



REPORT TO

**STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND  
WELL BEING, CATHOLIC  
EDUCATION AND HUMAN  
RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING ANNUAL  
REPORT 2020-2021**

*Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Deuteronomy 31:6*

Created, Draft	First Tabling	Review
January 3, 2022	January 13, 2022	Click here to enter a date.

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**INFORMATION REPORT**

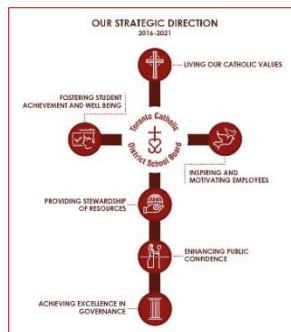
**Vision:**

*At Toronto Catholic we transform the world through witness, faith, innovation and action.*

**Mission:**

*The Toronto Catholic District School Board is an inclusive learning community uniting home, parish and school and rooted in the love of Christ.*

*We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge to lead lives of faith, hope and charity.*



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## **A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

A significant focus within the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) Multi-Year Strategic Plan is fostering student achievement and well-being. This is accomplished in part, by creating equitable learning environments. Equitable learning environments strive to ensure that the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual needs of all students are met. This is best achieved through the valued and deliberate collaboration between TCDSB and its community partners. By involving students, parents, and parishes in this integral work, we will better address community Mental Health and Well-Being and nurture trusting relationships to guide our ongoing efforts.

Efforts to create mentally healthy school environments for students are evidenced in many ways. Progress with the Student Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy 2019-2022 has been made across each of the TCDSB Mental Health and Well-Being Pillars. The focus on creating a mentally healthy school environment has taken on a heightened relevance and has been extended to include the virtual school environment during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This focus extends to building an understanding of mental health and well-being among all employee groups as well. To build both awareness and capacity, presentations, workshops, and mental health and well-being initiatives have been offered to students, staff, and the parent community.

*The cumulative staff time required to prepare this report was 32 hours.*

## **B. PURPOSE**

This Mental Health and Well-Being 2020-2021 Annual Report will include data related to student mental health and well-being procedures, programs, and professional development related to the creation of mentally healthy learning environments. This report serves the requirement of the Board for an annual review and will address the TCDSB Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy 2020-2021 Feedback on the three stipulated pillars.

## C. BACKGROUND

The TCDSB Mental Health and Well-Being policy (S.03) was adopted in June 2013. The TCDSB Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy 2019-2022 was presented to the Special Education Advisory Committee on June 12, 2019, and approved by Board on September 19, 2019.

The Mental Health and Well-Being Policy includes the following metrics on the annual reporting of the Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy: Special Services personnel will annually review the Mental Health Response Guidelines, the Suicide Intervention Guidelines, and the Mental Health Crisis Response Guidelines and assess their effectiveness.

## D. EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS

The following Mental Health and Well-Being Pillars form the basis of the TCDSB Student Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy 2019-2022:

- **Within Us** - “I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). The TCDSB will continue to support and develop the fundamentals for everyday mental health and well-being for each and every student.
- **Between Us** - “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). As healthy relationships are one of the most critical protective factors that support positive mental health, the TCDSB will continue to support and strengthen these relationships.
- **Around Us** - “A friend loves at all times, and people are born to share adversity” (Proverbs 17:17). Healthy environments support each community member, and, thus, the TCDSB continues to be committed to creating mentally healthy environments.

The following related legislation and policy govern the TCDSB Mental Health and Well-Being strategy:

- Open Minds, Healthy Minds Ontario’s Comprehensive Mental Health and Addiction Strategy June 2011

- Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education: A Discussion Document 2016
- TCDSB Mental Health and Well-Being (S.03)

## **E. METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

### **TCDSB Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy 2020-2021 Feedback on the Three Pillars**

During the 2020-2021 school year, multiple board-wide closures and provincial shutdowns presented unique challenges for Special Services to adopt flexible strategies to support the well-being of students, staff and the TCDSB families as students shifted between virtual and in-person learning. Throughout the school year, all three Pillars of the Mental Health Plan were adapted to address the continued need to serve TCDSB students, families, and staff through virtual platforms.

A continued focus on meeting the mental health and well-being needs of all students, whether they were learning virtually or in-person, remained a priority. The pandemic continues to demand creativity, collaboration, and compassion, while engaging in teaching, learning, and clinical service delivery. Highlighted below are some key strategic responses that have supported our students, staff, and families, beginning in September 2020 and continuing through to August 2021.

#### **Pillar One: Within Us**

**Promote the use of culturally-responsive social emotional learning within classrooms to foster resiliency and adaptive coping mechanisms for students**

- Promoted the use of Faith & Wellness throughout the system. It is an evidence-based daily mental health classroom resource from School Mental Health Ontario.
- Created three Wellness Calendar Resources for educators and school staff to embed wellness activities into the instructional day.

These were distributed for the *12 Days of Wellness to Christmas*, the week of *Bell Let's Talk* in January and *Mental Health Awareness Week* in May.

- The Student Mental Health Action Kit from School Mental Health Ontario was presented to school principals and other stakeholders (e.g., Assessment and Programming Teachers, the Autism team, the Psychology and Social Work teams) to promote the integration of social emotional learning activities during the school day with students.
- In collaboration with the Safe Schools staff, the mental health team delivered a workshop on *Alternatives to Suspensions for K-3 Students* to all elementary principals and introduced several tools/resources such as Faith & Wellness, Kids Have Stress Too, and Zones of Regulation to help bolster students' capacity for emotional regulation.
- Facilitated training on Stress Lessons for targeted psychology and social work team members to equip them to support educators in the delivery of the program. Stress Lessons is an evidence-based classroom program to help students develop stress management and adaptive coping skills.
- Informed all school administrators of new Virtual Field Trips, a series of lessons plans to support the development of stress management and healthy coping skills from School Mental Health Ontario to encourage use of these social emotional learning tools in the classroom.

## **Support Student Well-Being**

The Mental Health, Psychology and Social Work teams work together to support student well-being at the TCDSB. A team of over 60 full-time Social Workers, 48 Psychology service providers and six Mental Health Professional Workers actively engaged in providing counselling services, conducting psychological assessments, facilitating mental health workshops to various stakeholders (i.e., educators, students, and parents) and providing suicide and crisis interventions. Below is a summary of the data gathered over the 2020-2021 school year:

- Mental Health Professional Workers facilitated mental health literacy workshops in 22 secondary schools reaching over 4,000 students. Psychology staff delivered 73 mental health workshops and 35 learning-based presentations to schools.
- Social Work, Psychology, and Mental Health team members provided clinical support and team consults as summarized below, engaging virtually with students throughout the multiple closures and over the summer months.
- Individual counselling referrals: social workers supported 5,120 students, psychology service providers supported 169 students and mental health professional workers supported 92 students, totalling 5,381 students overall.
- Continued implementation of the *Stop the Stigma* student mental health awareness program in 73 elementary schools and 32 secondary schools, expanded the initiative to 19 classes from St. Anne's Academy.
- Facilitated the *Stop the Stigma Symposium, "We Become Compassionate"*, reaching 60 elementary classrooms (i.e., approximately 1400 students), plus 20 secondary school classrooms.
- In collaboration with Safe Schools staff, the Mental Health team presented the topic of mental health benefits of "*generosity*" at their symposium, reaching about 3500 students.
- Over the summer months, Special Services continued to support and

mentor camp leaders to facilitate social emotional learning activities everyday with their campers, while providing clinical support for summer referrals and continuity of service for students requiring continued support during the summer.

## **Pillar Two: Between Us**

**Continue to build capacity among staff to help them better support students' mental health and well-being.**

- Professional development for a mentally healthy return to school was delivered to all staff in September highlighting social emotional learning resources such as First 10 Days Back and Beyond.
- Professional development was facilitated for 90 St. Anne educators to *Support the Mental Health of Remote Learners*.
- Professional development on *Creating a Mentally Healthy Classroom* was delivered to 150 Teaching and Learning Collaborative staff as well as elementary support staff.
- Mental health professionals delivered professional development sessions for staff in 12 secondary schools, reaching over 600 staff members on various mental health topics.
- A total of four mental health workshops were delivered to 168 new TCDSB teachers through the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP).
- In collaboration with Health and Physical Education curriculum staff, the Mental Health Team facilitated training for a classroom stress management program, Stress Lessons, for all elementary and secondary Health and Physical Education teachers.
- In collaboration with Safe Schools, 112 Social Workers and Psychology staff members received a workshop on *Cannabis and Youth* by Dr. Abby Goldstein from Ontario Institute for Studies in

Education (OISE).

- Collaborated with Curriculum Team staff to create resources and lessons to promote well-being for the Continuing Education summer school programs.
- Supported the Equity, Diversity, Indigenous Education Department, and Catholic Student Leadership system-wide student workshops promoting the infusion of well-being strategies into pre-workshop planning and lessons, and providing mental health supports for students requiring outreach during student virtual presentations.

**Continue to build students' safety nets by providing suicide awareness and intervention training to staff.**

- Offered START suicide prevention program (asynchronous webinar) in conjunction with a live session to contextualize the training and review our TCDSB guidelines. The groups trained included 50 Chaplains, 96 support staff from both panels and 48 school administrators.
- Delivered one two-day *Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training* (ASIST) to eight staff (guidance and mental health professionals).
- Suicide Intervention Risk reviews are completed using the *Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training* (ASIST) model. The following chart summarizes key data indicators over the last three years.

Key indicator data	2018-2019 Academic Year	2019-2020 Academic Year	2020-2021 Academic Year
Suicide Intervention Risk Reviews conducted by the Social WorkTeam	755	581	475



Suicide Intervention Risk Reviews conducted by the Psychology Team	155	97	68
Suicide Intervention Risk Reviews conducted by Mental Health Professional Workers	6	24	21
Number of total students receiving suicide intervention support	916	702	564

### **System communication to promote and foster mentally-healthy interactions in schools.**

- Several tip sheets were distributed periodically throughout the system such as the Mentally-Healthy Return to School and Having Mentally-Healthy Conversations about Anti-Black Racism.
- Developed the Circle of Support for Students During Remote Learning to support St. Anne educators in navigating the pathways to care for remote students.
- Shared a Pride Month Infographic for Mentally Healthy Conversations that Supporting 2SLGBTQ+ Students and Families for staff.

### **Pillar Three – Around Us**

#### **Parent Engagement**

- Distributed tip sheets to the TCDSB parent community such as Noticing Mental Health Concerns and a Mentally-Healthy Return to School document.
- Distributed seasonal Mental Health Newsletters (i.e., September, January, summer) as well as an info-sheet on the impact of COVID in March.

- Several presentations on Mental Health and COVID were facilitated to 162 parents.

### **Memorandums of Understanding with children and youth mental health agencies**

- The social work and psychology departments continued the partnership with community mental health agencies for Priority Access to mental health services in the community. This partnership allows families to access service more quickly than typical wait list times. The Social Work team referred 2,458 students and the Mental Health Professional Workers referred 71 students to outside agencies.
- In collaboration with Safe Schools, STRIDES, the city of Toronto's Lead Agency for Infant, Children and Youth Mental Health, facilitated training on human trafficking for the Social Work and Psychology staff.
- TCDSB maintained the existing Mental Health Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with 13 mental health agencies, who provided virtual services to students.
- Social Work and Psychology staff continued to work collaboratively with Mental Health and Addiction Nurses through Toronto Central Community and Care Access Centre (TC-CCAC).

### **Support staff well-being for all employee groups through various professional development opportunities.**

- Every month, messaging was distributed throughout the system focused on key mental health themes such as self-compassion, gratitude, social connections, etc., with videos provided to share during team meetings.
- Pre-recorded webinar on Fostering Our Own Resiliency During COVID-19 made available for Professional Development days for self-directed learning.
- Professional development on Fostering Our Own Resiliency

delivered to 110 St. Anne educators, 150 Teaching and Learning Collaborative educators, 30 business leaders.

- In collaboration with Nurturing our Catholic Community, a webinar on staff well-being was delivered to 4,000 secondary educators during Leaders of Your Own Learning (LOYOL).
- Staff well-being sessions delivered to local school teams [e.g., Bishop Marrocco/Thomas Merton (16), Speech and Language Pathologists (30), St. Joseph College (30), Secondary School Vice-Principals Association (39) and new school administrators (16)].

### **Widening Our Lens – Equitable and Culturally Responsive Approaches**

The TCDSB recognizes the importance of centering the work that we do in supporting students' mental health and well-being through equitable and culturally responsive approaches. The Social Work, Psychology and Mental Health teams have an inherent professional obligation as advocates to our community of students and families to learn and serve to eliminate system barriers and all forms of racism and discrimination. As such, concerted efforts were made to support the mental health and well-being of racialized students within our community of schools. The following section highlights some of these implemented and ongoing initiatives:

- In collaboration with the Equity Department staff, distributed a system-wide message supporting Black Mental Health Week. As well, key tip sheets such as Having Mentally Healthy Conversations about Anti-Black Racism from School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO) were distributed throughout the system.
- Through the *Focus on Youth* (FOY) program, which provides employment and leadership opportunities for students from marginalized communities, staff from the Psychology, Social Work and Mental Health teams mentored 80 student leaders, enhancing their mental health literacy, so they in turn could lead younger students in the FOY after school programs and summer camps.
- TCDSB Social Work team engaged identity specific supports when needed or requested. This also involved clinician to clinician

consultation involving referrals of marginalized groups where an identity-specific lens was critical and offered additional peer supervision for clinicians impacted by racism themselves.

- The Social Work team has created an equity specific social work group that looks at all practice considerations to ensure we interrupt potential experiences of anti-Black racism or further marginalization of our families.
- The Social Work team consults around referrals to children's aid societies in an equity informed and sensitive manner with a focus on addressing disproportionate referrals involving marginalized families.
- A number of professional development sessions were held for our social workers, psychology, and mental health staff on addressing bias and dismantling anti-Black racism including work with organizations such as *Liberation Practice International*, *Heyworth Centre for Women*, and the *FCJ Refugee Centre*, and the TCDSB Equity team.
- The Psychology team has been focusing on professional development on testing bias in racialized groups using appropriate measures and standards when doing formal assessments. These sessions included Psychological Assessment of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Populations with Dr. Esther Geva & Dr. Judith Weiner, as well as Ontario Psychological Association's Dorothy Hill Symposium: Social Justice and Anti-Oppressive Work in School Focused Psychological Services with Dr. Jordon Wright.
- In consultation with the Equity department, the Mental Health team developed an Adapted Decision Support Tool: Considerations for Planning of Presentations on Sensitive Topics. The purpose of the tool is to assist administrators and school teams in their decision process of one-time presentations to ensure a comprehensive plan to enhance student learning while supporting student well-being.

- The Social Work, Psychology and Mental Health teams collectively helped support students' well-being during several board-wide equity initiatives involving students such as the Asian Heritage Month events, the Anti-Racism Conference, Safe Schools Conference, Stop the Stigma Campaign, etc.
- The mental health staff collaborated with several community partner organizations such as *Tropicana*, *Stolen from Africa*, and *Delta* to better support the unique needs of our student population. For example, in collaboration with *TAIBU*, the Social Work team facilitated a leadership group at a secondary school, empowering racialized students.

## **F. CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

This report is for the information of the Board.