

DATE: June 14, 2016

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Support for Teachers – Addressing Mental Health Needs of Students
(Response to Request for Information #157)

ORIGINATOR: Dr. Sandra Stoddard, Executive Director Governance, Strategic Services and Support for Schools, Corporate Secretary

REFERENCE: n/a

ISSUE

Trustee Johner requested that Administration provide information regarding the District’s approach in supporting teachers in addressing the mental health needs of students.

CURRENT SITUATION

Outlined below are the responses to the questions asked in the request for information. Links to further details are embedded within the responses.

1. Does the District offer professional learning to staff?

Yes. The District applies the [Comprehensive School Health](#) (CSH) approach and definition to mental health. The foundation of our professional learning in the area of mental health literacy is in two areas: [Mental Health First Aid](#) certification, which builds capacity within staff to identify students in need of intervention and to understand the importance of fostering healthy relationships that can act as bridge to professional support. Secondly, beginning in the spring of 2016, the District is now offering Go-To Educator mental health literacy training based on the research of [Dr. Stanley Kutcher](#). The goal of this training is to build mental health capacity in a sustainable way by increasing mental health literacy amongst District employees.

The District also offers in-services through the Professional Learning Calendar, including sessions on Healthy Relationships; a Community of Practice for Counsellors; ‘Be Safe!’ Red Cross Training; Increasing Emotional Regulation in Student; Supporting Students who Experience Anxiety, and others.

The District has provided resource supports for mental health through the CSH unit’s Jurisdictional [Healthy School Community Wellness Fund](#). This has included kick-start funding for mental health initiatives with a student leadership and staff capacity building component.

The District has 15 Alberta Project Promoting and Living and Healthy Eating (APPLE) School sites at the elementary school level that focus on physical literacy, nutrition, and social emotional learning as foundations to positive mental health. The CSH approach is embedded in the [APPLE Schools](#) project.

2. Are there supporting documents and resources to assist teachers to promote positive mental health strategies in their classrooms?

A CSH consultant within Inclusive Learning provides support for developing integrated approaches in schools to enhance positive mental health. The consultant also serves as a bridge for schools to access resources from partners including: Alberta Health Services (AHS), The Red Cross, PrevNet, Regional Collaborative Service Delivery (RCSD), the Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health, Ever Active Schools, Primary Care Networks ; the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning; the University of Alberta's School of Public Health.

[Schools as a Setting for Promoting Positive Mental Health: Better Practices and Perspectives](#)—provides guidelines for better practices related to the promotion of positive mental health perspectives within a comprehensive school health framework.

[Edmonton Public Schools' Mental Health Awareness internal website](#)—provides information to support the annual Mental Health Awareness week, as well as resources to support learning organized by Divisions, literature lists, PA announcements, video resources, community events, and emergency contacts and supports.

[Elementary](#) and [Junior High Mental Health Toolkits](#)—are a result of a collaborative project between AHS Public Health, AHS Addictions and Mental Health, Edmonton Public Schools, and Edmonton Catholic Schools. This is a curriculum-based resource that teaches students about mental wellness.

[Pan Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health's Healthy School Planner](#)—this assessment provides feedback on areas of strength and growth in regards to positive mental health within participating school communities.

[AHS' Addictions and Mental Health CALM Lessons](#)—the District's CSH consultant works closely with AHS' Addiction Prevention and Mental Health Coordinator for the Zone 2/3 Region to provide up-to-date resource based CALM lessons that are linked to curricular outcomes.

[40 Development Assets for Adolescents](#)—provides protective factors for mental health.

[Bounce Back Book](#)—free resource from AHS that teaches Division 1 and 2 students about mental health.

[MORE Modules](#)—professional learning for school staff: these web-based online modules address current issues in child and adolescent mental health. Modules are available at any time and provide text-based discussion among registrants and presenters and web-based evaluation of the module.

[AHS Guide for Schools Choosing Health Resources](#)—this guide highlights best practices for choosing health resources (including mental health).

[Mental Health Tip-sheets](#)— provide strategies for supporting positive mental health through social participation and support behaviour.

[Addiction and Mental Health Mobile Application Directory 2016](#)—this document includes information about mobile applications (apps) related to addiction and mental health.

3. Does the District have the capacity to provide intervention supports for students in need?

Through Inclusive Learning service teams, consultants provide intervention supports in schools. Multi-discipline teams provide support through assessment and consultation. Specific disciplines that support schools with the mental well-being of students include social workers, behaviour consultants, psychologists and occupational therapist. In addition to District resources we collaborate with RCSD to provide coordinated comprehensive school-based wrap-around services including those from AHS. Through this partnership we have 14 Mental Health Therapists. These therapists are integrated into the Inclusive Learning school teams and receive referrals directly from the school.

A multidisciplinary mental health team, consisting of one psychologist, one social worker and one mental health nurse is in the process of being created. The psychologist and social worker position are filled and we are working to secure a mental health nurse. The present team members have participated in meetings with District Support Services, Hospital school campuses, School Resource Officers (SRO), AHS and Edmonton Catholic partners to gain a better understanding of the gaps in mental health supports for students in our District. In the exploration it has been identified that many of our students with significant mental health needs, who are receiving tertiary mental health services (inpatient hospital or day treatment programs), have limited success transitioning back to their community school setting due to lack of support. Some students attend specialized programs upon return, but many return to an inclusive setting in their community school. Often, these students arrive at school with little or no notice and no transition plan for the student's successful return to school.

The role of the Mental Health Transition Team (MHTT) is to support those students transitioning from tertiary mental health care to their community school, in order to support the student's successful return. Supports will be provided as consultation to the school administration and teaching team and directly to the student and family, as needed, for each individual case. Our goal will be to connect the school-student-family clients with the available school and community resources through the transition period and follow-up where needed. We also see a role for our mobile team to provide outreach supports for some at-risk students to facilitate referrals to other mental health supports, and provide interim support, in order to prevent a breakdown in school placement or the need for hospitalization.

4. What is the role of AHS?

AHS is the key partner in mental health support for our District. AHS provides:

- Health Promotion Coordinators (HPCs) that work directly with the CSH unit to identify mental health best practices, resources and supports for schools in our District.
- The HPCs also develop resources that connect to curricular outcomes, advise the CSH consultant on new research and evidence-based practices, present to school sites, offer professional learning on CSH and positive mental health approach, and design training modules to educate school stakeholders.
- Coordinate inter-District meetings such as the School Mental Health Team that: updates the regional mental health toolkits, shares resources to provide mental health literacy development

across districts (e.g.; Stan Kutcher), and collaborates to create common awareness and understandings around mental health for the greater Edmonton area. Edmonton Public Schools staff works closely with Edmonton Catholic Schools, Elk Island Catholic Schools, Elk Island Public Schools, Parkland School Division, and the Francophone School Division in mental health.

- AHS provides through RCSD, resources, mental health therapists, speech/language therapists, and occupational therapists—all employees of AHS are integrated into the Inclusive Learning team.

SS:sj