

Creating a Healthy School that supports: **Mental Health**

Mental health is defined as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, 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, 2001).

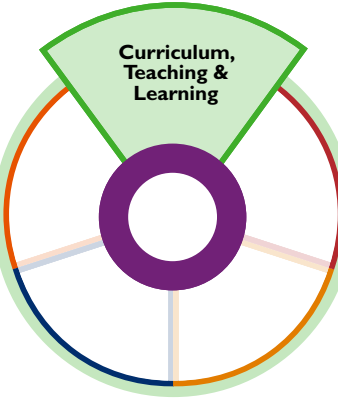
A school community supportive of mental health contributes to the overall health of students by providing an environment where students can develop their self-esteem, confidence and a sense of control over their lives.


10% of elementary school students and 17% of secondary students report fair to poor mental health.

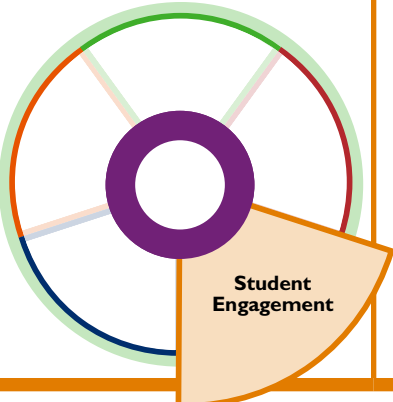
45% of elementary school students and 50% of secondary school students feel that they can’t do anything right.


37% of secondary school students reported moderate-to-serious psychological distress.


The school environment is a key setting to promote mental health, as it is a place where students can form positive connections with caring adults, peers and the community. These relationships help students to develop a sense of belonging, feel valued and supported, and handle life’s ups and downs in positive ways.

At the School	In the Classroom	Student
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote positive mental health messages through different channels (e.g. school assemblies, announcements, posters, social media, parent workshops, and newsletter inserts). Provide opportunities for teachers to participate in ongoing learning and training related to mental health and how to recognize the signs and symptoms of poor mental health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a variety of teaching strategies to weave mental health education through all subjects in all grades. Provide lessons on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> self-regulation (e.g. recognizing hunger and sleep needs) and resiliency healthy coping (e.g. healthy eating, optimistic thinking and physical activity) life skills (e.g. problem solving, focusing on what you can control and emotional awareness) equity and diversity online safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage student contributions to their “All About Me” portfolio or Individual Pathways Plan and advocate for accommodations as necessary. Provide students with the opportunity to talk about mental health during instructional time.

At the School	In the Classroom	Student
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide activities/workshops for staff and/or parents to increase awareness about building resiliency and/or online safety concerns. Respond to reports of harassment, name calling and bullying in a timely manner. Provide staff with an opportunity to share evidence-based practices at staff meetings and dialogue with parents to support mental health. Staff have opportunities to lead and influence their environment in a positive way. Staff are given opportunities for training and skill development. School celebrates successes of the students and staff. Staff and students are encouraged to eat healthy and be physically active. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role model healthy coping behaviors (e.g. healthy eating, optimistic thinking, physical activity and demonstrate school spirit). Implement strategies that support autonomy and create opportunities for students to make choices (e.g. narrative writing or art projects). Encourage students to break down large tasks into manageable pieces. Use case studies to help students understand how mistakes can be learning opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for secondary school students to partner with elementary schools to promote positive mental health (e.g. healthy coping and online safety). Provide student leadership opportunities (e.g. volunteering with seniors, or mentoring younger students or peers). Encourage students to report incidents of discrimination, harassment and bullying, and provide opportunities for students to contribute to the solutions.

At the School	In the Classroom	Student
 <p>Student Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize extracurricular activities that are inclusive, promote positive mental health and provide opportunities for students to try new things. Provide opportunities for students to organize an event/activity in partnership with school staff (e.g. positive message t-shirt contest). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore students' areas of strength, interest and potential to personalize learning and enhance student engagement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage students to explore how they can redirect, express or address emotions in a healthy way, while acknowledging their individual concerns and perspective. Provide opportunities for students to develop self-regulation and stress management skills (e.g. yoga/meditation club). 		

At the School	In the Classroom	Student
 <p>Social & Physical Environments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that school/classroom activities are representative of the experiences of educators, students and parents and are free of stigma. Raise awareness about mental health and promote the reality that mental health is for everyone (e.g. a mural). Display posters/resources that encourage educators, students and parents to talk about mental health and mental illness. Provide alternate break options for students and staff (e.g. smaller cafeteria during lunch and library/open gym during recess). School ensures that the contributions staff make are recognized. Staff are provided opportunity for input when changes are implemented at the school. The school has a safety plan in place if someone experiences distress and/or a crisis. Bullying prevention and awareness-raising strategies are in place for both staff and students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a safe, inclusive, peaceful and comfortable classroom (e.g. dedicated quiet space, outdoor learning option and posted class schedule). Provide opportunities for students to take a break and refocus (e.g. stretch break, visualization activity, going outside).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage students to contribute to the planning and identification of places in the school where they can go to discuss issues related to mental health with educators and/or peers (e.g. peace garden). Encourage students to participate in programs that support the transition from elementary school to secondary school and post-secondary. 		

At the School	In the Classroom	Student
 <p>Home, School & Community Partnerships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with community organizations to support mental health promotion throughout the school. Partner with your school's Public Health Nurse to assist in assessing the mental health needs in your school, accessing Health Department resources, and planning and implementing strategies for addressing mental health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect with school board mental health lead, parents, and community partners to implement mental health awareness strategies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that students are aware of how to access programs, services and activities in the school and community that promote mental health. Invite students to provide input into activities that involve decision-making, problem solving and taking action within the school and community. 		



Durham Health Connection Line
905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729

durham.ca/mentalhealth

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729



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