



Excellence | Equity | New Evangelization



TOGETHER FOR MENTAL HEALTH 2017–2020

Mental Health Strategy



DURHAM CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
Catholic Education: Learning and Living in Faith



DURHAM CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Catholic Education: Learning and Living in Faith

Our Mission

We are called to celebrate and nurture the God-given talents of each student as we serve with excellence in the light of Christ.

Our Vision

Each student in our Catholic learning community embodies excellence and equity by embracing the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations — to be:

- a discerning believer;
- a collaborative contributor;
- a self-directed, responsible lifelong learner;
- a responsible citizen.
- a reflective, creative and holistic thinker;
- an effective communicator;
- a caring family member; and

Our Catholic Values

By living these values with an open mind and a faithful heart we bear witness to these words:
“You are the hope of the Church and of the world. You are my hope.” – Saint John Paul II

As a Catholic Learning Community, we value:

Faith, evangelizing ourselves and others through scripture, sacrament, prayer and action in service with the home, school and parish.

Hope, giving witness to the belief that we can become who we are called to be.

Love, being present to others with care, compassion, solidarity, community and joy.

Peace, creating opportunities for contemplation, spirituality, reconciliation and forgiveness.

Wisdom, listening and responding to the Holy Spirit.

Inclusion, ensuring a sense of belonging by promoting the dignity and worth of each human life.

Excellence, building on God’s grace to achieve our earthly and eternal vocations.

Creativity, celebrating diverse and innovative expressions of God’s gifts.

Service, seeking out and responding to local and global needs with prudence, fortitude, humility and charity.

Stewardship, shepherding God’s creation and resources for the common good.

Responsibility, demonstrating accountability and fidelity in our thoughts, words and deeds.

Justice, acting and serving with integrity in communion with the Gospel and teachings of Jesus.

A message from the Director of Education


The Durham Catholic District School Board believes that student well-being plays a significant role in student success and academic achievement. With a central theme of well-being for all learners, our Mental Health Strategy was developed with the Board's mission, vision and values in mind, which includes the Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations. Through this plan, we aim to educate all learners about the mental health continuum, how to recognize when help is needed, and how to access support.

We can see by the facts, figures and survey data in this plan, the Durham Catholic District School Board has been successful in raising mental health awareness and educating school communities about the impact of well-being on student achievement. I commend our highly trained staff for following through on the commitments outlined in our previous mental health strategy, as we continue the conversation about mental health. Looking forward to our next steps of our strategic plan in the area of mental health and well-being, we recognize there is still much to do in the continued campaign of awareness, prevention and early intervention.

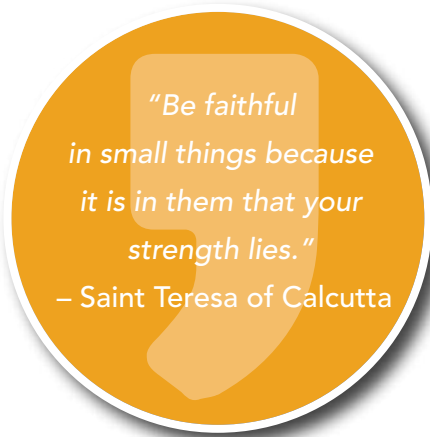
In keeping with the Board's mission, vision, values and *Discovery 2020 Strategic Plan*, the Mental Health Strategy is reflective of Catholic education, promoting Excellence, Equity and New Evangelization. It is also driven by the *Student Well-Being and Achievement Board Improvement Plan*, which is built on the concept of educating the whole child — mind, body and soul. In these pages, we are pleased to provide our Catholic communities and partners with a clear focus on our strategic goals and actions, supporting well-being for all.

Yours in Catholic Education,
Anne O'Brien
Director of Education





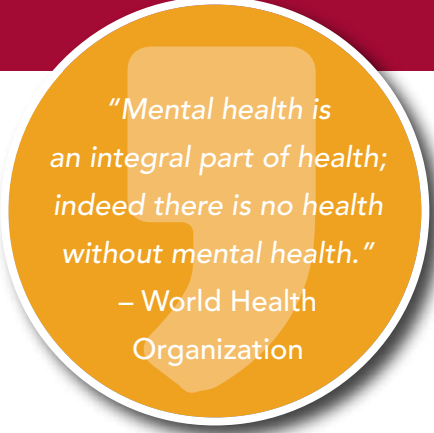
"Our efforts must aim at restoring hope, righting wrongs, maintaining commitments, and thus promoting the well-being of individuals and of peoples." – Pope Francis



*"Be faithful
in small things because
it is in them that your
strength lies."*
– Saint Teresa of Calcutta

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"Mental health is an integral part of health; indeed there is no health without mental health."

– World Health Organization

Our Together for Mental Health Mission

To create caring and supportive Catholic school communities that promote well-being and maximize achievement for all learners.

Our Together for Mental Health Vision

Every school community in the Durham Catholic District School Board will inspire students to **believe**, **belong** and **become**:

Believe: All learners believe with faith in their ability to achieve to their God-given potential; they are physically, spiritually, emotionally and mentally healthy.

Belong: All learners feel they belong to an inclusive and caring community where the stigma surrounding mental health concerns is eliminated; they are engaged in their learning and feel a strong connection between home, school and parish.

Become: All learners become caring and resilient members of society, contributing their God-given talents in service to others; they are aware of the importance of mental health and well-being and know how to access supports.

Our Commitments

As a Catholic learning community, we believe that mental health and well-being are an essential component of academic achievement, hence we are committed to:

- Instilling a belief in the worth and dignity of every person
- Sharing responsibility for creating collaborative and inclusive learning communities
- Recognizing the inextricable link between student mental health and student achievement as the foundation for productive, well-rounded contributors to our community
- Believing that all children have a right to attend school and reach their full potential
- Developing our system's capacity to understand and support the mental health and well-being of all learners
- Focusing on the implementation of evidence-based/evidence-informed programs and services to support all learners
- Engaging with our community mental health and healthcare stakeholders as partners in achieving mentally healthy schools
- Providing a safe, caring, inclusive learning environment so that all children and youth can succeed.

Facts and Figures About Student Mental Health

- Approximately one in five students in Canadian schools struggle with a mental health problem that interferes with their day-to-day functioning (School Mental Health ASSIST)
- 70% of mental health problems have their onset during childhood or adolescence (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health)
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the age of 10–24 (Canadian Mental Health Association)
- In Ontario, 11% of students reported needing professional help for mental health concerns. Of these students, 54% received professional help (2014 Ontario Child Health Study — School Mental Health Survey)
- In Durham Region, 17% of secondary school students and 10% of elementary school students reported fair to poor mental health. These estimates are similar to Ontario rates (The Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey, 2015)
- In Durham Region, 82% of secondary school students and 90% of elementary school students indicated a sense of belonging at school (The Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey, 2015)
- According to the Durham Catholic District School Board School Climate Survey (2016), among students in Grades 7–12:
 - 96% of students reported they feel safe at school
 - 72% of students reported that the adults and students at their school respect each other
 - 84% of students reported that there is at least one adult in their school that they trust
 - 52% of students were confident that staff make student well-being a priority, while 31% were unsure

“There is a clear relationship between student mental health problems and academic difficulties. When students are pre-occupied with emotional concerns, they cannot participate fully in learning.” – School Mental Health ASSIST

Key Terms and Definitions

Well-being: A positive sense of self, spirit and belonging that we feel when our cognitive, emotional, social, spiritual and physical needs are being met. Well-being in school settings is about helping children and students become resilient, so that they can make positive and healthy choices to support learning and achievement both now and in the future (adapted from Ontario’s Well-Being Strategy for Education Discussion Document).

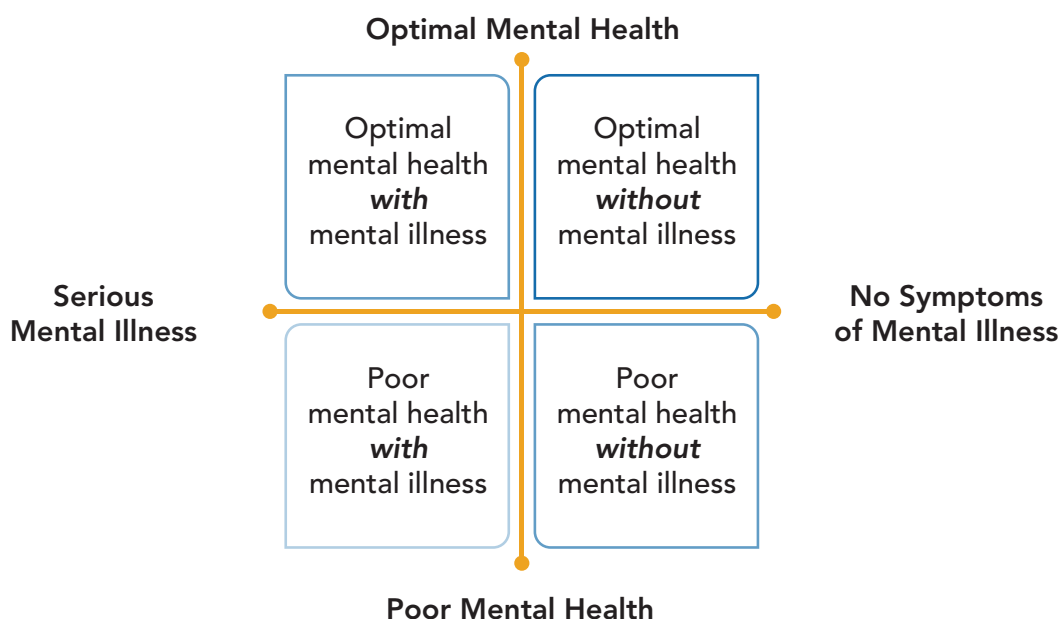
Mental health: A state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community (World Health Organization).

Mental health problem: A range of behavioural and emotional problems that may have a negative impact on student’s well-being and interfere with their functioning at school, at home, in the community and in social settings (Supporting Minds, Ontario Ministry of Education).

Mental illness: Characterized by alterations in thinking, mood or behaviour associated with significant distress and impaired functioning (Public Health Agency of Canada).

Dual Continuum Model of Mental Health and Mental Illness

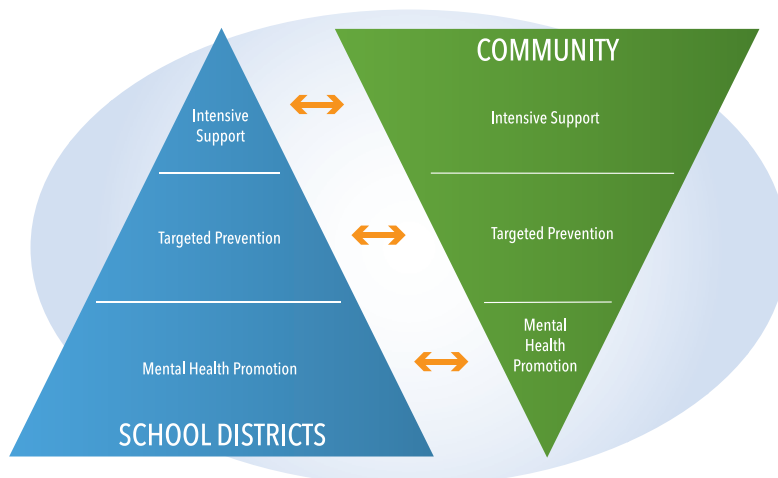
It is helpful to think of mental health and mental illness as two separate, but interconnected concepts existing on a continuum. An individual with a mental illness, who uses healthy strategies and maintains a balanced life can have positive mental health, in the same way that an individual can live with a physical illness such as diabetes, but lead a healthy balanced life and still be considered to have optimal health.



Understanding the Tiered Support Model

In Tier One, the focus for school boards is to create mentally healthy environments and promote mental health and well-being through universal approaches that benefit all students. In Tier Two, school boards work to build skills with vulnerable students through prevention programming. Tier Three includes clinical interventions for students with significant mental health challenges, which occurs largely in partnership with community and mental health settings. Source: School Mental Health ASSIST.

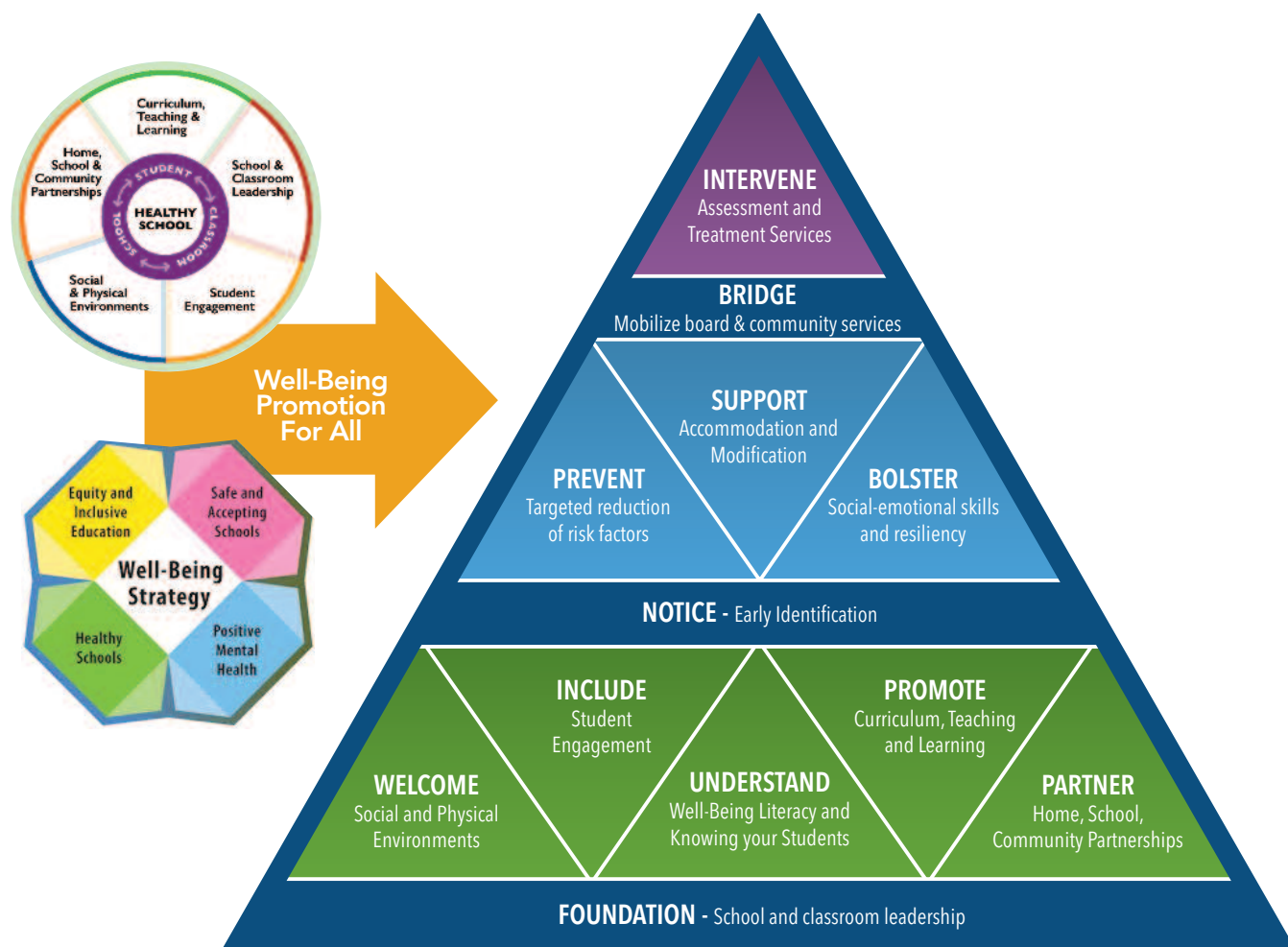
Vision for an Integrated System of Care



School Mental Health ASSIST Aligned and Integrated Model (AIM) for School Mental Health and Well-Being

The Aligned and Integrated Model (AIM) demonstrates the tiered-support intervention approach that aligns with other key Ministry of Education initiatives such as **Foundations for a Healthy School** and **Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education**. AIM was developed by School Mental Health ASSIST, the provincial mental health leadership team which supports Ontario school boards in promoting student mental health and well-being. When schools welcome, include, understand, promote and partner, they create conditions that enable optimal learning and well-being for **all** students. By noticing and through early identification, educators can take actions to prevent, support, and bolster the skills of **some** students who are at risk for developing mental health problems. Finally, by bridging links to professionals and community services with mental health expertise, Student Services staff can intervene for the **few** students who require more intensive supports.

Aligned and Integrated Model (AIM) for School Mental Health and Well Being



Together for Mental Health 2014–2017: The First Three Years Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priority #1

Develop and strengthen organizational conditions for school mental health:

- Engaged in a process of data collection and resource mapping;
- Established board-level Mental Health Leadership Team and Mental Health Steering Committee;
- Created three-year Mental Health and Addictions Strategy and annual Action Plans;
- Obtained system commitment to Mental Health and Addictions Strategy vision and mission;
- Established and executed Communication Plan;
- Executed 'Be Well' campaign to introduce and share key messages broadly;
- Supported the expectation that all schools include mental health goals in School Improvement Plans;
- Established standard process for response to suicide risk, including written protocol and staff training;
- Developed protocols for professional development using a systematic cascading approach;
- Expanded opportunities for broad collaboration within the board and with community;
- Provided authentic opportunities for students to become involved in mental health initiatives;
- Worked with School Mental Health ASSIST implementation team to create tools and resources;
- Collaborated with community partners to develop resources and plan student events; and
- Updated initial assessment data.

Strategic Priority #2

Build capacity among staff, students and parents:

- Provided opportunities for foundational mental health awareness for staff, students and parents;
- Developed mental health literacy for educators through systematic roll-out of various training opportunities and certificate courses;
- Increased capacity for Student Services staff to be able to intervene with students requiring more intensive interventions;
- Initiated a focus on substance use through leadership and student participation in Durham Youth Drug Awareness Committee 'Awareness to Action' student conferences;
- Maintained active involvement on Durham Talking About Mental Illness coalition with the goal of reducing stigma and promoting positive mental health for Intermediate and Secondary students;
- Organized and delivered two 'Sharing of Excellence: Parents as Partners' conferences promoting positive mental health; and
- Embedded well-being lessons into high school "Head Start" transition program.

Strategic Priority #3

Investigate and implement evidence-informed mental health practices, strategies and programs:

- Developed local guidelines for schools considering mental health awareness activities or initiatives;
- Researched evidence-based programs to correspond with specific gaps identified in resource mapping;
- Developed a 'menu' of board-approved, evidence-based/evidence-informed promotion and prevention programs and supported schools in the selection and use of programs;
- Implemented Roots of Empathy program in select schools;
- Implemented 'Star Power' anxiety group (in partnership with Lakeridge Health Oshawa) and System Approach to Mindfulness pilots in select schools;
- Initiated a focus on 'early years' mental health with a specific focus on building resiliency; and
- Engaged in program evaluation.

TOGETHER FOR MENTAL HEALTH 2014–2017

5200

"Be well"
locker magnets
distributed to
Secondary
students and posters in
every classroom



192

staff certified in Applied
Suicide Intervention Skills
Training (ASIST)



435

staff and community
members certified in Mental
Health First Aid



341

Staff and parents
trained in safeTALK



2

successful board-level
parent conferences
promoting
positive mental health

SHARING OF EXCELLENCE
PARENTS AS PARTNERS 2016–2017
Connecting With Our Children and Teens
Promoting Positive Mental Health

Highlights – Of The – First 3 Years



100%

of schools utilizing
universal evidence-based,
social-emotional learning
programs



78%

of schools
participated in Talking
About Mental Illness
(TAMI) classroom
program



Ongoing
professional
development
opportunities for staff

SHARING OF EXCELLENCE

WORKSHOP SERIES 2015-2016

Creation of, and staff
training on DCDSB suicide
prevention
intervention &
postvention
protocols



TOGETHER FOR MENTAL HEALTH 2014–2017

Mental Health and
Addiction Strategy



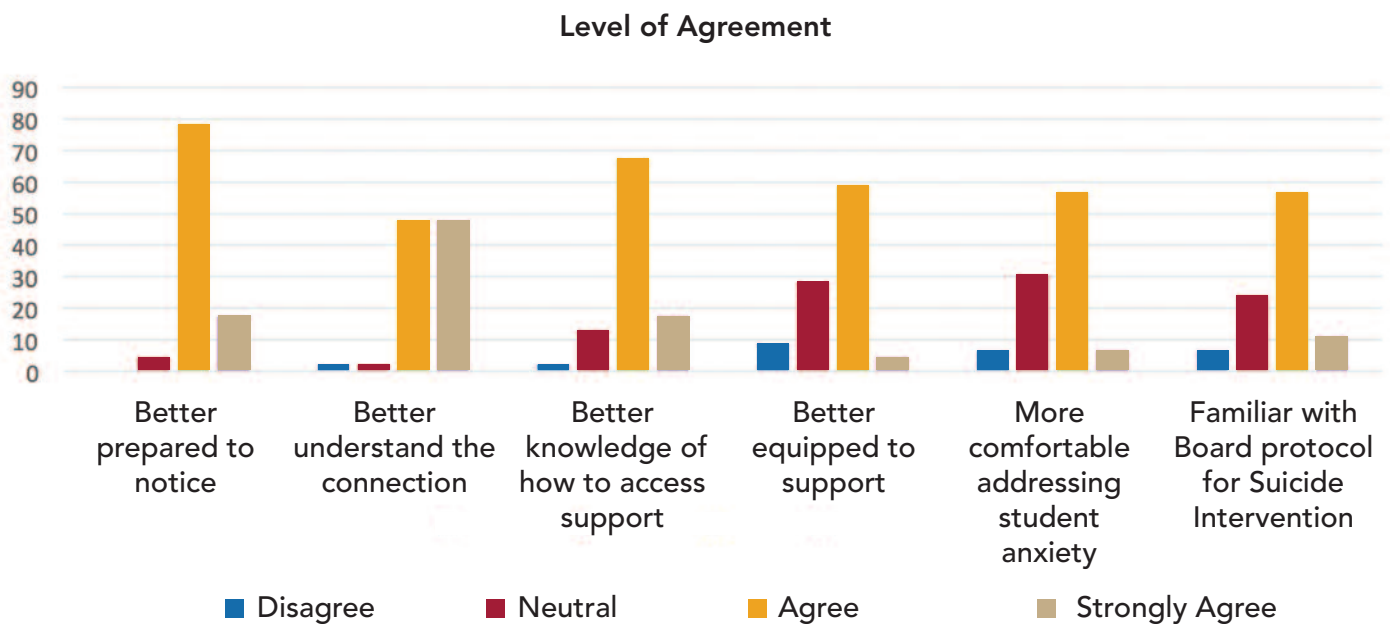
#DCDSBWellbeing



Findings from Current Board Survey/Scan

In the spring of 2017, stakeholders from across the board were invited to participate in an extensive consultation process related to the Durham Catholic District School Board **Together for Mental Health** strategy. Student groups, staff groups, Standing Committees of the board and community members were consulted.

100% of school teams completed the Durham Catholic District School Board Mental Health and Well-Being Survey/Scan. They were asked to indicate their level of agreement with several statements by comparing to 2014 when the DCDSB Mental Health Strategy was first introduced:



- **96%** of school teams **agree-to-strongly agree** that educators in their school are better prepared now to notice when a student may be experiencing a mental health concern
- **96%** of school teams **agree-to-strongly agree** that educators in their school better understand that there is a connection between student well-being and positive school environment/mentally healthy classrooms
- **85%** of school teams **agree-to-strongly agree** that educators in their school have a better knowledge of the necessary steps to take in order to connect students to school-based and/or board-level supports
- **63%** of school teams **agree-to-strongly agree** that educators in their school are better equipped to support students with mental health concerns
- **63%** of school teams **agree-to-strongly agree** that educators in their school feel more comfortable addressing student anxiety
- **67%** of school teams **agree-to-strongly agree** that educators in their school are familiar with the board protocol and procedures for suicide intervention

Schools were also asked to indicate the top student social-emotional/mental health concerns in their school community. The top three responses are listed below. Anxiety was rated as the highest concern across the board.



Other numbers:

- **100%** of schools have staff members who are trained to provide life-assisting suicide first aid intervention (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) and suicide alertness (safeTALK)
 - the majority of elementary schools have two to three ASIST trained staff members; the majority of secondary schools have seven to nine ASIST trained staff members
- **100%** of schools have staff members who are trained in Mental Health First Aid and Violence Threat Risk Assessment
- **100%** of schools have engaged in staff capacity-building initiatives related to student and/or staff mental well-being
- **100%** of schools are using various evidence-informed social-emotional learning programs
- **50%** of schools have a student wellness or "Stomping out Stigma" group which focuses on promoting positive mental health and/or reducing the stigma of mental illness
- **94%** of schools have accessed their school's Public Health Nurse for mental health promotion

Three key themes emerged from these consultations:

1. Continue to focus on faith:

Participants in the survey were clear that the work of the Mental Health Strategy needs to continue to reflect our Catholic faith and the impact that a positive spiritual life has on one's mental health and well-being.

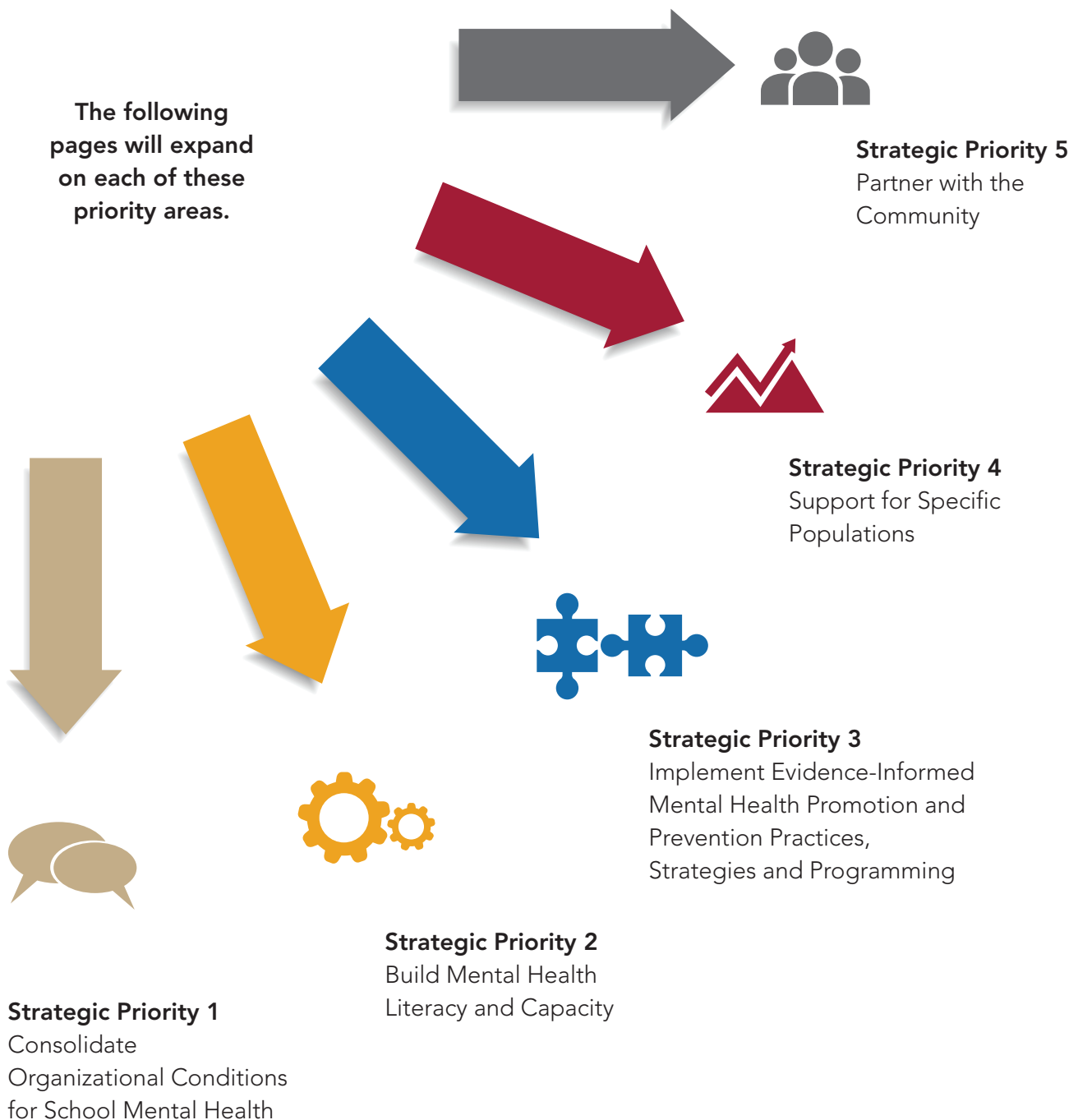
2. Focus on everyday well-being practices:

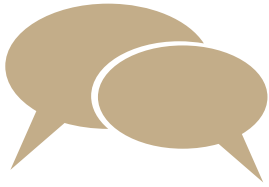
Survey results indicated very favourable results in the efforts to raise awareness about mental health, coupled with the ongoing need to embed knowledge, habits and skills for well-being in everyday school and classroom practices.

3. Focus on staff well-being, in addition to student well-being:

Participants in the survey indicated that staff and student well-being are inextricably linked and that in order to promote and ensure student well-being, educators first need to feel confident about their own.

Overview: Durham Catholic District School Board 2017–2020 Mental Health Strategic Priorities





Strategic Priority #1: Consolidate Organizational Conditions for School Mental Health

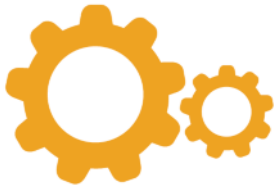
Organizational conditions refer to the foundations that need to be in place for sustainable practices in mental health to exist in schools. Building these organizational conditions was the focus of the first strategic plan. Over the next three years, the Durham Catholic District School Board will continue to focus on the integration of student mental health and well-being into all aspects of school life and continue to build a solid foundation for sustainable practices.

Work in this area will include an ongoing focus on:

- Standard processes: a focus on role clarification, developing new, and revising existing protocols and procedures, as appropriate;
- Communication plan: the communication of the vision, shared language and key messages, in order to obtain system-wide commitment to the Mental Health Strategy. Ensuring communication extends outside of the system will be an important focus;
- Continuous quality improvement: a focus on identifying indicators of success in order to measure the progress. This includes implementation of well-being measures created by the Ministry of Education as a part of Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education, as well as utilizing program evaluation, board scans, School Climate data and other information to inform progress and set future goals; and
- Collaboration and alignment: alignment with key Ministry of Education initiatives, such as *Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education*, with School Mental Health ASSIST initiatives, and with Durham Catholic District School Board's key principles identified in the board's *Discovery 2020 Strategic Plan*. Attention will also be paid to supporting schools in aligning with Ministry and board processes and priorities.

"Educators are not mental health professionals, but they can help to inspire purpose, hope, belonging and meaning, through direct instruction and daily interactions with students, within accepting and safe school environments."

– School Mental Health ASSIST



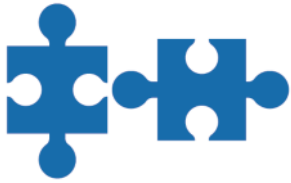
Strategic Priority #2: Build Mental Health Literacy and Capacity

The Durham Catholic District School Board is committed to building the mental health literacy and capacity for staff, students and parents. Capacity building will be implemented using a systematic cascading approach that ensures that stakeholders receive the level of training that is appropriate for their roles (i.e., All stakeholders require a basic level of mental health awareness; those who have a more direct role in supporting student mental health require a deeper level of mental health literacy; those who deliver specialized assessment and intervention services require an expertise level of knowledge). The Catholic church teaches us about the importance of the dignity of the person as well as compassion for one another; hence, the importance of reducing stigma for staff members and students is also covered under this strategic priority.

Over the next three years, work in this area will include a focus on:

- Developing capacity at all levels of the board to promote mentally healthy classrooms;
- Sharing the *Ministry of Education's Supporting Minds Educators Guide* throughout the board;
- Providing high quality professional development for educators on specific topics related to staff and student mental health and well-being;
- Building staff awareness and capacity in the areas of suicide prevention and intervention;
- Implementing and supporting staff and student anti-stigma campaigns and programs; and
- Offering mental health awareness opportunities for parents and students.

"Schools are uniquely positioned to promote positive child and youth mental health, reduce stigma, build social-emotional learning skills, prevent mental health problems in high risk groups, identify students in need, and build pathways to care."
– School Mental Health ASSIST



Strategic Priority #3:

Implement Evidence-Informed Mental Health Promotion and Prevention Practices, Strategies and Programming

All students can benefit from universal programming and everyday practices embedded into the culture of the classroom to promote well-being and increase engagement. Some students will benefit from the use of targeted programming that is delivered in a smaller group setting to specific students who may be at greater risk of developing a mental health problem. Regardless of the level of intervention, it is critical that mental health promotion and prevention programming is evidence-informed and implementation sensitive.

Over the next three years, work in this area will include a focus on:

- Promoting and supporting system-level activities for both staff and students that focus on self-regulation, resiliency and mindful awareness;
- Engaging with School Mental Health ASSIST to implement the collaborative projects that are currently being piloted, as appropriate for the Durham Catholic District School Board;
- Focusing on everyday mental health practices and strategies in the classroom; and
- Providing support for educators in the delivery of curriculum in the areas of social-emotional learning, as well as mental health/mental illness.

“Mental health promotion involves actions to create living conditions and environments that support mental health and allow people to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles.”
– World Health Organization



Strategic Priority #4: Support for Specific Populations

In an attempt to address equity and inclusive education challenges, several specific groups have been identified that may require more or different mental health supports at school because of their unique context and attributes. These specific groups may include the following: Indigenous populations; those who identify as LGBTQ; our youngest learners; newcomers; and/or students with special education needs. As Pope Francis reminds us, “despite differences, all people are God’s children.”

Over the next three years, work in this area will include a focus on:

- Seeking opportunities to align with existing board and community-level initiatives related to specific diverse populations;
- Seeking additional capacity-building opportunities to develop cultural competency related to mental health;
- Increasing knowledge and awareness of needs and supports in specific populations;
- Linking with School Mental Health ASSIST initiatives related to specific populations; and
- Engaging the voices of youth and families, particularly those from diverse communities.

*“Mental wellness is a balance of the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional. This balance is enriched as individuals have: **Purpose** in their daily lives whether it is through education, employment, care-giving activities, or cultural ways of being and doing; **Hope** for their future and those of their families that is grounded in a sense of identity, unique Indigenous values, and having a belief in spirit; a sense of **belonging** and connectedness within their families, to community, and to culture; and finally a sense of **meaning** and an understanding of how their lives and those of their families and communities are part of creation and a rich history.”*

– First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework, Health Canada



Strategic Priority #5: Partner with the Community

Student well-being is a shared responsibility between family, school, church and community. The Durham Catholic District School Board recognizes the crucial role and valued expertise that each contribute. Community partners in child and youth mental health, health services, child protection and youth justice are integral to the success and well-being of students. All staff will continue to work toward equitable and sustainable community partnerships and articulating clear pathways to service to ensure the right service for the right student at the right time.

Over the next three years, work in this area will include a focus on:

- Engaging in consultation with Durham's Lead Agency (Kinark Child and Family Services) as part of Moving on Mental Health to define scope and critical paths to support children, youth and families;
- Enhancing both internal and external dialogues pertaining to facilitating pathways to, through and from mental health services for students and families;
- Working collaboratively with community partners on mental health promotion initiatives and education campaigns; and
- Participating on community collaborative tables related to mental health and addictions.

"One of the marvelous things about community is that it enables us to welcome and help people in a way we couldn't as individuals. When we pool our strength and share the work and responsibility, we can welcome many people, even those in deep distress, and perhaps help them find self-confidence and inner healing. "

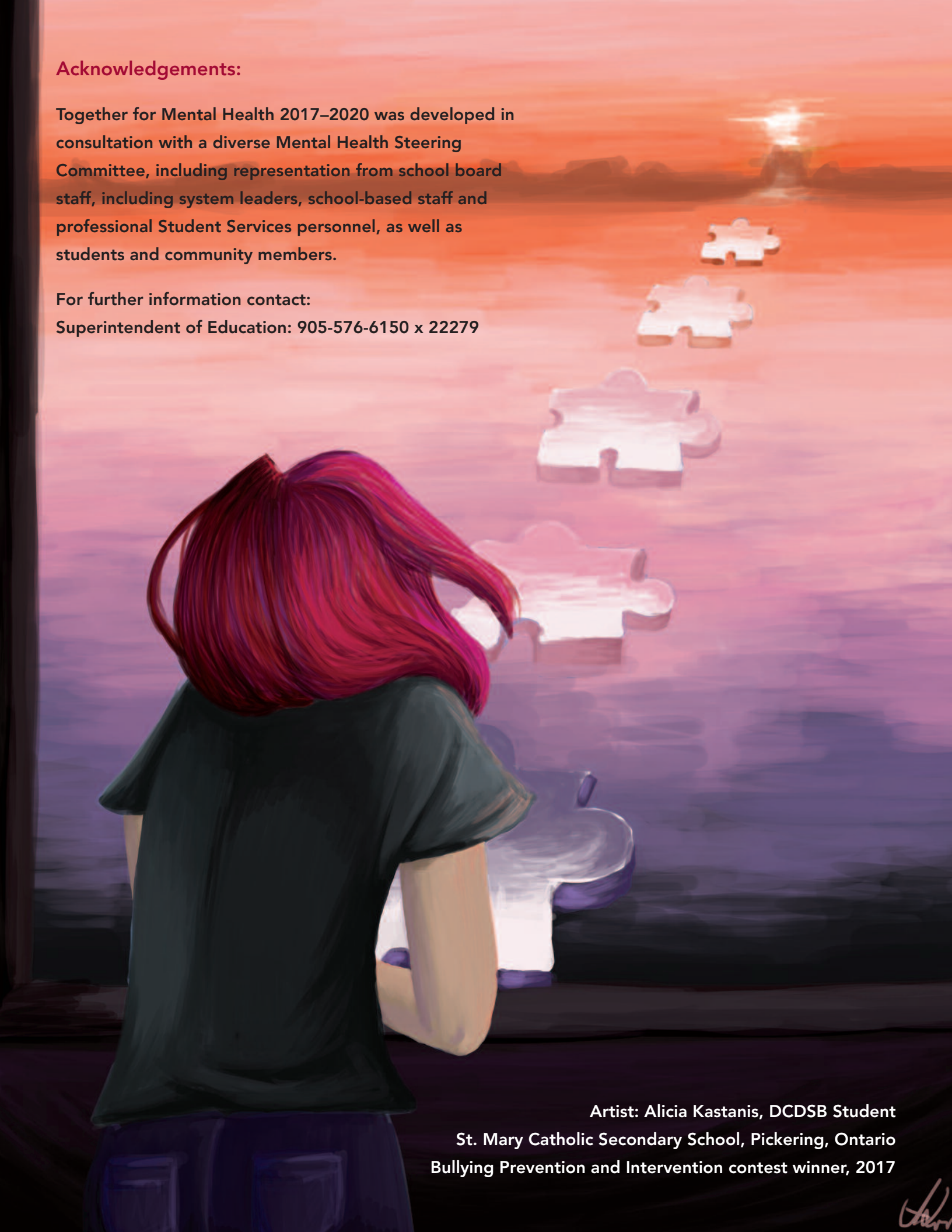
– Jean Vanier, Community and Growth

Acknowledgements:

Together for Mental Health 2017–2020 was developed in consultation with a diverse Mental Health Steering Committee, including representation from school board staff, including system leaders, school-based staff and professional Student Services personnel, as well as students and community members.

For further information contact:

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Bullying Prevention and Intervention contest winner, 2017