Student Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy:

*Being Well, Doing Well*

2019 – 2022
MISSION

The Toronto Catholic District School Board’s (TCDSB) Student Mental Health Strategy is designed to raise awareness, build capacity and provide a coordinated and evidence-based/informed approach to student mental health. With our Catholic faith embedded in this approach, we engage students, families, mental health partners and all staff in supporting student mental health and well-being within the TCDSB.

VISION

At TCDSB children and youth learn and grow to reach their full potential. Our school board is anchored in Catholic values in which the mental health of children and youth is recognized as a key determinant of well-being and achievement. Every school in the TCDSB strives to be a mentally healthy school and promotes well-being and achievement for students, staff and our community.

Superintendent of Special Services
Linda Maselli-Jackman

Chief of Mental Health Strategy and Staff Well-being
Marie-Josée Gendron Ph.D., C.Psych

Mental Health Leader
Melissa Hanlon MSW, RSW
Executive Summary

TCDSB is committed to nurturing the relationship between our Catholic faith and good mental health. Living our Catholic faith supports emotional well-being and teaches us about the compassion and dignity of all persons.

TCDSB maintains a strong reputation among school boards across Ontario as demonstrating exemplary practices in student mental health leadership and student success. We continue to recognize the link between student mental health and student achievement and this relationship forms the foundation for productive, well-rounded, contributors of our community.

We continue to utilize a three-tiered approach to student mental health.

In the first tier, through the use of universal strategies that promote the well-being of ALL students, we foster mentally healthy schools.

In the second tier, prevention strategies and programming are utilized to support vulnerable students.

In the third tier, interventions are geared to support the needs of students exhibiting significant functional impairment due to their struggles with mental illness. Our work in all three tiers is enhanced by the fostering of a positive climate in our schools, families, and communities, promoting mental health and wellness for all.
Three-Tiered Approach to Student Mental Health Services

- **ALL Students**: Promotion of programs and strategies to improve the mental health of ALL students.
- **SOME Students**: Prevention programs and strategies for students at risk of mental health problems.
- **FEW Students**: Targeted intervention for students with identified mental health problems.
Guiding Principles

- Our Catholic values instill a belief in the worth and dignity of every person; that people thrive in a safe, healthy and compassionate environment; and that each of us shares responsibility for creating collaborative communities of learning (TCDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan).

- We are committed to the equity, and inclusive education, of all students. Our Catholic faith rejects injustice and respects the dignity of the person.

- We are committed to following the mission set out in our Board Learning Improvement Plan (BLIP) which directs us to focus on our Catholic Social Teaching, as well as provincial goals such as “promoting well-being” of all students and enhancing mental and physical health.

- All children have a right to attend school and reach their fullest potential.

- We commit to the continued development of our system’s capacity to understand and serve each student with a view towards improved mental health and well-being.

- We will utilize the existing mental health expertise of our Special Services multi-disciplinary team and school-based staff in addressing mental health promotion and prevention to the fullest of our capacity.

- We will focus on the implementation of evidenced based, best practices programs and services for our schools and students.

- Our community stakeholders in mental health and well-being, parishes, and families are our partners in achieving mentally healthy schools across our school board.
**WITHIN US**

As children of God, our students are flourishing with positive mental health, a strong sense of well-being and resilience. “I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13

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**BETWEEN US**

Every interaction we have is an opportunity to encounter with God, with the hope of fostering healthy interpersonal relationships that support resilient youth and healthy schools. “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” John 15:12

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**AROUND US**

Communities that are rooted in our Catholic faith support positive mental health and well-being at school, for everyone within the family, community and parish. “A friend loves at all times, and people are born to share adversity.” Proverbs 17:17
WITHIN US

“I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.”
Philippians 4:13

We look to Jesus’ example and guidance, in all areas of development—physically, mentally, spiritually and socially. Our hope for our students is that they have every opportunity to thrive in all areas of development, flourishing with positive mental health and resilience.

The TCDSB will support and develop the fundamentals for everyday mental health and well-being, through the use and promotion of the following:

- Development of knowledge of God’s vision and mission for each of us, including the promotion of self-discovery and reflection, through prayer, study of the Religion and Family Life curriculum, and through the participation in the life of the Church;
- Development of Spiritual Wellness through the practice of various forms of prayer (e.g., Eucharist, Rosary, Christian Meditation, and other liturgical celebrations);
- Faith and Wellness, developed by School Mental Health Ontario and Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association (OECTA);
- Health and Physical Education Living Skills emphasizing interpersonal skills, communication skills and personal skills;
- Social Emotional Learning (self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision making and self-management) in the classroom;
- Professional development for school staff to ensure best practices are employed in supporting student mental health;
- Student data related to mental health and well-being (i.e., My School, My Voice; Safe and Caring Schools surveys);
- Direct mental health service provision through prevention and education programs, individual intervention, group counselling and family support;
- Continued development and review of organizational conditions to help maintain positive student mental health (i.e. Mental Health Policy and associated guidelines).
In our Catholic school communities, we strive to treat each other not only with tolerance and respect, but with the understanding that each of us is created in the image and likeness of God, and therefore is good and absolutely worthy of unconditional love. Every interaction we have is an opportunity to encounter with God, with the hope of fostering healthy interpersonal relationships that support resilient youth and healthy schools.

As healthy relationships are one of the most critical protective factors that support positive mental health, the TCDSB will support and strengthen these relationships by:

- Spreading the message of the Gospel - Beatitudes, Social Justice, Catholic Social Teachings;
- Building awareness about the role that positive relationships play in the protection and promotion of positive mental health through professional development opportunities;
- Engaging caring and supportive staff members to promote positive relationships with students;
- Supporting mental health awareness, promotion, and literacy among staff, students, and parents/caregivers (e.g., professional development modules developed by School Mental Health Ontario, such as *The Mentally Healthy Classroom*);
- Supporting school staff in the implementation of standardized suicide prevention and intervention practices and protocols such as SafeTalk (suicide awareness workshops for all staff) and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) for mental health service providers, guidance counselors and school administrators;
- Promoting positive interpersonal communication in the digital age;
- Supporting the mental health needs of students of all social identities. Particular focus will be placed on raising awareness of the increased level of risk for the mental health and well-being of those with marginalized identities;
- Promoting the importance of a culturally-relevant and responsive environment where inclusion of all students is woven into all school activities and within the curriculum.
“A friend loves at all times, and people are born to share adversity.” Proverbs 17:17

Rooted in the Gospel, we witness to the love of Christ in our school communities through our care and support of each other. Communities that are rooted in our Catholic faith support positive mental health and well-being at school, within the family, community and parish.

Environment plays an important role in our mental health and well-being. Healthy environments support each and all of their members. TCDSB is committed to creating healthy environments by:

- Celebrating our faith, unity, and uniqueness with the larger community through Eucharist, liturgies of the word and other empowering events;
- Sharing regular messages and tools about positive mental health to schools/parents (e.g., board Mental Health Newsletters, school level newsletters, board website, annual Special Education Parent Fair, etc.);
- Developing School Well-Being Teams to promote mental health initiatives in school communities;
- Expanding the Stop the Stigma campaign to an increased number of elementary schools (the campaign is already in all secondary schools) while offering ongoing support for existing Stop the Stigma initiatives;
- Ensuring that school staff are aware of the TCDSB Student Mental Health and Well-being Policy and associated guidelines;
- Supporting families with knowledge about mental health and well-being (e.g., parent fairs, parent symposiums, etc.);
- Continuing to collaborate with community organizations in support of student mental health and well-being.