

**REPORT OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Thursday January 18, 2024, 6:30 P.M.**

ROLL CALL:

Eva Kyriakides, Association for Bright Children (ABC) SEAC Chair  
sensaRAneb Burrell, Autism Ontario – Durham Chapter  
Tara Culley, Durham Down Syndrome Association  
Rowin Jarvis, Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region  
Elizabeth Daniel, Member at Large  
Morgann Cameron, Member at Large  
Charmain Brown, OPVIC Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children  
Jennifer McLaughlin, Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support

Trustees: Donna Edwards Kelly Miller Debora Oldfield

Staff: Superintendent, Andrea McAuley  
System Lead, Michelle Crawford-Eade  
System Lead Conor Jinkinson

Recording Secretary: Lisa Wry

**1. Call to Order:**

Superintendent Andrea McAuley called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

**2. Land Acknowledgement:**

Superintendent Andrea McAuley advised that the Durham District School Board acknowledges that many Indigenous Nations have longstanding relationships, both historic and modern, with the territories upon which our school board and schools are located. Today, this area is home to many Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island. We acknowledge that the Durham Region forms a part of the traditional and treaty territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, the Mississauga Peoples, and the treaty territory of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation. It is on these ancestral and treaty lands that we teach, learn and live.

**3. DDSB Human Rights & Equity Statement**

The Durham District School Board recognizes Indigenous rights are distinct. In the exercise of those rights, Indigenous staff and students shall not be subject to action with the aim or effect of depriving these distinct rights.

The Durham District School Board is committed to learning and working environments that centre human rights and equity and are safe, welcoming, respectful, equitable, accessible, inclusive, and free from discrimination.

4. **Welcome Guests:** Melissa Cook-Vice-Principal David Bouchard P.S., Lisa Coppins- Senior Manager of People and Culture, Erin Elmhurst - Superintendent of Equitable Education, Jason Himsl 7-12 English and Language Facilitator, Lanya Lewis -System Lead, Heather Mundy -Superintendent of Equitable Education Tracey Running-Principal, O'Neill CVI, Andrea Spooner - Clinical Supervisor of Psychological Services, Lisa Virtue -Speech and Language Pathologist

**Regrets:** Jenn McLaughlin, sensaRAneb Burrell, Trustee Kelly Miller.

**Absent:** Trustee Deb Oldfield.

5. **Approval of Agenda:**

That the agenda for January 18, 2024, be approved:

MOVED BY: Elizabeth Daniel

SECONDED BY: Morgann Cameron

CARRIED

6. a) **Election of the Chair:**

The approval of the agenda was held until after the election.

Superintendent Andrea McAuley informed committee members of the election process for the positions of SEAC Chair and Vice-Chair following the Ontario Education Act Regulations. Nominations were called three times for the position of Chair of SEAC.

Tara Culley nominated, Eva Kyriakides for 2024 Chair of SEAC. Eva Kyriakides accepted the nomination and was acclaimed Chair.

SEAC member Eva Kyriakides as the newly elected Chair assumed the chair and conducted the remainder of the meeting. Chair Eva Kyriakides thanked committee members for electing her to the position of Chair of SEAC.

- b) **Election of the Vice- Chair:**

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair.

Tara Culley self-nominated for position of Vice-Chair and following three calls Tara Culley was acclaimed Vice-Chair for SEAC 2024.

7. **Approval of the Minutes from November 9, 2023:**

That the minutes from November 9, 2023, be approved: with the typo corrected in the word April.

MOVED BY: Tara Culley

SECONDED BY: Trustee Donna Edwards

CARRIED

8. **Staff Reports:**

**Administration:** Inclusive Student Services (ISS) System Lead-Conor Jinkinson shared the fifth volume of the [Inclusive Student Services Impact Update Vol.5](#): which focuses on Student Mental Health and Well-Being. Our Mental Health and Well-Being action plan shows

alignment with the district policies and procedures as well as memorandum 169. Our ISS Impact Updates continue to include quotes from our school community as well as the system. The focus of the next volume is on Education Community Partnership Programs (ECP).

- Please share the ISS Impact Updates with your associations

Special education program planning will begin now for the 2024-2025 school year. All special education classes will be in person.

**Board:** Trustee Donna Edwards shared with SEAC members that Board of Trustees received presentations and information and during the governance meeting there where some questions around the accessibility policy and that is why it is back on the SEAC agenda. There was also, a presentation from the Literacy team on literacy instruction. The Board has designated the Ignite Durham Learning Foundation (IDLF) as the charity of choice. The IDLF (link below) has a depot in Oshawa which has food, clothing and other items children and families may need. The Multi Year strategic plan was presented to Standing Committee as well as the student census. Calendar consultations for the 2024-2025 school year with planning considerations around PA days and religious holidays.

<https://ignitedurhamlearningfoundation.ddsb.ca/en/index.aspx>

## 9. Presentation

### **DDSB Literacy Plan**

Superintendent Erin Elmhurst thanked SEAC for the opportunity to present the DDSB Literacy Plan and introduced herself and her responsibilities within the DDSB which includes supporting Teaching and Learning specifically literacy K-12.

Key Members of the DDSB Central Literacy Team introduced themselves and their roles:

- Lanya Lewis -System Lead
- Lisa Virtue -Speech and Language Pathologist
- Andrea Spooner - Clinical Supervisor of Psychological Services,
- Jason Himsl - 7-12 English and Language Facilitator

The team shared with SEAC the Districts advancement in evidence-based literacy programming and shed light on student experiences as a result of dedicated actions and educator practices.

- Learning to read is a fundamental and essential human right.
- It is the cornerstone for individual empowerment, education, and participation in society.
- Through responsive teacher-student relationships, students are immersed in rich literacy experiences that nurture enjoyment for learning.
- Teaching reading is a collaborative process; not the role of one person.
- Learning to read and write is a complex process and requires knowledge of the brain combined with strong instructional practice.
- The literacy inquiry project brought together the skills sets of a Speech-Language Pathologist and Literacy Coach
- Students experienced measured growth in foundational literacy skills and increased confidence in reading abilities.
- While engaged in this work, the Right to Read Inquiry Report, the Ministry of Education's Effective Early Reading Instruction Guide, and the updated Language and English

curricula were all released. The work being undertaken by the DDSB was in direct alignment with these guiding documents.

- In the 2023 school year, the continued evolution of the Literacy Inquiry Project informed the creation of collaborative interdepartmental teams as well as system-wide professional learning.
- These collaborative teams also continue to support junior and intermediate educators in delivering responsive evidence-based literacy instruction.
- The impact of this work is being felt by students; they are learning to read, are proud of themselves and are developing a love for reading.
- School teams work together to offer personalized programming, involving support staff in co-planning and co-teaching, and in doing so, enhance educators' ability to support every student.
- The active involvement of families and the broader community is crucial in shaping and fostering the development of literacy skills.
- The foundational reading and writing skills students are developing will help them become reflective, critical, and independent learners and achieve academic and programming goals.
- A partnership with Grandview Childrens Centre last school year allowed us to look at how we are supporting our students that use augmented communication devices in developing their literacy skills. The Centre is very happy with the progress their students have made and continue to make.

Members engaged in a questions period with the Literacy Team:

- Great to see the improvements around reading, how this information applied to students in secondary school who may still be at the foundational stage?
  - Currently working with teachers at the secondary level familiarizing them with how foundational literacy skills are threaded throughout and the building of inquiry skills. Implementing evidence-based literacy routines and practices. On top of the that, for students that have more urgent needs, we have enhanced programming often learning strategies courses offered, helping them build their skills and have more success as they move through the academic classes. Multi-pronged approaches offered.
- Who was this pilot intended for, was there a specific demographic?
  - The pilot was four schools in four different core areas, worked with classroom educators for all students. Through learning these strategies educators were able to take these skills and apply them to assist students with learning disabilities.
  - Team approach from multiple areas for all students ensuring that the right people have the training to deliver evidence-based literacy instruction.
- We have an interdisciplinary team, and for certain cohorts of students we need to dig deeper such as our learners that don't use oral language for communication. We are quite close to finalizing an agreement with a team from western Canada. One of the members which is part of the Deaf community, and they want to learn more about and how to support our students.
- This is great work, so good to see educators and students encouraged by the results. Looking for information that can be shared with the association.
  - The majority of the information comes from learning about evidence-based structured literacy. The Living with Disabilities Association website has fantastic resources on structured literacy.

- Such great work looking at what are the next steps? Will the literacy team continue next year, resources.
  - This is an exciting time for us right now. We are looking at a universal screener. We realize that students in older grades have gaps in their literacy skills. The training is going to extend for quite some time. The training will continue for years to come as implementing the new curriculum is going to take some time.
- Has there been consideration about sharing with parents/caregivers the tools used and how/why so they can continue to encourage this learning at home.
  - Information is sent to families continually explaining what work students are engaged in, intervention and strategy tools as well as links to resources.

## 10. Consultation

SEAC welcomed Lisa Coppins- Senior Manager of People and Culture and Heather Mundy Superintendent of Equitable Education joined SEAC to share more information and seek feedback about the Accessible Customer Service Policy to be included under the Human Rights Policy. The language in the Human Rights Policy would cover the Accessible Customer Service Policy.

SEAC was asked if they had questions about recommendations to rescinding the policy and regulation and placing the procedure under the Human Rights Policy.

Members provided the following feedback:

- Concerns were expressed that if the policy were removed people may not be looking for accessibly the human rights.
- It would be a stand-alone link under the accessibility link.
- A great idea to include the procedure under the Human Rights because that is the legal application.
- Search for accessibility should result in a link to the policy whether it is Human Rights Policy.
- Important to not create barriers within pathways to information for families looking from information.

## 11. Open Discussion

- Parent/Caregiver Engagement Event
- Before the pandemic, SEAC was preparing to host an Engagement Event.
- Sub-committee needed to create and organize the event.
- Considerations around June or September timing.
  - Parents and students are more engaged in September, may be a time when parents/caregivers are geared to provide a successful school year for their children.

The committee voted and decided that September would be the best time to have an engagement event.

Event Committee may focus on:

- Associations are key to helping families advocate.
- Does not need to be a multi hour commitment.
- Establish a date.
- Discuss content and roles.
  - Audience would be primarily parents/caregivers and students with identifications and their advocates.
- Teach students how to be advocates for their own learning.

Anyone that would like to be a part of the planning committee please email SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides.

#### 11. **Business Arising from the Minutes**

- DRAFT- letter to the Ministry about the direct move to trades before the completion of Secondary school, please review and direct any comments back to Eva.

An email has been sent about consultation around the 2024-2025 school year calendars. You will receive four calendars two secondary and two elementary one modified school year and the second regular school year for each of the divisions.

- The Education Act does have requirements which include 194 school days and when the calendar can start and when it must finish by.
- Working in consultation with the Durham Catholic District School Board as the transportation consortium is responsible for both districts, where there is not alignment between the two there are significant financial implications.
- There is also legal obligation for professional learning.
- Calendars also go to the School Community Council (SCC) for feedback,

Feedback is requested by February 2, 2024.

#### 12. **Association Reports & Committee Reports**

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides would like to see each association share with the group what the associations do and what are some of the barriers and concerns their families experience.

- Charmain Brown volunteered to highlight the Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children (OPVIC) association for the February 2024 meeting.

We are mandated to have 10 meetings a year, and without quorum there it is not considered a meeting. Suggestions for meeting topics to replace the missed meetings:

- Budget meeting,
- Parent engagement event planning meeting.

#### 13. **Correspondence**

- Hasting and Prince Edward DSB: Letter to the Ministry Special Incident Portion (SIP)
  - The SIP funding does not come close to covering the costs associated with its purpose.
  - The Ministry for 2023-2024 heard the concerns of school boards and have decided to go to formula-based funding. The DDSB is one of the districts that will be audited on our SEA/SIP funding, because of this audit we are able to provide feedback to the Ministry which might open dialogue around supports for students.

#### 14. **Community Concerns**

Trustee Donna Edwards expressed concerns around Durham Region Transit (DRT) and the lack of consultation with schools, the impact on student transportation and accessibility for all users.

- This is a problem across Durham region concerns about creating more barriers to our students.
- Charmain Brown commented that the fact that you have a disability does not equate to you having transportation.

MOTION FOR SEAC TO WRITE A LETTER OF CONCERN TO DURHAM REGION TRANSIT  
AROUND ACCESSIBILITY

MOVED BY: Charmain Brown      SECONDED BY: Donna Edwards

CARRIED

Trustee Edwards also brought to the attention of members the quiet ascension of Bill 135 on December 4, 2023, which takes the existing local Health Integration Networks and amalgamates them into a service organization, including Home and Community Care Services. This is of great concern as a parent.

**15. Celebrations & Successes**

Tara Culley is volunteering at Brimacombe for Canadian Adaptive Snowsports (CADS) program, the orientation day was a wonderful day of learning about the needs of others with disabilities. The number of skiers that can be accommodated is determined by the number of volunteers.

Trustee Donna Edwards shared that Special Olympics games are in May and four members of her team will be attending for rhythmic gymnastics. She also shared that her daughter has been booked to make a speech at the annual *What it Means to have Down Syndrome* additionally she has been requested to speak at the *Durham Down Syndrome Association*. She puts a lot of research into these speeches and commented it could be a business idea.

**16. Next S.E.A.C Meeting**

- February 15, 2024

**17. Adjournment**

That the meeting does now adjourn at 8:38 p.m.

Adjournment called by SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides

MOVED BY: Tara Culley      SECONDED BY: Rowin Jarvis

CARRIED

Report respectfully submitted by:

Eva Kyriakides, SEAC Chair

**18. Attachments:**

- December 2023, Inclusive Student Services Impact Update – Vol. 4-SEAC
- January 2024, Inclusive Student Services Impact Update – Vol. 4-Student Mental Health

**Table 1- Action Plan**

ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY	COMPLETION
Comments for Letter to the Ministry about Skill trades before graduation – email to Eva	All members	Before February 15, 2024 meeting
Volunteers to organize Engagement Event– email to Eva	Any members interested in assisting	ASAP
Submit form if any feedback about the 2024-2025 school year calendars	Anyone that would like to share feedback.	February 2, 2024



# Inclusive Student Services Impact Update

2023-2024 • Volume 4

## Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

Under Ontario's Education Act, every student is entitled to a program which meets their needs. In Durham, our SEAC helps the Board protect the rights of students with special learning needs. SEAC provides information, advice, and assistance to parents/guardians whose children may require additional support. SEAC is comprised of representatives from local parent associations that provide consultation to the DDSB on special education programs and services.

The SEAC is currently comprised of three DDSB Trustees and the following associations and roles:

Eva Kyriakides, Association for Bright Children (ABC)

Elizabeth Daniel, Member at Large

SensaRAneb Burrell, Autism Ontario, Durham Chapter

Morgann Cameron, Member at Large

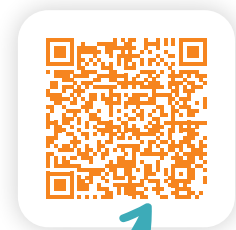
Tara Culley, Durham Down Syndrome Association

Charmain Brown, Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children (OPVIC)

Rowin Jarvis, Learning Disabilities of Durham Region

Jennifer McLaughlin, Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support

The SEAC is dedicated to establishing supportive educational environments that assist students with special strengths and needs in reaching their full potential. Additional information can be found in the [DDSB SEAC brochure](#).



## Actioning the Results of the SEAC Parent/Caregiver Survey

From May to June 2023, a SEAC Parent/Caregiver Survey took place to:

- Gather parent/caregiver feedback;
- Learn more about what is and is not working around communication; and
- Receive parent/caregiver suggestions on how we can improve across the DDSB.

Thank you to the 1,118 respondents to the survey. The feedback from the survey highlighted that many families felt communication practices have been helpful in feeling welcomed and engaged as partners in education. The survey also provided us with valuable information about where we can make improvements to better understand the experience of families in working with school teams.

Survey responses received were representative of all municipalities within the Durham Region, representative of all grades (Kindergarten to Grade 12+) and representative of students across all categories of exceptionality.

## Key Findings—Communication:

- 72.4% respondents were very satisfied (35.5%) or somewhat satisfied (36.9%) with the communication received from their child's support team members.
- Working well in terms of communication—Top 3: emails, outreach/updates, and applications/tools (Remind, Seesaw)
- Needs improvement in terms of communication—Top 3: progress updates/outreach, connecting with support team, and Individual Education Plan (IEP). We will focus on educator awareness, implementation, and adherence as we seek to improve.
- The majority of parents/caregivers expressed being comfortable (87.3% rated 3-5/5) during the Identification Placement Review Committee (IPRC) conversation but a lower percentage indicated feeling that the Special Education was productive (64.6% rate 4-5/5).
- 16.6% (represents 185 participants) were not at all familiar with the DDSB's Parent/Guardian Guide to Special Education IPRC.
- In alignment with the DDSB Indigenous Education Policy and Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy, actively addressing ableism and engaging in culturally responsive, affirming practices are essential to improving on the experience of families.



## SEAC Message for Parents/Caregivers

Thank you for all that you do to support our students both in and out of class. Without you, many students would not be able to attend school, learn and form meaningful relationships with others. SEAC is dedicated to continuously improving the way we work together with parents, students and staff. To that end, we created the parent/caregiver survey to see what we are doing well and areas where we can improve—this survey's focus was on communication and some of the overall points are listed above.

Other takeaways that were highlighted as part of the survey responses that we would like to share:

- Establishing a good relationship with parents/caregivers is key in building trust and a solid team around each student. Many parents do not know how to navigate the school system, so making them feel like a valuable part of the team is important.
- Communication does not always have to be about issues; sharing a positive experience or moment is as impactful for a student as working through any challenges that they face in the school career.

We have heard from DDSB parents/caregivers and wanted to share some of the messages we received. We hope that in sharing a few of the quotes directly that there is inspiration to keep improving these important relationships. We look forward to hearing about all the new ideas and stories in the coming months.

**“My child has shown great strides in her JK year, and we can’t wait to see how much she grows in SK.”**

–Kindergarten Parent/Caregiver

**“Our SERT and teacher are amazing, but I find the frequency of touch points are too far apart for our students with exceptionality. Yes, parents can request it but it is hard to know how things are going and if issues arise they sometimes aren’t addressed timely because we don’t know where things are.”**

–Grade 1-3 Parent/Caregiver

**“I would like more communication regarding my child’s participation in learning activities and his progress. He does not share much, so we are left guessing much of the time. I also don’t know how his behaviour has been, so I’m hoping no news is good news.”**

–Grade 4-6 Parent/Caregiver

**“My son is nonverbal and therefore I am completely dependent on his school team to communicate what transpired in his day. It is important to me that I understand everything in his day that may be impacting his development and behaviour.”**

–Grade 4-6 Parent/Caregiver



Scan code for more information about the [DDSB Inclusive Student Services Impact Update](#).

# 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.

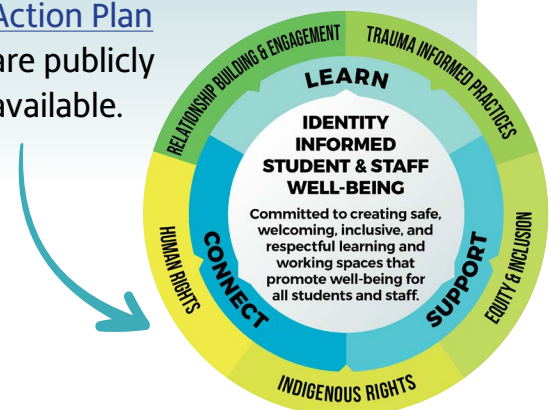
The Ministry recently launched [Policy/Program Memorandum 169 Student Mental Health](#) outlining eleven expectations of Boards whose goals result in students having the knowledge and skills to understand and support their mental health, provide ongoing access to high quality mental health services with 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

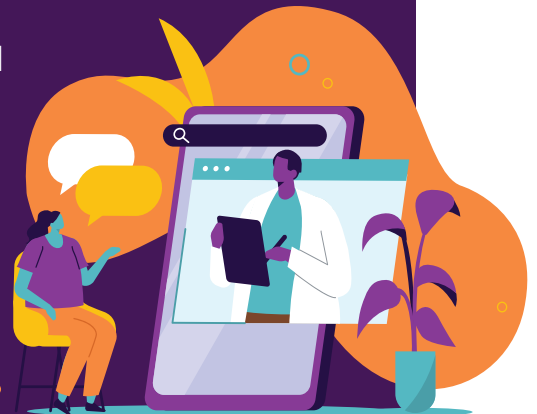
The DDSB three-year [Mental Health and Well-Being Action Plan](#) and [2023-2024 Action Plan](#) are publicly available.



## 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](#).

