 169.1, Education Act).
- ✓ The ministry provides school boards with funding to provide integrated support for student achievement and well-being across all programming
- ✓ Boards are required to conduct school climate surveys to collect information from students, families and staff about aspects of the school experience related to positive school climate and the prevention of bullying
- ✓ All Ontario school boards have a mental health strategy and action plan
- ✓ All boards have a Mental Health Leader and a superintendent leading the board’s mental health leadership team, strategy and action plan
- ✓ School Mental Health Ontario (SMH-ON), is the ministry’s implementation partner for student mental health and they provide coaches to support boards with this work
- ✓ There are resources available from SMH-ON and from the Ministry of Education to support educators, parents and families with mental health and well-being.

Supporting Students Post-Pandemic

- Everyone has a unique COVID-19 story.
- We need to lead and teach with compassion, knowing that some people have experienced significant loss, grief and distress.
- School and classroom environments can provide a safe and welcoming spaces for students to recover and flourish.
- This diagram from a discussion paper published by the Ontario Public School Board Association, *Transitioning from the COVID-19 School Experience* highlights the need for an intentional, collaborative effort to balance elements that support student achievement and well-being.



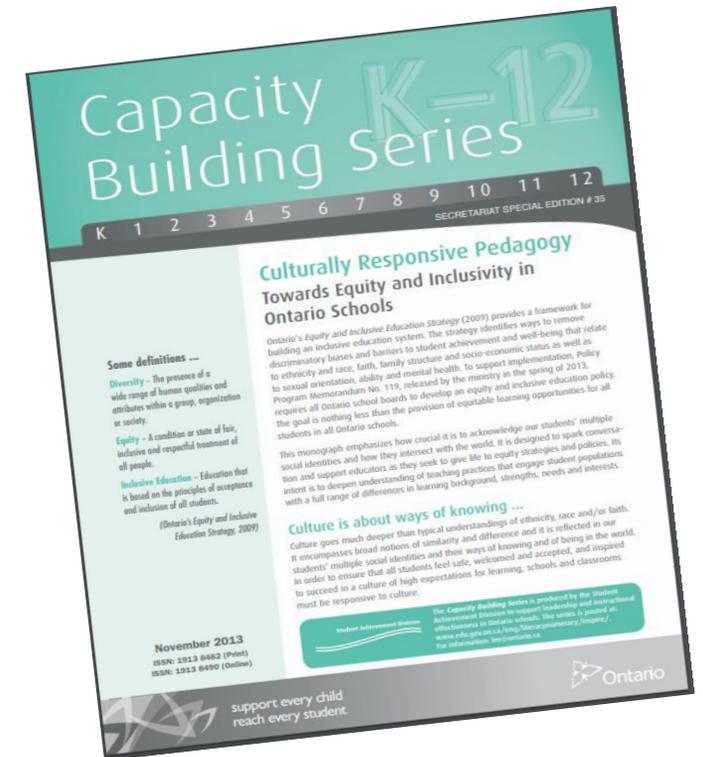
A Culturally Responsive and Relevant Approach

An educator's teaching stance plays a pivotal role in creating a learning environment that supports positive student mental health and well-being.

Student experiences of racism and inequity have an impact on mental health and well-being.

By adopting a culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy (CRRP) and approach:

- Educators develop socio-cultural consciousness, an awareness of how socio-cultural structures impact individual experiences and opportunities
- Teachers recognize all students learn differently and that these differences may be connected to background, language, family structure and social or cultural identity.
- They see student diversity in terms of student strengths; they orient to it as presenting opportunities for enhancing learning rather than as challenges and/or deficits of the student or particular community. (page 2, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy - Towards Equity and Inclusivity in Ontario Schools, 2013).



Designing the Learning Environment: The Third Teacher

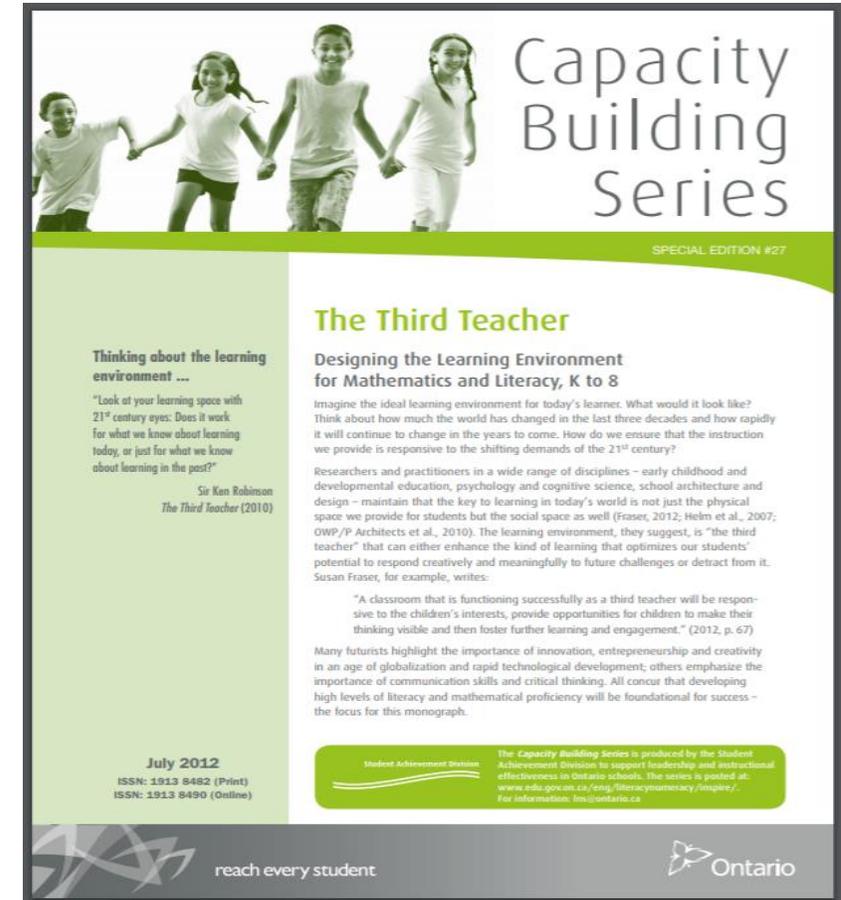
The key to learning in today's world is not just the physical space we provide for students but the social space as well (Fraser, 2012; Helm et al., 2007; WP/P Architects et al., 2010)

Learning is both an internal process of assimilating new information and a social process of discussion and negotiation.

Key components of a rich learning environment are identified as:

- Empower student learning through collaboration
- Give weight to student voice through dialogue
- Focus on student solutions and interpretations
- Encourage real-world problem solving
- Build self-efficacy

When students have a sense of belonging and safety within a community of learners, they are empowered to take risks and explore new ideas. ([The Third Teacher Capacity Building Series, 2012](#))



Reflective Questions

1. What actions have you seen staff in schools taking to recognize, validate and support students and families with their unique COVID-19 experience?
2. How are you supporting your own and each others' mental health and well-being for your own sake and in order to be our best to support students and families?
3. What did you learn from your experience with the pandemic over the last year and how can you apply it to support an equitable and healthy educational experience for your students?

2. Mental Health and Well-Being Supports

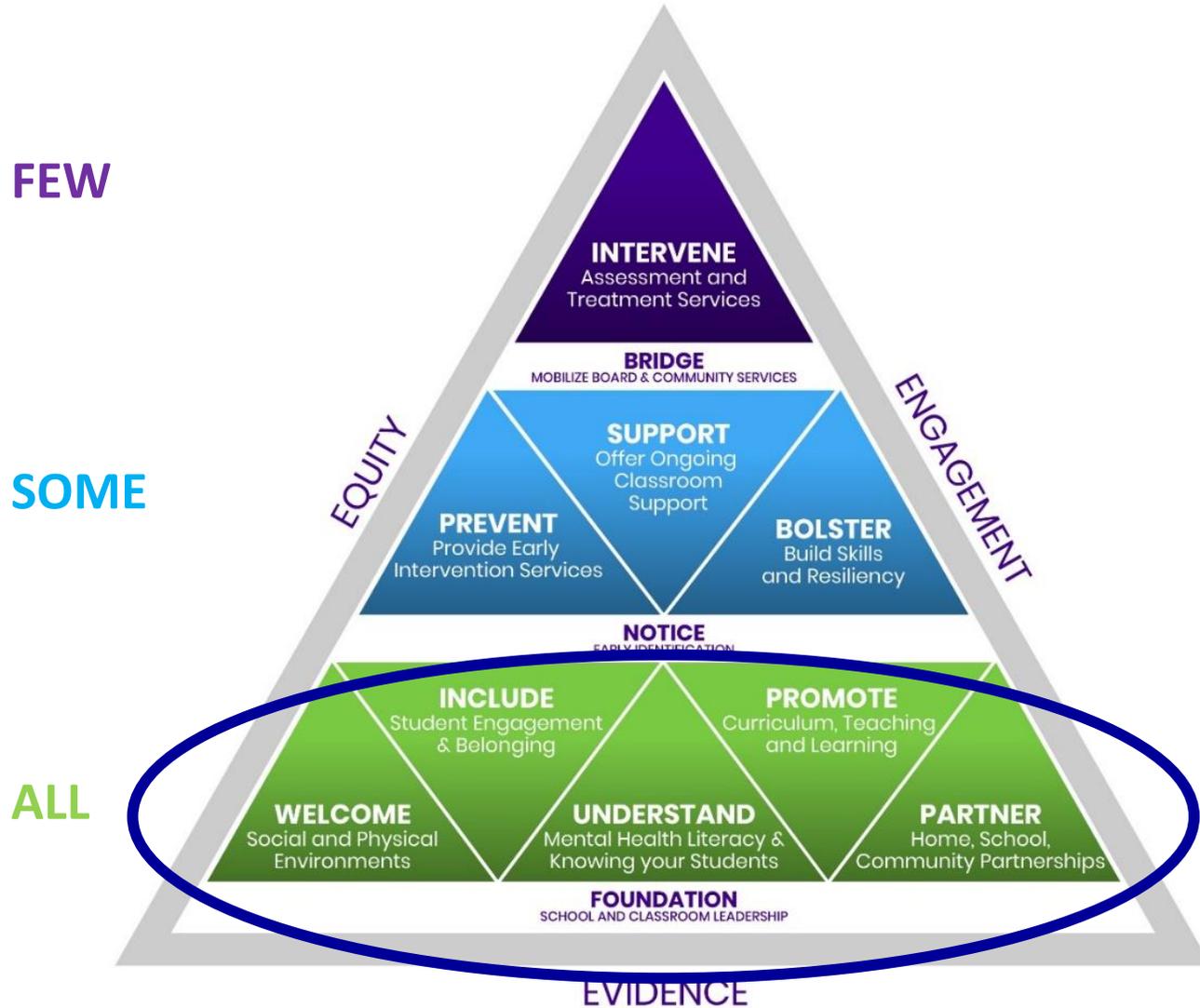


Schools are optimal places to:

- Promote positive mental health and well-being
- Build student social-emotional learning skills
- Reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking
- Identify students in need of support
- Prevent mental health problems in high risk groups
- Build pathways to, from and through services



Aligned & Integrated Model (AIM)



WELCOME

INCLUDE

UNDERSTAND

PROMOTE

PARTNER

What does it look like in everyday classroom life?

What can I do to support this in my classroom and school?



The main role of schools in this area is to enhance mental health and well-being for ALL students

First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework

Persons who experience wellness have hope, know where they belong in this world, and understand that their life has meaning and that they have a unique and specific purpose in life (FNMWCF, 2015, p 5).





And to notice, prevent, connect and support when mental health problems arise at school

O – Observe

N - Notice

E - Explore

C - Chat

A - Ask

L - Listen

L - Link

- ✓ According to the Ontario Child Health Study (2014), only 26-34% of children and youth with a mental health need saw a mental health provider
- ✓ Schools are the most common setting for mental health related contacts

Student Mental Health and Well-Being - It Starts with You!

To effectively support student mental health, we each need to take the time we need to care for our own well-being.



“Parents and teachers who take care of themselves are better able to take care of their children and students”

Reflect on this image and quote:

- How is this true for you? How does this support you and your students?

The Role of School Staff in Student Mental Health and Well-Being

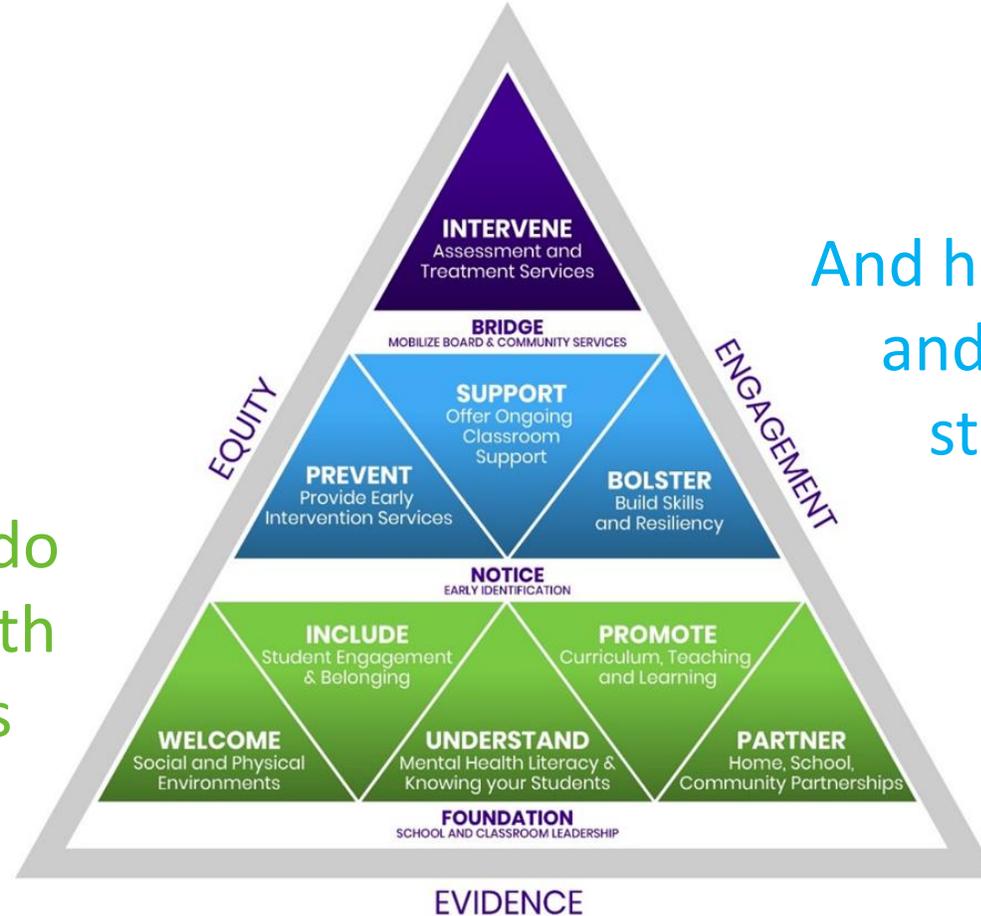
- Critical role in establishing and maintaining classrooms and schools where students and families feel a sense of belonging and value
- Canadian educators report that they want to help to support student mental health and well-being but many aren't sure what to do to help effectively
- Sometimes school staff feel concerned they will say or do the wrong things
- Understanding what your role is, and isn't, when it comes to student mental health, can help you to feel more confident in this area of practice.



Remember our Main Role in School Mental Health is Promotion and Prevention



Consider what you already do to enhance the mental health of ALL students in your class and school.



And how you notice, support and bolster when SOME students need more.

Personal Resiliency and Self-Care

- ✓ We are all playing a variety of roles – educator, parent, child, friend – and have competing demands on our energy
- ✓ Practice self-kindness and be patient with yourself
- ✓ Try on some new self-care activities, or just be sure to make time for the things that make you feel well
- ✓ Take the time to check-in on your own wellness, and reach out for support from time to time
- ✓ Remember we are also modeling self-care and well-being for students. They are watching, and can learn about this from you.



Cultivating Calm: Self-Care Ideas For Educators

1 min	5 min	10 min	30+ min
Get Grounded Pause. Feel your feet in your shoes. If seated, lightly push your feet against the floor.	Say Thank You Text a friend, thank them for something they did for you	Journal Write down 10 things you are grateful for.	Phone a Friend Ask them how they are feeling. Share your thoughts and experiences too.
Recall Who is someone that makes you smile? Bring them to mind for a moment or two.	Listen Have a favourite song that you listen to when relaxing? Press play!	Sip. Savour. Prepare and enjoy a cup of your favourite tea or other beverage.	Sweat! High Intensity Interval Training - Run - Weights You Choose.
Do Not Disturb Set your phone to DND when you can. Or just leave it in another room for a while.	Meditate Find a free guided meditation online. Find a style that works for you.	Walk it Out Take a stroll around the block.	Stretch it Out Find a free yoga class online.
Breathe Inhale (5 sec.), Exhale (7 sec). Repeat 3x	Tidy Up Set your timer and take a 5 min break to tidy up your home office or desk.	Dance Have a favourite jam that makes you want to move? Press play. Repeat.	Laugh! Watch a funny movie, show or YouTube video.

What do ALL students need at school?

- ✓ A warm welcome
- ✓ A smile
- ✓ A connection to a caring adult who looks like the student
- ✓ Curriculum and textbooks that reflect who they are
- ✓ A chance to learn
- ✓ A safe place to risk
- ✓ Someone who notices when something is wrong
- ✓ Someone who listens, and tries to find help for them
- ✓ Someone who believes in them, and instills hope

“The role model effect shows that having one teacher of the same race is enough to give a student the ambition to achieve...”



SMH-ON Mentally Healthy Back to School Support Package

SMH-ON has developed a comprehensive educator resource as part of their back to school support package for use in the classroom.



Mentally Healthy Back to School Support Package

Practical Resources to Help Schools
Rise Together to Resilience

Ensemble de soutiens pour favoriser la santé mentale à la rentrée scolaire

Ressources pratiques pour appuyer les écoles vers la résilience

- Student Mental Health Action Kit
- Educator Resource Guide to Support Student Mental Health and Well-Being
- Health & Physical Education Lesson Plans (grades 1 –8)
- First 10 Days
- Mentally Healthy Classroom Reflection Tool
- Supporting a Mentally Healthy Return to School
- Supporting the Mental Health and Well-Being of Students Who Will Return to School Remotely

Resources are available on the School Mental Health Ontario website: www.smho.on

3. Targeted Supports – Cultural Responsiveness & Social Emotional Learning

When thinking about your experience during the COVID-19 Pandemic..

- How did your experience differ from that of your friends, family or colleagues?
- How might the experience of the students you will be working with be different? Reflect on the experiences of students living in different circumstances such as those living in care.
- Were there privileges you experienced or certain challenges you had to overcome?
- How will your experiences impact how you approach your students, and pay attention to your own well-being?
- Knowing that all students have had different positive and negative experiences over the past year, what are some things that you can do to acknowledge and support these experiences in the classroom?

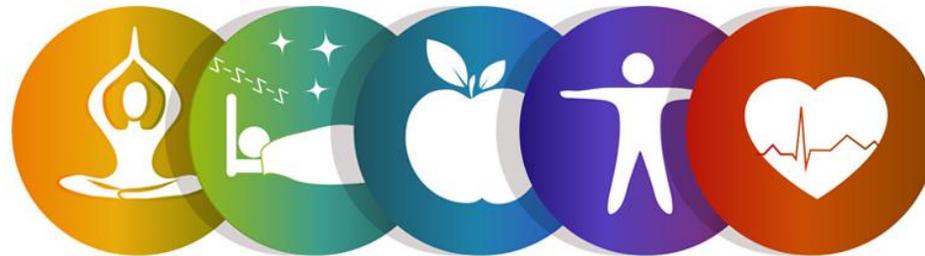


Culturally Responsive and Relevant Instruction

Begins with educator self-reflection about their own bias, instruction and the learning environment.

Deepens the meaning of the learning and contributes to overall well-being of students:

- Ability to understand themselves and others
- Sense of belonging
- Sense of identity and confidence
- Ability to respond positively to stress and challenges
- Critical thinking skills

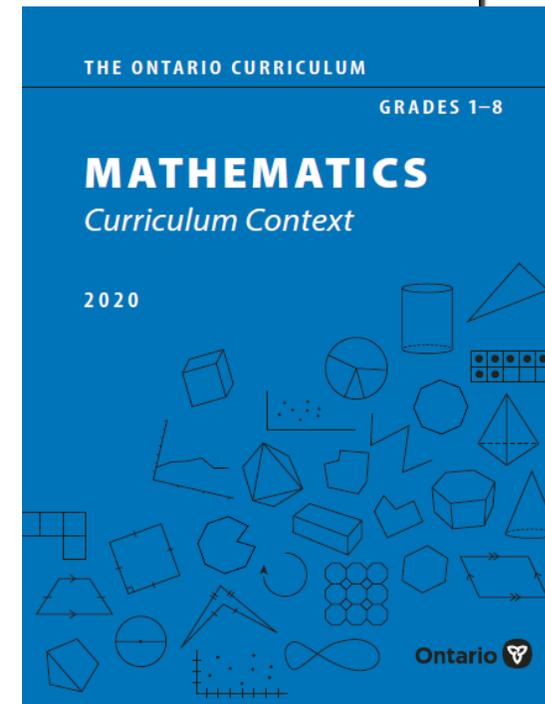
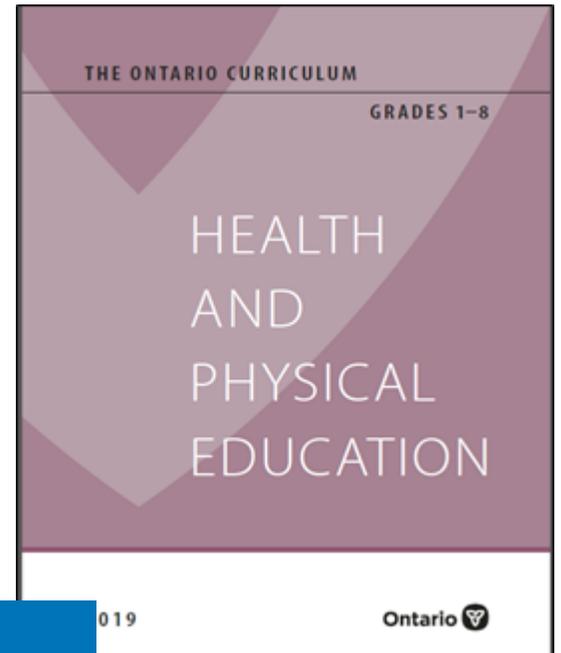


Social-Emotional Learning Skills

- There is evidence that developing culturally relevant and responsive social-emotional learning skills that are grounded in anti-racist and anti-colonial practices, can contribute to students' overall health and well-being and to improved academic performance.

Social-Emotional Learning Skills:

- Identification and management of emotions
- Stress management and coping
- Positive motivation and perseverance
- Healthy relationships
- Self-awareness and sense of identity
- Critical and creative thinking



Culturally Responsive Social-Emotional Learning

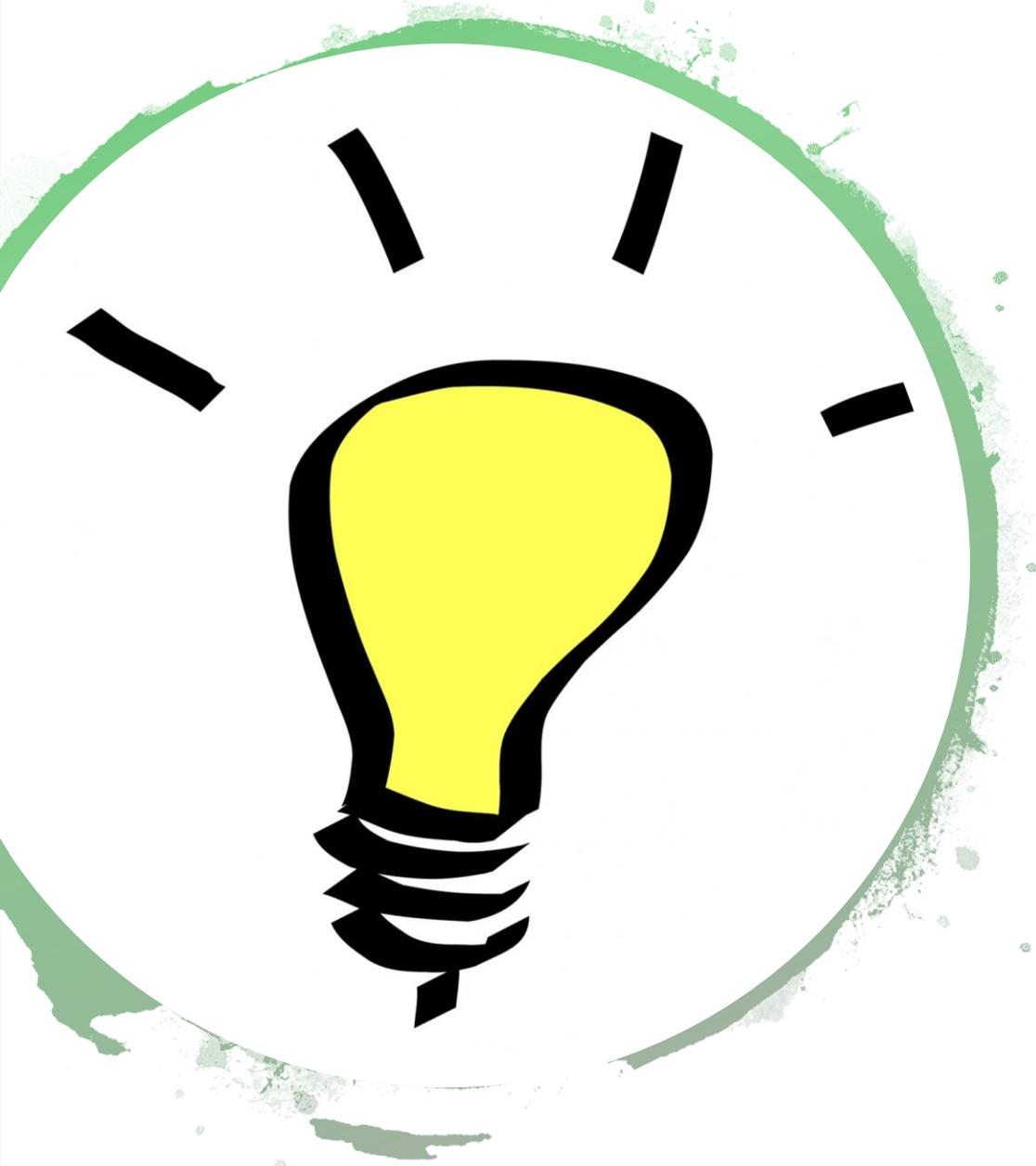
What it is	What it is Not
Is grounded in understanding of students as individuals, their strengths and needs	A behaviour management tool or a form of “policing”
Begins with educator self-reflection about personal bias, systemic barriers, instructional strategies, classroom and school climate and how these impact student well-being and academic achievement	A process that uses a “fixed grid” or checklist that can be applied in the same way for every student and every setting
Recognizes that a multi-dimensional, student-centred approach is needed	Limited to “Growth Mindset, Resiliency, Self-regulation”
Is contextual and avoids assumptions of universality when considering norms and look for’s	An approach that is helpful only for students who face challenges or have traditionally been marginalized within the education system
Involves intentional planning and instruction	An approach to “fix” students (rather than address systemic racism and oppression)
Reflects awareness that students’ social and emotional responses in the classroom will be impacted by their socio-cultural contexts as well as a sense of value and belonging	

Start with Reflection

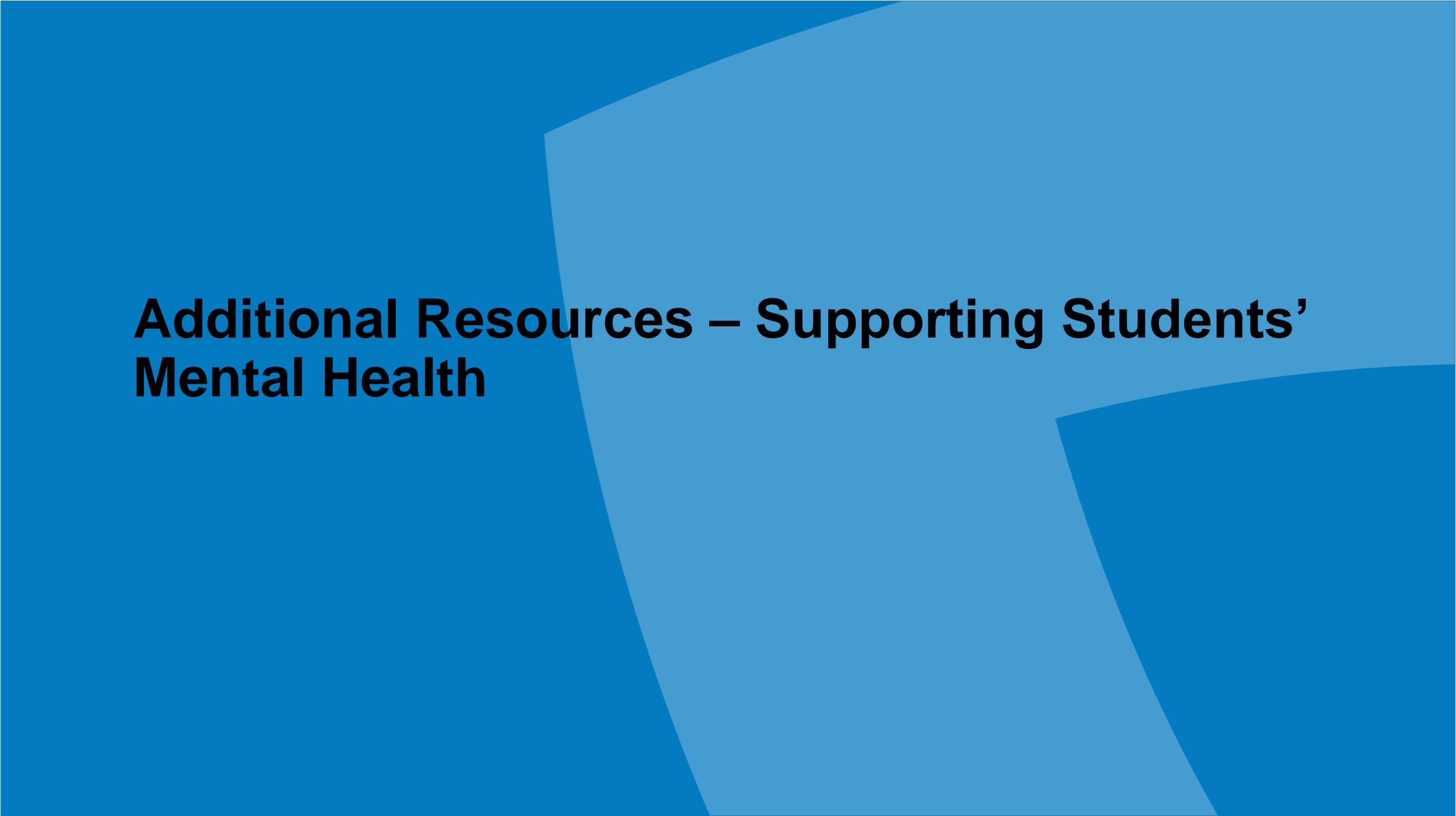


- Begin with self-reflection about personal bias, individual students, their families and the learning context.
- Consider the classroom environment and instructional strategies and their impact on students.
- Be aware that students' social and emotional responses in the classroom will be impacted by their sense of value and belonging in the classroom.
- Avoid assumptions of universality when considering norms and look for's for social-emotional learning skills.

And Continue Reflecting and Taking Action



- Intervene when you see discrimination
- Be proactive in identifying systemic barriers some students experience
- Be aware of how we can maintain and perpetuate those barriers in schools and act to dismantle them
- Be aware of how your social and emotional responses impact students' sense of value and belonging

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Additional Resources – Supporting Students’ Mental Health

Supporting Students' Mental Health

1 Create a Safe Space

- Use language that avoids stigmatizing mental illnesses.
- Notice who students socialize with.
- Watch how your students are functioning in school.



2 Notice the Signs

Look For:

- constant worrying, frequent, angry outbursts or mood swings
- significant drops in school marks
- a lack of energy or motivation.



3 Listen & Consult

- Validate students' feelings and hear their concerns.
- Always document and keep good records.
- Consult your principal or vice-principal frequently.

REMEMBER: Seek help

Do not try to diagnose ailments or propose treatment.



The Educator's Role



Ontario
College of
Teachers

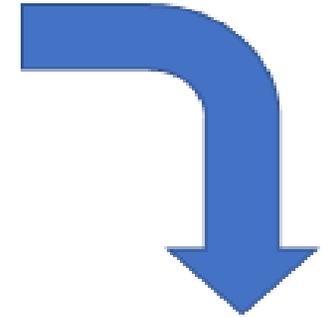
Ordre des
enseignantes et
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de l'Ontario

Supporting Students' Mental Health (cont'd)

4 Know Who to Inform

If a student is at risk of harm, act immediately according to your employer's protocols. As appropriate, involve:

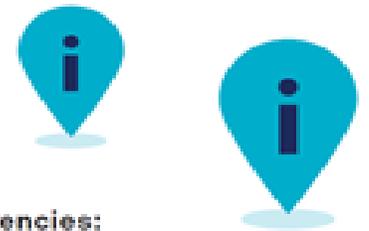
- parents/guardians
- school board psychologists, social workers & school support team
- elders, knowledge keepers or members of a faith community.



5 Consult these Agencies

If you are unsure whether an action is appropriate, report to your supervisor. For additional information contact these agencies:

- [Aboriginal Health Access Centres](#)
- [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#)
- [Children's Mental Health Ontario](#)
- [EdCan Network](#)
- [School Mental Health ASSIST](#)
- [Sick Kids' Hospital, Centre for Brain and Mental Health](#)
- [Mental Health Commission of Canada](#)
- [Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario](#)
- [Canadian Mental Health Association](#)
- [Ontario Mental Health Association](#)
- [Ontario Ministry of Education](#)
- [Teenmentalhealth.org](#)



More Resources

- Resources for:
 - Students
 - Parents and Families
 - Educators

PEOPLE WHO ARE IMPACTED BY OPPRESSION GET A LOT OF HARMFUL AND NEGATIVE MESSAGES FROM THE WORLD AROUND US. THIS CAN BE A LOT TO HANDLE, ESPECIALLY ON TOP OF EVERYTHING GOING ON DURING THESE UNPRECEDENTED TIMES.

Supporting yourself during unprecedented times as a person impacted by oppression:

- Filter out harmful messaging. You are allowed to take a break from the news or social media.



INFO SHEET

A Mental Health Literacy Resource for Educators

Supporting Mentally Healthy Conversations About Anti-Black Racism With Students

A Resource for Educators

This return to school year will be like no other. Ontario students, families and school board staff are navigating the COVID-19 pandemic and the significant global response to anti-Black racism and the Black Lives Matter movement.



 School Mental Health Ontario / Santé mentale en milieu scolaire Ontario

www.smho-smso.ca

While systemic oppression is not new, the pandemic has magnified deep-rooted economic, social and racial inequities. These have disproportionately affected the most vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Students and families experienced and witnessed the added layers of poverty; family violence; discrimination; transphobia and homophobia; anti-Black, anti-Asian and anti-Indigenous racism; and barriers relating to disability, including mental illness and addictions. This disproportionately limited their access to social, emotional, and academic supports.

The realities of discrimination and oppression create and reinforce barriers to equitable mental health and wellbeing outcomes. They contribute to greater levels of stigmatization and trauma, and can decrease access to appropriate school-based mental health services. That's compounded when students face multiple forms of discrimination and marginality related to their intersectional identities.

The experiences of racism and anti-Black racism are daily occurrences in the lives of so many Ontario students, staff and families. This can contribute to the erosion of individual mental health, as well as the collective mental health and well-being of Black and racialized communities.

Schools are an ideal place for mental health and wellbeing promotion, prevention and early intervention. Schools are also ideally positioned to unlearn the systemic ways racism impacts our classrooms, our school, and our communities.

As learning communities, we need to create spaces to learn about and acknowledge the realities of anti-Black racism, and encourage discussion. We should also expect that some students will come to school with the need to talk about this experience, and the impact it has had on them and their families. We need to listen and learn. Because that is the best and only basis for action. This resource offers guidance to educators on supporting mentally-healthy conversations about anti-Black racism with students, and serves as a call to action and advocacy.



Feedback

Thank you for taking a few moments to provide some feedback.

Ministry Staff Contact Information

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Additional Information – Equity Supports / Parents as Partners

Targeted Supports for Students

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, underserved students, including students from low-income households, Indigenous, Black and racialized students, have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-related challenges and more vulnerable to mental health challenges.
- Recognizing that a community lens is important to understand racism and xenophobia, the ministry has partnered with organizations to build supports to address barriers and systemic inequities that disproportionately impact the mental health and well-being of underserved students.
- The ministry has specifically partnered with organizations that provide supports for confronting anti-Asian racism, anti-Black racism, and Islamophobia and support the advocacy for educational issues and concerns that have disproportionately affected racialized communities and equity-seeking groups.
- Resources developed through these partnerships will be shared with school boards as they become available.

Understanding the Connections between Equity and Mental Health and Well-Being

- Student experiences of racism and inequity have an impact on mental health and well-being.

approach with school boards, teachers, students, parents, guardians and community organizations, including through the Indigenous Graduation Coach Program and the Graduation Coach Program for Black Students.

Specialized Programs for Underserved Students

Graduation Coach Program for Black Students

- The program promotes Black student excellence. Graduation coaches with lived experience in diverse Black communities work in schools, act as mentors and advocate for the needs of Black students, with the support of committed school staff, board leadership and the school community. The program provides culturally responsive supports to Black students to help improve their well-being and academic achievement.

Indigenous Graduation Coach Program

- The Indigenous Graduation Coach Program provides funding to targeted district school boards for the recruitment of Indigenous Graduation Coaches to support Indigenous student well-being and achievement. The supports provided by the coach are intended to reduce the graduation gap between Indigenous students and all other students. The Indigenous Grad Coach has deep connections to the local Indigenous community, an awareness of local Indigenous and community resources and ability to connect students and families to these resources.

Student and Family Advocate Initiative

- The Student and Family Advocates Initiative will offer community-based and culturally-relevant advocacy supports to Black students and families in the Greater Toronto Area, Ottawa, and Hamilton. Student and Family Advocates will help Black students and families connect to supports, services and opportunities to help them achieve their educational, career, and life goals. Student and Family Advocates will work directly with families to develop individual strategies for helping them overcome barriers when navigating school processes and systems.

Education Liaisons

- The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services funds each Children's Aid Society to hire a full-time Education Liaison. The Education Liaisons focus on improving the educational outcomes of children and youth in care by coordinating educational services and building capacity within children's aid societies and school boards.

Transportation and Stability Supports for Children and Youth in Care

- The Transportation and Stability Supports program funds school boards to provide transportation for children and youth in care to remain in their home school when they experience a residence change and it is in their best interest to remain in their home school. Stability supports enable all children and youth in care, whether or not they have experienced a residence change, to receive supports that will provide additional stability for their educational experience and support a positive connection to education and learning, such as tutoring, technology and cultural support.

Working with Parents as Partners

- Good schools become great schools when parents are engaged in their children's education.
- The positive results of a partnership between parents and schools, and shared high expectations for our children and youth, include improved student achievement, reduced absenteeism, positive student behaviour, and increased parental confidence in the education system.
- Research shows positive links between parent engagement and student success and well-being. The more support that families provide for their children's learning and educational progress, the more likely their children will do well in school and continue in their education.

Parents in Partnership – a parent engagement policy for Ontario schools



The four strategies of the policy recognize and encourage multiple forms of parent engagement, promote outreach and the elimination of barriers, and support parents in acquiring the knowledge and skills they need to be engaged in their children’s education.

The policy urges educators to look beyond the traditional parent roles of volunteers in the school as an indicator of their engagement and calls upon educators to be aware of the challenges related to parent involvement.

Reflective Questions for Working with Parents

1. Throughout the pandemic, in many cases, there was a much closer connection between schools, teachers, students and parents. What can we apply from that experience going forward as we work in partnership with parents?
2. Many parent groups have expressed the need to provide all parents with more information and resources to support children's positive mental health and well-being. How can we work with our school councils and Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) to support this need?
3. How can we support individual parent and family access to supports to address concerns or questions about their child's mental health or well-being?

Selected Resources

Resource link	Description
Council of Ontario Directors of Education Parent Engagement Toolkit: Building Healthy Relationships	Toolkit and guide for parents that was developed to support parents in the whole-school approach to safe, inclusive and accepting schools. It focuses on topics such as mental well-being, conflict resolution, bullying prevention, social media and resilience.
Parent Engagement	Website to promote teacher-parent relationships developed by the Ontario Teachers' Federation. The website includes short vignettes, podcasts and practical tips and resources for teachers.
Roots of Empathy video series	Two video series addressing needs of students, parents and educators: <i>Parenting Through COVID-19</i> and <i>Understanding Children's Behaviour: Through the lens of temperament</i> .
We All Belong – a Multimedia Tool Kit for Parents and Schools	Multi-media resource including 20 engaging vignettes, discussion guides and a resource book for parents and schools, to encourage parent engagement and home/school collaboration and to promote a whole school approach to safe, inclusive and accepting schools.
A Circle of Caring – A Multimedia Tool Kit for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Communities, Families, and Schools Joining the Circle	The <i>A Circle of Caring</i> multi-media tool kit includes short animated films in nine languages (Cree, Inuktitut, Michif, Mohawk, Oji-Cree, Ojibway, Oneida, English and French). Topics include cultural pride, helping our children succeed, understanding bullying and discrimination, getting involved in school life, and nurturing safe and healthy schools and communities. The <i>Joining the Circle</i> tool kit for educators includes 10 short animated films in 8 languages and an information and discussion guide. Topics for reflection and discussion include pride and identity, understanding racism and discrimination, building and strengthening relationships with families and nurturing safe and healthy schools and communities.
Parents in Partnership – a parent engagement policy for Ontario schools http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involve/PE_Policy2010.pdf	The policy supports a vision of parents as both valued partners and active participants in their children's education. It recognizes that parents have a primary influence on their children's attitudes towards school, their learning and their future success, and acknowledges the many ways that parents make a difference in their children's education.
Ontario Regulation 612/00	Ontario regulation on School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees.