

Mental Health, Well-being, & Addictions Strategy

2018-2021 Vision, Mission Statement, & Goals

Overview Statement

The current Mental Health, Well-being and Addictions Strategy reflects alignment with *Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education* (2016), *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* (2017), School Mental Health Assist's (SMHA) strategic directions *Taking Flight 2017-2020*, Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board's (ALCDSB) Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement and Well-being (BIPSAW; 2018), ALCDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan, and the necessary foundation of our Catholic social teachings. As we are called to honour the dignity and humanity of all individuals, we affirm our commitment to mental health and well-being in our workplaces and school communities.



At ALCDSB, we are fundamentally changing the way we discuss and value mental health in our system. In recent years, we've worked to improve the literacy of our stakeholders. Now, we are shifting to intentionally implement daily practices wherein mental health and well-being are openly discussed and are always a consideration for all stakeholders. With this understanding, we will nurture the creation of daily habits and practices that encourage equitable outcomes for all. Ultimately, everyone at ALCDSB is encouraged to and able to reach their full potential in the image and likeness of God.

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Mental Health & Addictions Strategy Pillars

Mission Statement

We will maintain and improve the conditions whereby students and staff in ALCDSB are able to continue to expand their theoretical awareness and knowledge about mental health and well-being. We have a culture of acceptance, inclusion, and understanding, that values each individual's role in contributing to the ongoing growth and recognition of the importance of mental health and well-being in our daily lives. Mental Health and well-being are paramount and they are regarded as an essential component of overall health. Our organization has the means to support students and staff in a meaningful and sustainable way and this is reflected in our vision for ALCDSB.

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Vision

At ALCDSB, our environments are inclusive and filled with kind and caring colleagues and classmates. Our days include both consideration to the established fact that there is a positive connection between mental health, well-being, and academic achievement, and to the implementation of teaching practices which support this. We nurture and value every student and staff member by establishing and valuing relationships. Doing this, we are able to personalize support to explicitly teach the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and habits, necessary for every student and staff member to navigate their own academic and/or professional and social-emotional challenges: we all demonstrate resilience and resourcefulness. When necessary, staff are able to correctly identify the pathway to care and make connections to community partners. This results in timely and appropriate referrals that support individual and/or school community needs. There is a renewed appreciation for staff mental health and well-being. Recognizing that we serve as role models, it is a part of each staff's professional responsibility to themselves, to each other, and to all students in ALCDSB to intentionally develop attitudes and behaviours that support mental health and well-being for all.

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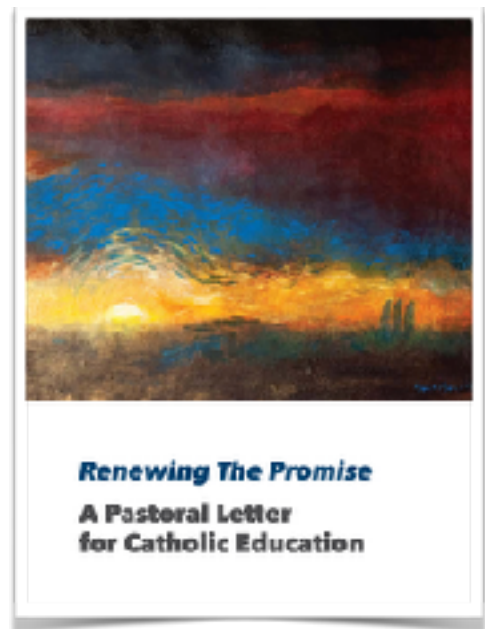
Values and Commitments

Faith in Action guided by the pastoral letter, Renewing the Promise: All staff and students and their families understand they are beloved children of God and see the values in their respective roles within the school community supported by the themes articulated in *Renewing the Promise*:

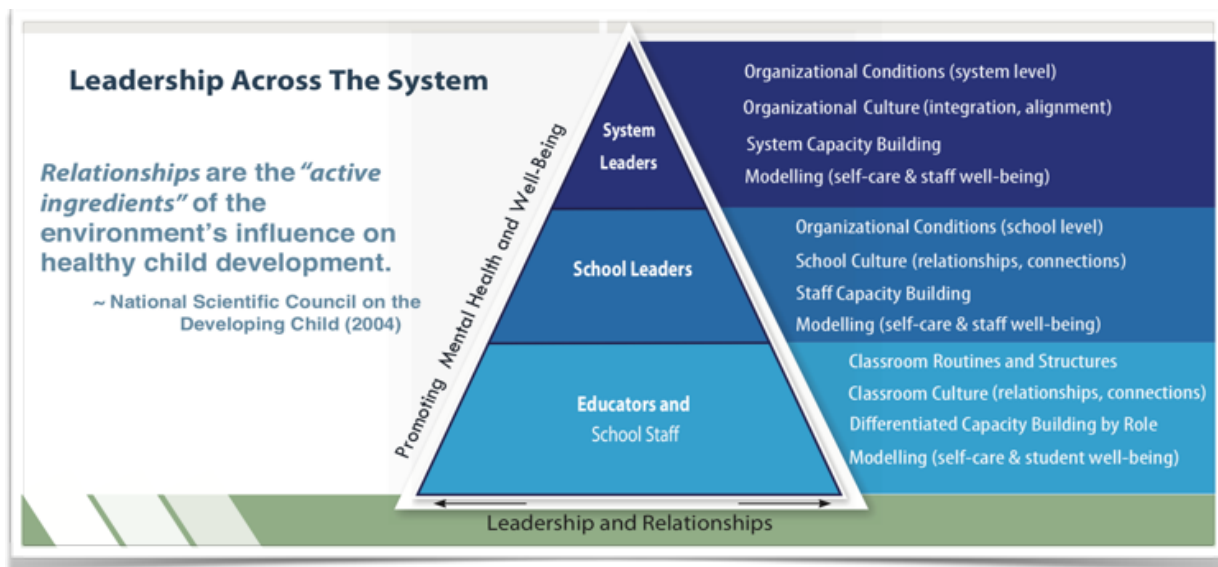
- ***A Community that Accompanies:*** Staff serve as caring adults in service to all students and families and fully utilize our Religion and Family Life programming to support trusting relationships and an understanding that we are all unique; created in the image of God. Our schools are supported by members of the ALCDSB Multi-disciplinary Mental Health Leadership Team and Mental Health Advisory Group.
- ***A Community That Builds Relationships:*** Our Catholic schools are witnesses to Christ and work to facilitate active, meaningful, caring relationships within and between parish, home and school communities.

- *A Community That Encourages Engagement and Instils Hope:* Through a loving encounter with Jesus, we find hope, courage and resolve in the face of adversity. Our Christ-centered mission as a Catholic school system is a call to service; which requires full engagement in the greater community and in relationship to each other.
- *A Community That Forms Joyful Disciples:* The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus

Focus on Well-being Promotion: ALCDSB is committed to student and staff well-being modelled from School Mental Health ASSIST’s Aligned and Integration Model (AIM). This framework provides examples of systematic and intentional daily practices that nurture welcoming and inclusive environments, that foster mutual understanding, encourage collaborative partnership, and mandate the promotion of well-being for all. Using activities that are evidence-based and improve the overall well-being of all students and staff, ALCDSB is dedicated to positive outcomes related to mental health and overall well-being.



Supporting Leadership Across the System: ALCDSB deeply values the individual role that every staff member has to offer. This includes system leaders, school leaders, educators and school staff. Each of these respected groups will require ongoing support to create a culture of mentally healthy students and staff.



Systems leaders will continue to maintain a culture of positive mental health and well-being by modelling self-care and ongoing commitment to the Mental Health, Well-being, and Addictions Strategy. This is demonstrated through the seamless integration and alignment of organizational conditions and an organizational culture that builds capacity and sustainability. Specifically, mental health and well-being are

considerations in all areas of the education and work experience, including our Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement and Well-being (BIPSAW) and School Improvement Plans for Student Achievement and Well-being (SIPSAW)



In service to their staff and students, school leaders act as role models of mental health and well-being and further develop their personal experience and abilities to develop staff capacity. Responsible for upholding a caring school environment and working as system leaders, they will be supported in the acquisition of the skills necessary to assess, plan, do, study, and act in the creation of their SIPSAW and Positive School Climate and Well-being goals. This will also incorporate the provision of applicable tools and resources to assist school leaders in promoting awareness, focusing on mental health literacy, and enlisting expertise, as needed, in their individual school communities.

Through their service as caring, responsive and predictable adults, educators and school staff play a fundamental role in establishing and maintaining a classroom culture that serves as the foundation for

mental health and well-being within their greater school community. Alike other system members, educators and school staff act as role models for positive mental health and well-being and create a daily experience of nurturing and understanding in inclusive environments. As such, this staff group will be supported with training that highlights the importance of relationships which will facilitate the implementation of the AIM Tier 1 framework. It will specifically include the use of strategies supporting Social Emotional Learning (SEL).

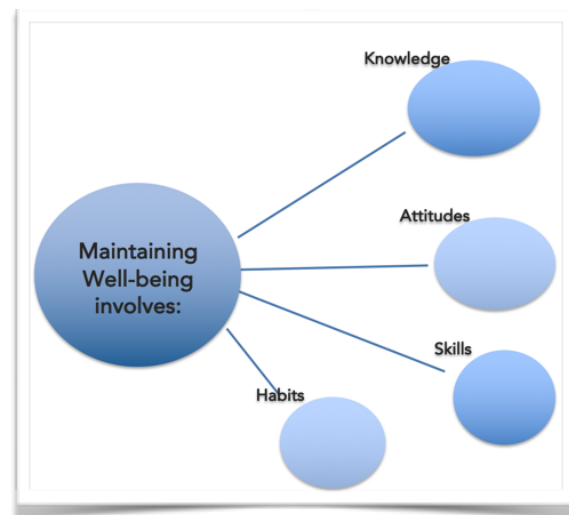


Overall, the entire system of students and staff at ALCDSB will have awareness, understanding, and daily practices that support mental health and well-being for all.

Community Partnerships: We continue to work collaboratively and in partnership with our community agencies, services, and supports, to mobilize needed supports that best serve our students, staff, and their families. We also serve as a contributory partner and act as a community stakeholder in the development, maintenance, and ongoing support of community initiatives, programs, services, and supports that influence our communities.

Goals

1. All staff and students in ALCDSB are knowledgeable of the link between positive mental health and well-being and achievement. This awareness is reflected by attitudes that value the creation and nurturing of the relevant skills and behaviours that foster healthy daily habits to promote this overall well-being for all. ALCDSB's focus is on systematic, intentional daily practices, that promote positive mental health and actively prevent the likelihood of challenges brought about by mental illness.



2. Every stakeholder within ALCDSB has the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and habits required to clearly articulate their role within the system and to effectively execute their responsibilities. There is mutual respect and understanding among staff and students about each person's level of expertise and ability. There is clarity regarding referral processes and system navigation. ALCDSB has developed assessment tools that accurately capture the information required to evaluate:

- positive school climate and well being data
- the awareness of mental health, well-being and addictions challenges and strengths (e.g. availability and accessibility of resources, ease of implementation, level of implementation)
- the ability of staff to effectively implement evidence-based mental health promotion and treatment programs with treatment fidelity
- other metrics, as deemed necessary by the Mental Health Leadership Team and Mental Health Advisory Group.

'ALCDSB's focus is on systematic, intentional daily practices, that promote positive mental health and actively prevent the likelihood of challenges brought about by mental illness.'

3. Youth Engagement and Partnership: Students of ALCDSB are active participants in the creation, development, and implementation of school-led initiatives and they are involved at a system-level in the planning and the execution of the board's Mental Health, Well-being, & Addictions Strategy. As a system we are working from consulting and informing youth toward full-partnership with our students (i.e., youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults, Hart's Ladder, 1992). As we do this, we honour youths' voices and the significant contribution they have to offer.

Areas of Strength Identified

As indicated by the results of School Mental Health ASSIST's 2018 Board Scan Part 1, ALCDSB demonstrates a strong commitment to our work improving the organizational conditions required to move towards full sustainability of mental health initiatives and programming. Senior management's understanding of mental health initiatives, including system roles, and ongoing partnerships in attending meetings of the Mental Health Leadership Team, community partners and provincial planning meetings has set a clear example that Mental Health is a significant priority. When leadership teams demonstrate this level of dedication, it translates into school staff accepting comparable practices.

This is further highlighted by our clear and focused vision and shared language surrounding mental health and well-being. This has been made possible by systematically offering professional learning with content that is provided in a variety of mediums (e.g., workshops, recommended websites), is appropriate and respectful of diversity in the communities served, and supports those who serve our most vulnerable students with expertise level training. Moving forward, we will continue to strategize to cascade professional learning in impactful ways to ensure that *all* levels of the system are supported with knowledge about mental health, addictions, and well-being.

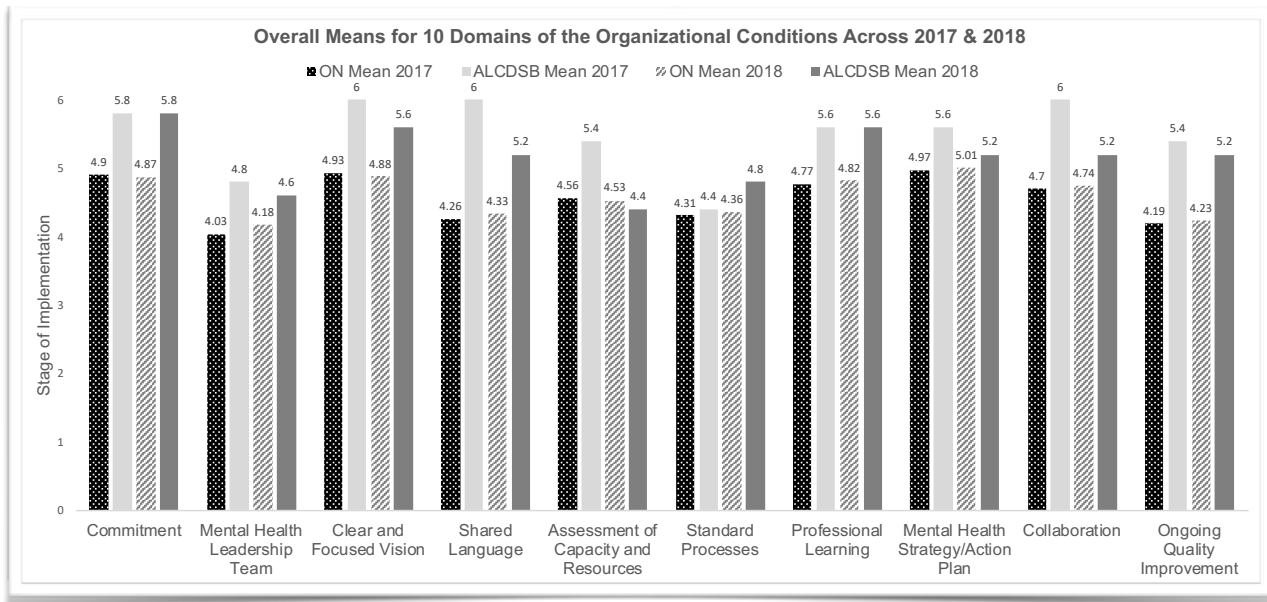
Mental Health Awareness training is an ongoing priority at ALCDSB. During the 2017-18 school year the following professional learning opportunities occurred:

- administrative teams continued to develop, implement, and assess the effect of their previous training in *Leading Mentally Healthy Schools*.
- up-to-date protocols for life promotion/suicide prevention, including risk management interventions and post-vention were developed and implemented, including staff training on January 11th, 2018.
- Additionally, pathways to care continue to be shared in a way that is understood by staff, students, families and community partners.
- 55 teachers received direct instruction on SMHA's *Mentally Healthy Classrooms Modules*, which review implementation of strategies, including explicit teaching of social emotional learning, to improve mental health and wellness for all.
- ASIST Training #s.
- *safeTALK* training #s.

Areas of Need Identified

- ALCDSB will be diversifying the membership of the Mental Health Advisory Group (MHAG) to better assess and accurately capture meaningful experiences and perspectives from a variety of stakeholders.

- Ongoing training and coaching about the selection and implementation of empirically-based promotion and prevention programming in schools, including the use of SMHA's Decision Support Tool for the selection of youth and family engagement and mental health literacy strategies is also necessary.
- Additional assessment of capacity and resources. Our needs under this condition are threefold.
 - First, we must consider additional consultation with both youth and their families as well as community stakeholders to capture varying perspectives amount strengths, needs, and priorities in the area of student mental health and addictions within the community. In working towards achieving this, ALCDSB is looking to better capture student voice and use it to better inform our system and processes.
 - Second, we have the opportunity to refine our resource mapping across both East and West areas of ALCDSB. This is an ongoing endeavor and ALCDSB continues to work with community partners to clearly identify pathways to care. This includes developing and implementing systems to accurately assess our current processes which will inform our next steps.
 - Third, based on results from questionnaires completed by administrators and youth workers (June 2018), ALCDSB's greatest area of need is for students who have co-occurring special education needs, addictions, or are in their early years (K-2). For all of these students, relationships and family challenges, self-regulation, and behavioural issues were identified as priorities.



- There is a need to refocus role clarity and confirm that the role of staff at the school level is to implement the AIM's Tier 1. While the referral and liaising process will continue to be overseen by school staff, the implementation of supports and programming for students requiring Tier 2 and/or 3 intervention will be the responsibility of our community partners.

Next Steps

Capacity Building and Sustainability

Using provided professional resources from School Mental Health ASSIST, in collaboration with the Catholic Principals' Association, as well as customized tools, the ALCDSB Mental Health Leadership Team will support capacity building with administrators and senior team members at monthly Director's meetings. This will include rollouts of SMHA professional resources, most notably the Aligned and Integrated Model (AIM), as well as specific tools, strategies, and applications for respective divisions.

Continued consultation with allied health professionals, including our internal psychology team, as well as ongoing collaboration to promote the alignment of strategic priorities between the MHLT, Student Services, and Curriculum Departments, will support the ongoing provision of deeper levels of mental health literacy in the next 3 years.

Upcoming professional learning will explicitly refer to the *Mentally Healthy Classrooms Modules* and will occur with customized trainings that identify and address the specific needs of individual staff groups (e.g., Central Team Staff Training, Early Years – targeted to EY teams, including 21-day habit coaching/feedback; Secondary – Student Support/Success/Guidance; YW teams)

Overall, the intentional focus of the MHLT and ALCDSB is shifting from literacy to practice. Instead of teaching new material, staff will be guided in the application, maintenance, and improvement of their current skill repertoire.

Aligned and Integrated Model Tier 1: Mental Health and Well-being Promotion

Consistent with ALCDSB's system focus on student centered learning and the principles of UDL, components of the AIM Tier 1, including social emotional learning strategies and evidence-based programming, will resume in classrooms to support the removal of barriers to student well-being and achievement. Staff, in partnership with the MHLT who will work at a system level to address barriers as identified by administrators and YW in June 2018 (e.g., time constraints, ongoing training and consultation), will be encouraged to develop practices that support ongoing capacity building and sustainability implementation.

Aligned and Integrated Model Tier 2: Mental Illness Prevention

Tier 2 prevention programming will be implemented on an 'as needed' basis, with training from the MHLT where appropriate, and as determined by individual school need. All programs will be evidence-based and will address target vulnerable populations to mitigate risk of social emotional and/or mental health challenges (e.g., Zones of Regulation)

Within ALCDSB there are some groups of students who are more vulnerable than others. As indicated by administrators there is an additional need for resources, including services and programming for the following student groups. Students who:

"When educators WELCOME, INCLUDE, UNDERSTAND, PROMOTE, and PARTNER, students have a better sense of belonging at school and can feel confident that there are caring adults in the building who they can turn to if they are having difficulties academically, socially behaviourally or emotionally. These five elements of Tier 1... are fundamental to creating a mentally healthy school"

School Mental Health ASSIST, 2018

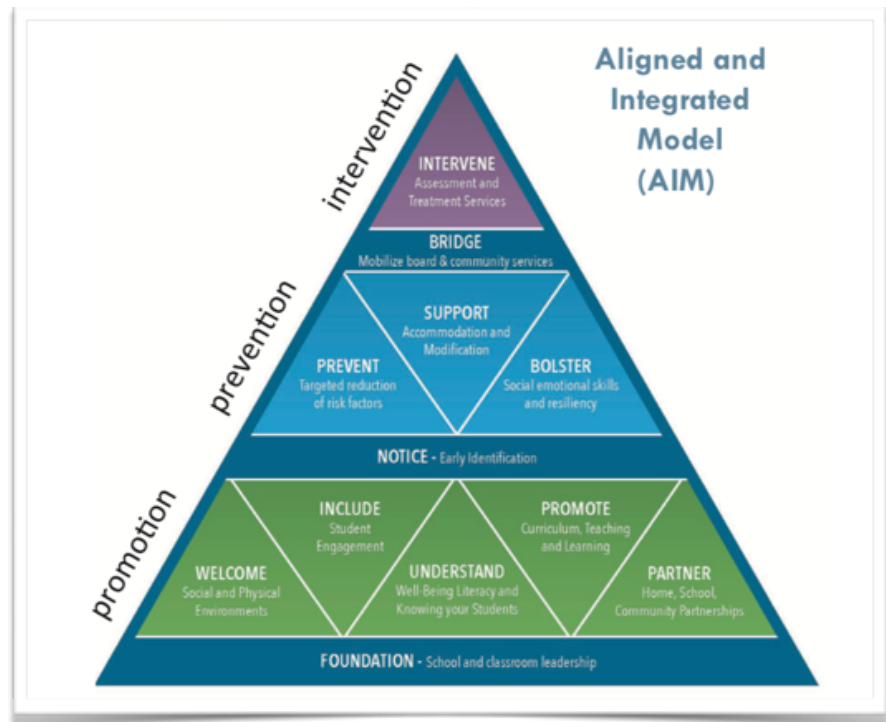
- have/or are currently experiencing poverty and/or trauma
- have special education needs
- identify as LGBTQ2S+
- identify at First Nations Metis Inuit (FNMI)
- in the Early Years (EY) Kindergarten-Grade 2 division.

As part of our 2018-21 strategic plan, we will complete a needs evaluation, discuss the feasibility of possible options, and begin initial implementation of programming to support these groups of our students and the staff who work with them.

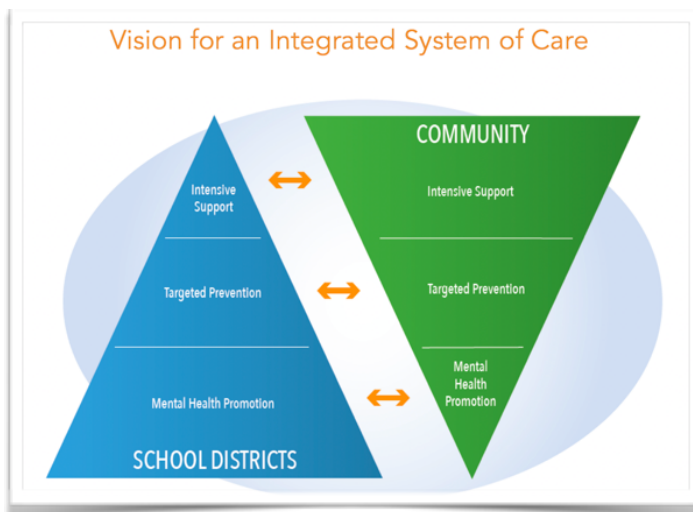
Aligned and Integrated Model Tier 3: Mental Illness Intervention

In recent years, ALCDSB has been privileged to work with community partners who offer specialized intervention and treatment services to our children and youth. As a member of these partnerships, the ability of school staff, including administrators, teachers, and support staff to complete initial assessments

and triage to appropriate ALCDSB Pathway to Care is essential to ensure that appropriate and timely referrals for the 'right service at the right time' is possible for every student requiring this level of



assistance. Moving forward, all Tier 3 intervention will be exclusively offered by these affiliated community partners. Service navigation assistance will be offered by the Mental Health Lead and in consultation with the MHLT, as needed. The MHL will work collaboratively and in consultation with said community partners to ensure appropriate and timely referrals and to address communication pathways between the service and ALCDSB staff.

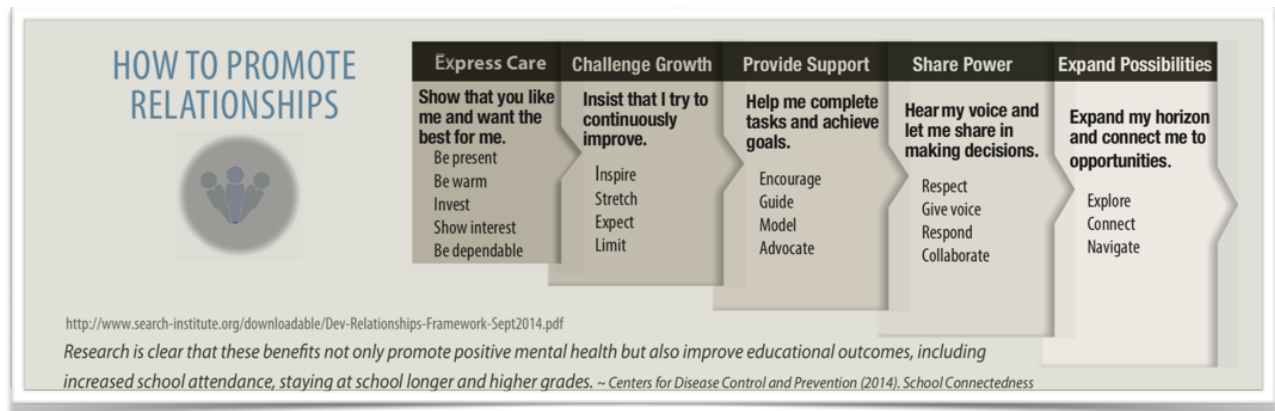


Additionally, as we work with lead agencies for children and youth mental health, addictions services (KAIROS), public health, the United Way, and YouthHAB, we

are committed to continue serving as key stakeholder at relevant tables to positively influence the availability and accessibility of community services and supports. Working as a contributory member in these partnerships, we will influence the future of quality and quantity of services, supports, and resources to best serve our staff and students.

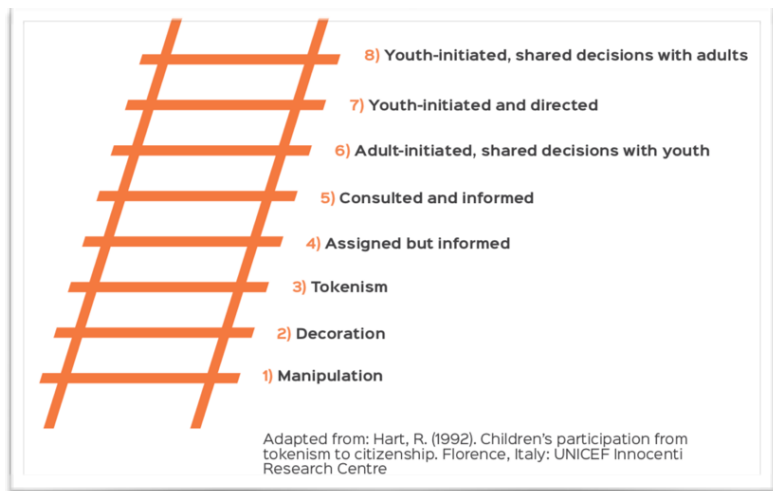
Youth Engagement

Aligned with SMHA's provincial focus, at ALCDSB, we are altering our approach to engage youth in an intentional way that will eventually include active collaboration in mental health and well-being initiatives at a system level. Although the level of involvement and participation varies, each secondary school in ALCDSB has a student group that focuses on issues related to mental health and well-being. In June 2018, the MHLT solicited feedback from secondary school students from 4/5 of these secondary schools. During in-person interviews, the feedback clearly indicated that students are looking for personal connections in their relationships with staff. Students are hoping for and wanting a deeper sense of understanding by their teachers of the impact positive mental health and well-being has on daily life. To this end the promotion of relationships is valued by our students.



Based on this feedback, over the next 3 years, we will be maintaining and adding to our youth engagement strategy:

- Ongoing partnership with Queens University, Dr. Su Buchannen, and the expansion of the 'Got Your Back' Wellness curriculum.
- Adding youth membership positions to the Mental Health Advisory Group.
- Creation of Youth Ambassador Summit Days which focus on celebrating current successes of student leadership teams and offering mentorship to secondary school students involved on



these teams.

- Ongoing and new partnerships with community agencies to assess the feasibility and implementation of RNAO Youth Wellness Champions Program.
- Partnering with youth to plan and implement activities for Catholic Education Week.

Overall, it is the intention of the Mental Health Leadership Team to move toward the creation of relationships with youth that foster collaboration and, eventually, shared decision making between youth and adults.

Final Thoughts

If we nurture communities that accompany, build relationships, encourage and instill hope and that form joyful disciples, then students will see themselves as beloved children of God who are deeply engaged with their community and the world around them. As stewards of God's creation, we are called to take care of ourselves, one another, and the environment. Tasked with this responsibility, we inspire and nurture compassionate communities of service that give witness to Catholic social teaching our students will actively grow and engage as responsible citizens who contribute to the well-being and dignity of all and all of God's creation: 'I care, I have responsibility, I am a team player, and I have a voice'

References

Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario (April, 2014)

ALCDSB Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement and Well-being 2018-19

Promoting Well-Being in Ontario's Education System

Taking Flight: School Mental Health Assist Strategic Directions 2017-2020

CASEL: SEL piece.

Children's participation from tokenism to citizenship (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Hart, R., 1992)

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