MENTAL HEALTH ACTION PLAN

2023 TO 2026

The Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) recognizes that mental health is a key determinant of student well-being and achievement. As such, we prioritize the professional development of our staff to ensure they are well-prepared to support with evidence-informed strategies, focused on empathy and understanding.



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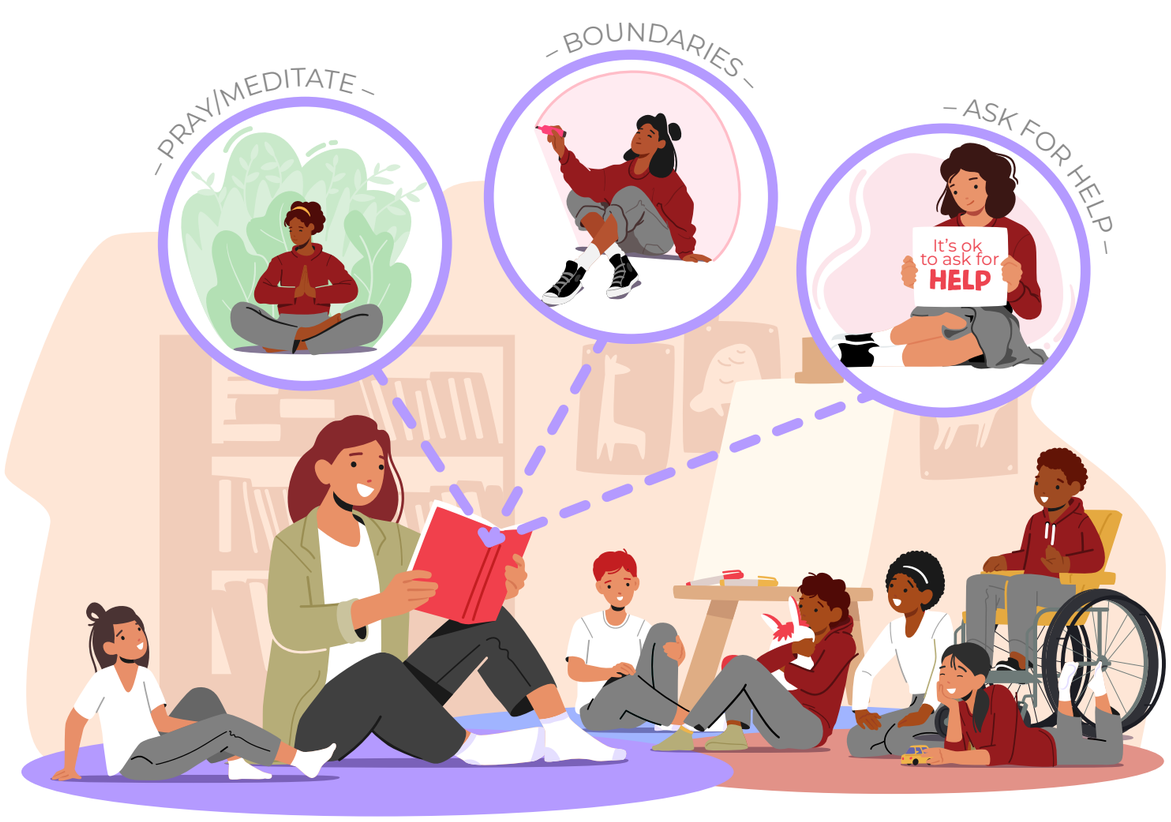
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A message from the Chief Executive Officer AND Chair of the Board



Dear Toronto Catholic District School Board Community,

We are pleased to share our Mental Health Action Plan (MHAP) for 2023-2026, which is designed to raise awareness, build capacity and provide a coordinated and evidence-informed approach to student mental health throughout the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB). Over the past few years, our students have faced even greater challenges due to the pandemic, resulting in a greater need to create emotionally and mentally healthy spaces to support students and their families.

We recognize that mental health is a key determinant of student well-being and achievement. As such, we prioritize the professional development of our staff to ensure they are well-prepared to support with evidence-informed strategies, focused on empathy and understanding.

We firmly believe that every student should have access to the necessary supports and services they need to succeed, and we are fully dedicated to making this a reality. Our commitment to this principle is rooted in our Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP), shared Catholic Values and the teachings of the Gospel, which steer us toward championing equity, accessibility, and justice in every facet of our work. At Toronto Catholic, we are fortunate to have a talented team of educators, support staff and mental health professionals who ardently embrace the role of compassionate mentors for our students, tirelessly combatting the negative beliefs and stigmas that surround mental health while respecting and loving every student.

We strongly believe that every student has the potential to flourish, and our goal is to create a safe and inclusive learning environment that encourages and fosters students' strengths in all areas of growth including academic, cognitive, emotional, physical, social and spiritual development. Together, we can positively impact the well-being of all students. By working in harmony with TCDSB families and our community members, we endeavour to foster a welcoming and supportive learning environment that accommodates and empowers all students, not just for today, but also for the future.

Thank you,

Dr. Brendan Browne
Chief Executive Officer

Nancy Crawford
Chair of the Board

Nurturing Our Catholic Community

> "May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus"
>
> Romans 15:5

As a Catholic learning community, we are called through the gospels to be people of faith, hope, and love. The TCDSB Pastoral Plan invites us to journey with one another with eyes of faith and hope, hearts of kindness and love, and minds of justice and peace. With this in mind, we are called to seek and respond to the image of Christ in each person we meet, and to grow daily in our love of God and neighbour. Together we work to nurture our faith-filled communities to be places of acceptance and belonging for all members.



Purpose of the MHAP

> "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."
>
> Romans 15:13

Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB)'s commitment to student well-being figures prominently in the Multi-year Strategic Plan (MYSP) as one of three identified pillars, alongside and inextricably linked with, Learning and Equity priorities.

As we strive to "Grow in Knowledge with Justice and Hope" (MYSP), we will continue to promote mentally healthy relationships and learning environments in which every student feels like they belong and can grow to reach their full potential. All staff members have a role to play in supporting student mental health. Mental Health staff within the Special Services Department work collaboratively with stakeholders across the system and in the community who bring multi-disciplinary perspectives to discussions around implementation of the action items identified in this plan.

Alignment of the MHAP

Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP)

IN GOD'S IMAGE: Growing in Knowledge, with Justice and Hope.

The Mental Health Action Plan is rooted in the TCDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) and is well-aligned with articulated goals in each of the three areas of focus, Learning, Equity, and Well-Being. These goals include:

LEARNING

Continue to develop a Christ-centered learning organization in pursuit of knowledge, innovation and responsiveness. .

EQUITY

Apply Catholic social justice to nurture a community focused on equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, anti-oppression.

WELL-BEING

Strengthen an environment rooted in Gospel values that nurtures hope and well-being.

To support well-being the TCDSB includes universal best practices that use evidence-based well-being strategies and resources to create and sustain mentally healthy classrooms and schools for students that focus on the development of the whole person. As well, the Mental Health Action Plan continues to keep staff well-being as a priority area in continuing to work with stakeholders to develop an organizational Well-Being Strategy to better support a work-life balance for all staff that nurtures spiritual, emotional, physical, and social well-being.

Equity Action Plan (EAP)

The TCDSB Equity Action Plan (EAP) offers a scripture-centered vision of inclusion that guides our path forward as we contemplate our commitment to every member of our community. Scriptural accounts of Jesus provide a constant witness of his inclusiveness. Jesus welcomed all people into the Kingdom of God and sought out the marginalized. The social teachings of the Catholic Church promote a society founded on justice and love, in which all persons possess inherent dignity as children of God and are to be welcomed and treated equitably. We strive to achieve a fair and inclusive school climate where all members of the school community feel welcomed, safe, nurtured, and experience an authentic sense of belonging.

Special Services Action Plan (SSAP)

The TCDSB Special Services Action Plan (SSAP) is grounded in equity-focused, asset-based approaches through which each student is honoured as a unique learner, communication among stakeholders is emphasized, and a commitment to improved service excellence is a focus. We recognize the powerful opportunity to create spaces where strengths are identified, and opportunities are met with a strong commitment to nurturing individual learning, growth, and success.

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."

Jeremiah 29.11

Structure of the MHAP

> “Do not fear,
> for I am with you.
>
> Do not be afraid,
> for I am your God.”

Isaiah 41:10a

The MHAP is a living document that will be responsive to system needs and informed by continuous improvement and data analysis. The focus of the plan is to enhance staff capacity through professional development, deepen the capacity of school mental health professionals and enhance student, parent/guardian engagement with an identity-affirming approach.

Within our MHAP, we state our three areas of commitment and relevant actions. The number of actions does not capture the full depth and scope of the work and focus within each area. We have provided the operational actions and indicated which departments will be accountable for carrying out the actions. Each action has its own monitoring framework tied to the expected outcome anticipated. In some cases, the areas of commitment may be revisited over several years and annual reports will

provide updates on the relevant progress. This action plan is designed to guide programs, services, and initiatives and inform us about continuous improvement. It does not provide the day-to-day details. Report back data will be provided annually and will inform next steps toward the stated commitments. In support of the MHAP, the mental health team will collaborate with a cross-departmental working group to review and implement mental health promotion resources across the system. This cross-departmental working group will include key team members from the Curriculum, Nurturing our Catholic Community, Equity, and Safe Schools departments to ensure all stakeholder perspectives are integrated in the supports and resources provided to students.



Tiered Approach to Student Mental Health

We continue to work in alignment with School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO) to utilize a three-tiered approach to supporting student mental health across the system. The first tier represents mental health promotion for all students, including the everyday work school staff do to create mentally healthy classrooms and schools and build knowledge of mental health.

The second tier represents targeted prevention and early intervention for those students who need additional mental health support, including brief services provided by school mental health professionals.

The third tier represents intensive and/or specialized assessment and intervention services for students who are experiencing more serious mental health struggles, which often involves bridging to community or health services.

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. The following diagram offers a visual depiction of this approach which has been adopted province-wide.

Tier 3

Intensive and Specialized Intervention for FEW students

Tier 2

Prevention and Early Intervention for SOME students

Tier 1

Mental Health Promotion for ALL students



Commitments and Monitoring

1

Enhance staff capacity through professional development and resources to support student mental health and well-being with an identity-affirming approach.

2

Deepen the capacity of school mental health professionals through the provision of evidence-based interventions from an identity-affirming approach.

3

Enhance student voice and parent/guardian engagement in identity-affirming mental health promotion and literacy.



COMMITMENT #1

Enhance staff capacity through professional development and resources to support student mental health and well-being with an identity-affirming approach.

Actions & Monitoring

ACTIONS:

A. Continue to support the implementation of the **Kids in the Know** program in both the elementary and secondary panels.

B. Support the implementation of Mental Health Literacy lesson plans in both elementary and secondary panels.

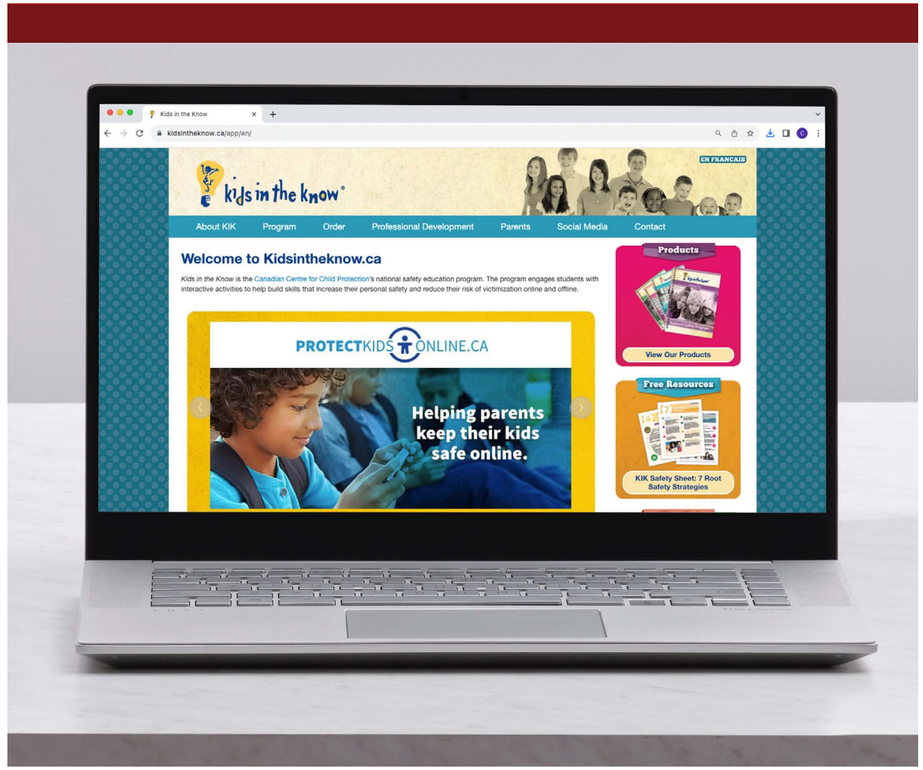
C. Implementation of the revised Suicide Intervention Guidelines along with Suicide Awareness training for all staff members.

D. Continue to enhance capacity among staff to support students who identity as 2SLGBTQ+, Black and Indigenous in alignment with the Equity Action Plan.

E. Strengthen and deepen the use of the **Faith & Wellness** resource to enhance social-emotional learning in schools.

MONITORING:

- Data on how many educators receive training on these topics.
- Surveys to ascertain the level and quality of implementation of the various programs from educators and school administrators.
- Collect data through Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) systematically to monitor student well-being in our community.



Expected Outcomes

By the end of the Academic Year 2023-2024

We will have evidence to indicate how effectively we enhanced staff capacity to support mental health and well-being with an identity-affirming approach.

Accountability: Special Services, Curriculum, Equity, Safe Schools

COMMITMENT #2

Deepen the capacity of school mental health professionals through the provision of evidence-based interventions from an identity-affirming approach.

Actions & Monitoring

ACTIONS:

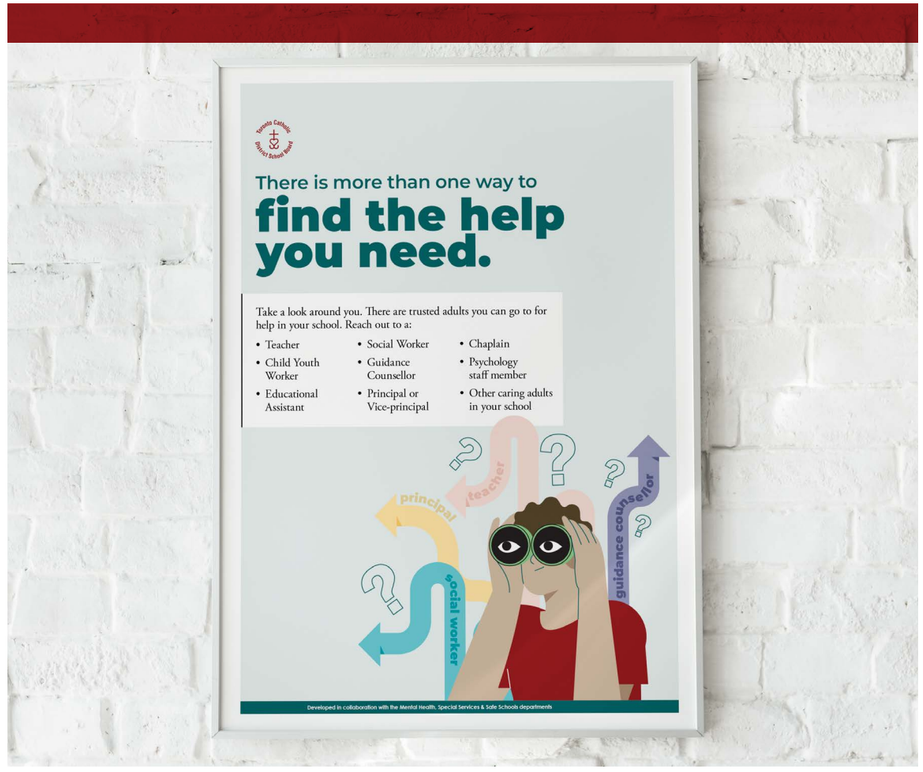
A. Support the use of evidence-informed and identity-affirming interventions through professional development, communities of practice, peer-to-peer support, and clinical supervision.

B. Support use of measurement-based care to inform and enhance counselling services.

C. Continue to strengthen collaboration with community mental health agencies to enhance pathways to/through/from mental health services.

MONITORING:

- Number of mental health professionals participating in professional development.
- Data on level and quality of implementation of evidence-based practices including measurement-based care among mental health professionals.
- Assess the level of engagement with mental health agencies by developing an assessment framework similar to the principles of the TCDSB community engagement policy.



Expected Outcomes

By the end of the Academic Year 2023-2024

We will demonstrate how we effectively deepened the capacity of TCDSB mental health professionals' use of evidence-based practice to better support students.

Accountability: Special Services

COMMITMENT #3

Enhance student voice and parent/guardian engagement in identity-affirming mental health promotion and literacy.

Actions & Monitoring

ACTIONS:

A. Increase student leadership in Mental Health Action Team (MHAT) initiatives in schools.

B. Meet with the Catholic Student Leadership Impact Team (CSLIT) and the Elementary Catholic Student Leadership Impact Team (E-CSLIT) to share information and elicit student perspectives on mental health initiatives.

C. Continue to provide and develop family-driven mental health workshops and resources.

MONITORING:

- Increase number of schools participating in MHAT from 25 to 30 secondary and from 75 to 100 elementary schools.
- Monitor the number of meetings and the quality of the consultative relationship with CSLIT executives and E-CSLIT.
- Monitor participation and feedback at webinars to continue to be responsive to parent/guardian voice for future initiatives.



Expected Outcomes

By the end of the Academic Year 2023-2024

Through student and parent/guardian voice, we will report an increase in awareness and engagement in mental health initiatives provided.

Accountability: Special Services, Nurturing Catholic Community, Curriculum, Student Success, Safe Schools

> I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.
>
> – Maya Angelou



Mental Health Action Team Symposium 2023



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