

2022-2025

# HAMILTON-WENTWORTH CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

## Mental Health and Addiction Strategy to Support Student Mental Health



Hamilton-Wentworth  
Catholic District School Board  
*Believing, Achieving, Serving*

HWCDSB Cares



The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board (HWCDSB) Mental Health and Addictions Strategy recognizes that positive mental health is imperative to ensure student academic success. It is committed to providing a safe, secure, and inclusive learning environment where all students can work towards reaching their fullness of humanity.

Catholic Social Teaching tells us that God creatively and lovingly calls us into the wonder of life. As stewards of the life God has entrusted to us, we are charged to assist young people in recognizing that gift by:

- Affirming the God-given potential of each person, developing the body, mind and spirit of each and every student;
- Entering into open dialogue, increased self-awareness and shared information about mental health and well-being; and,
- Responding as the hands, feet, and eyes of Christ to those in our schools who experience isolation, illness, powerlessness, or poverty in any form.

Student Mental Health at  
HWCDSB  
PAGE 02

HWCDSB Values and  
Commitments  
PAGE 03

Vision for Mentally Healthy  
Classrooms and Schools  
PAGE 04

HWCDSB Cares  
PAGE 05

Think in Tiers  
PAGE 06

Student Mental Health  
Priorities  
PAGES 07-08

Messages from the Chairperson  
& Director  
PAGE 09

Messages from the  
Superintendent & MHL  
PAGE 10



## Student Mental Health in HWCDSB

The mission of Catholic Education in Hamilton-Wentworth, in union with our Bishop, is to enable all learners to realize the fullness of humanity of which Our Lord Jesus Christ is the model. As a Catholic school community, the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board (HWCDSB) is rooted in faith and the philosophy of “Each Belongs” which permeates all aspects of learning within all schools. The Board strives to meet the spiritual and social-emotional needs of all students and is committed to ensuring that student well-being and achievement be given priority.



As a result, our schools and learning environments are inclusive and filled with kind and caring colleagues and classmates. Our days include consideration to the established fact that there is a positive connection between mental health, well-being (spiritual and physical), and academic success, and to the implementation of teaching practices which support teachers and other educators in nurturing this connection.

We value every student and staff member by establishing and valuing relationships. In 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 strive to demonstrate resilience and resourcefulness.

**“Consult not your fears, but your hopes and your dreams. Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself, not with what you have tried and failed in, but what is still possible for you to do”.**

POPE JOHN XXIII





# HWCDSB Values and Commitments



The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board is committed to:

- Developing and promoting excellence in Catholic Education; building a strong and collaborative relationship between home, school, and parish.
- Providing a safe, inclusive, positive, enriching and nurturing Christ-centered Catholic learning environment for all students entrusted to its care, so that all students can realize their fullness of humanity.
- Encouraging the use of prayer including Christian Meditation as spiritual disciplines that promote harmony of body, mind and spirit, and bring stillness, silence, and attentiveness and bring each individual into closer fellowship with God.
- Recognizing the direct link between student mental health and student achievement.
- Believing in the self-worth and dignity of every person and strives to ensure that students' learning environments are safe, secure, and accepting.
- Believing that all students have a right to attend school and reach their fullness of humanity in alignment with the Each Belongs philosophy.
- Endeavoring to continuously monitor system capacity to ensure that the mental health and well-being of all stakeholders are equipped to improve the mental health and well-being of students and staff.
- Collaborating with teachers, principals, special education resource and support staff, guidance, student success teams, and chaplaincy leaders to address mental health promotion and prevention.
- Working towards the implementation of evidence-informed best practices as they relate to mental health and well-being.
- Working towards collaborating with community mental health and addictions stakeholders to develop processes and share information to support our highest needs students.





# Our Vision for Mentally Healthy, Inclusive & Christ-Centred Classrooms & Schools

The HWCDSB is committed to a focus on the whole student in which academic achievement is supported by attention to the cognitive, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, and physical well-being of each student.

**Believing:** Educating students in a Christ-centred learning environment is at the core of Catholic education. The focus of this strategy is to ensure that our schools deliver on the Mission of the HWCDSB to enable all learners to realize the fullness of humanity of which our Lord Jesus Christ is the model.



**Achieving:** Student Achievement & Well-being: This priority reflects our call to educate and to nurture all learners to achieve their full potential to transform their communities. This priority includes curriculum, assessment, and instructional strategies. This priority is realized through a focus on the whole student in which academic achievement is supported by attention to the cognitive, mental, emotional, social, spiritual and physical well-being of each student.

**Serving:** All students become caring and contributing members of their parish, school community and the community at large, with awareness of mental health and wellness and the ability to seek support when necessary.

**"Instead of each person watching out for their own good, watch out for what is better for others."**

PHILIPPIANS 2:4





“Let us always meet each other with a smile, for the smile is the beginning of love.”

ST. TERESA OF CALCUTTA



## HWCDSB Cares

In September 2021, the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board launched a well-being campaign to build a culture of inclusion and support in every classroom and school with the motto, “HWCDSB Cares”.

To give children and youth the best possible start in life and learn early how to cope with and manage stress, the HWCDSB is working to reduce stigma by promoting equity and diversity, physical activity, healthy eating and self-esteem, and to develop peer support programs for students and their families.

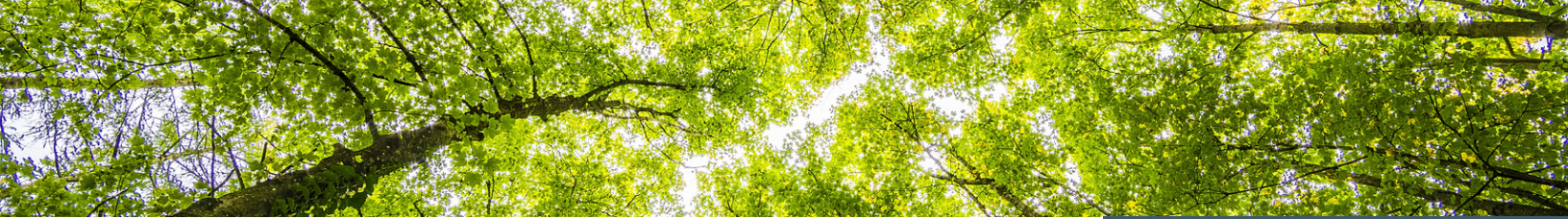
Early identification and intervention lead to better health outcomes, improved school attendance and achievement, contributions to society and the workforce, and cost-savings to the health care, justice and social service systems. Every day, in classrooms across Ontario, there are opportunities to inspire purpose, hope, meaning and belonging amongst students.

It is important to start early in life and reinforce skills and habits that promote mental health within caring classroom settings, which sets students up for success, and may help to prevent or minimize the burden of future mental health problems. Through this motto, the HWCDSB continues the commitment to support student mental health and wellness.



HWCDSB Cares





# Thinking In Tiers

Schools are an excellent place to promote mental health, notice concerns early, offer services, and provide ongoing support. To organize the various supports and services most suited to the school setting, leaders in this area describe a continuum of care, often called a “Multi-Tiered System of Support”. In Ontario, we depict this continuum using the AIM model. This model helps to organize mental health promotion efforts offered in a universal way for all students (Tier 1), services for students who may be at risk and needing a “higher dose” of targeted skill development (Tier 2), and supports for students who have a diagnosable mental health problem who need treatment and ongoing care (Tier 3).

## Tier 1: Universal Mental Health Promotion

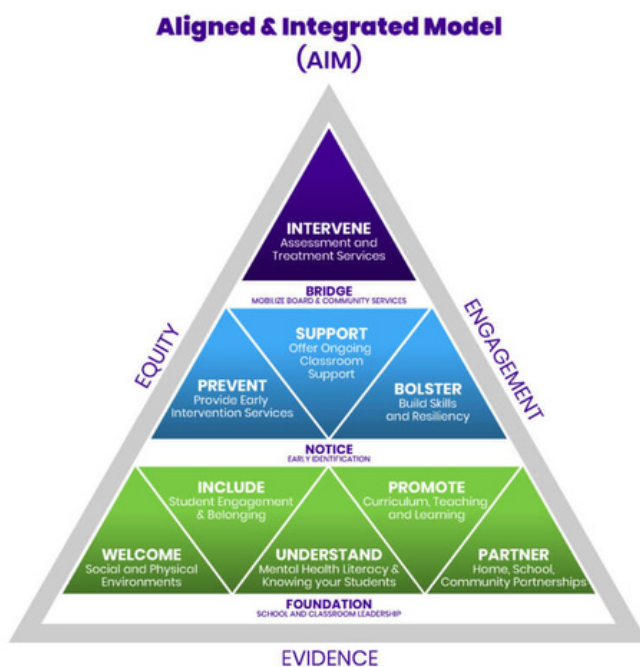
- Support for all students
- School and classroom promotion of social emotional learning skills
- Mental health literacy and promotion programs

## Tier 2: Targeted Prevention

- Support for some students
- Prevention and intervention programs for students at risk

## Tier 3: Specific Intervention

- Support for few student
- Specialized, evidence-based interventions and pathways to community care



Teach children to have compassion for others but also for themselves! We may speak nicely to our friends and forget to use the same loving language for ourself. Remember also the second greatest commandment of Jesus: “love your neighbour as yourself”.

MARK 12:31





# STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2022-2025

Organizational Conditions	Priority Areas	Focus of Work	Key Activities
Commitment	<p>Enriching understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultivate leadership and increase responsibility at all staff levels for the promotion of student mental health</li> <li>Further implementation of evidence informed practices and measurement based care</li> </ul>	<p>Awareness building of the HWCDSB Mental Health &amp; Addiction Strategic Plan and the HWCDSB Mental Health &amp; Addiction Annual Action Plan</p> <p>Professional development for student mental health professionals in promotion and intervention strategies</p> <p>Improve case documentation, standardization and data management through an ongoing focus on electronic documentation</p>	<p>Coordination of HWCDSB Student Mental Health Steering Committee meetings</p> <p>Provide ongoing clinical learning opportunities related to brief interventions</p> <p>Focus on further implementation and consistency on Penelope Case Management Software</p>
Mental Health Leadership Teams	<p>Capacity Building - Promotion of Mental Health &amp; Well-being for All :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead and promote mentally health schools</li> <li>Foster staff mental health literacy and awareness training with targeted training</li> <li>Building knowledge &amp; capacity in students and parents to notice mental health concerns and seek support</li> </ul>	<p>Continue to build principal/vice-principal and staff awareness on creating classrooms and schools that are safe, welcoming, and inclusive, are strengths-based, and which promotes resiliency and over all wellbeing.</p> <p>Increase staff knowledge specific to mental health literacy, noticing mental health issues in students and help-seeking for students with social, emotional, mental health, behavioural and addictions challenges.</p> <p>Ensure that all students and parents know where and how to access supports in the school for social, emotional, behavioural, mental health, and addictions challenges.</p>	<p>Provide supportive SMHO resources related to healthy classrooms and schools to all educators in the Board through the LMS system</p> <p>Provide Living Works START suicide awareness and intervention training for staff</p> <p>Student mental health newsletters for schools and parents</p> <p>News releases and social media campaigns for the school community to bring awareness to upcoming events and key messages</p> <p>Reestablishment of school-based student mental health leadership teams to facilitate mental health training, and promote mental health champions and well-being teams</p>
Assessment of Need & Capacity	<p>Enhancing Mental Health Supports &amp; Programming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on resiliency building for both students and staff</li> <li>Supporting students who require additional support as they are experiencing mental health challenges</li> <li>Development of awareness campaigns that focus on the reduction of mental health stigma and discrimination</li> </ul>	<p>Continue implementation of our Tier 1 mental health and wellness promotion with fidelity, monitoring of uptake, and supporting a cycle of training and feedback.</p> <p>Develop assessments skills and community pathways for service specific to the identification of specific mental health needs for students, particularly those disproportionately impacted and whose needs have not fully been met, including Black, Indigenous, LGBTQ2+ and other equity-seeking populations.</p> <p>Provide students and parents with opportunities to understand mental health and wellness as well as mental health issues through learning events</p>	<p>Development of evidence-informed resiliency resources to disseminate and intentionally imbed in all grades</p> <p>Analysis of data to assess uptake and impact of specific promotion resources, i.e. Faith in Wellness Resource, Tools for Life©</p> <p>Develop mental health services that are readily accessible to students at-risk</p> <p>Host a mental health summit lead by student and parent voice with the support of student mental health professionals</p>

# STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2022-2025

Organizational Conditions	Priority Areas	Focus of Work	Key Activities
<p><b>Communication &amp; Shared Language</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared language and understanding through student and parent engagement</li> <li>Aligning with equity framework through engagement and inclusion of priority populations (Indigenous, Black, LGBTQ2+) and other racialized populations</li> </ul>	<p>Engage the student voice to identify areas of mental health literacy</p> <p>Engage parent voice to identify areas of disengagement, chronic attendance problems, declines in academic achievement, and decreased credit attainment since the pandemic, with the impact far deeper for those already at-risk</p> <p>Development of pathways to community services to support students and families who have experienced and witnessed added layers of poverty; family violence; discrimination; transphobia and homophobia; anti-Black, anti-Asian and anti-Indigenous racism; and barriers related to disability, including mental illness and addictions. These realities hindered access to social, emotional, and academic supports.</p>	<p>Offer learning opportunities for students to build mental health resources within their schools and classrooms</p> <p>Engage Catholic School Councils on a local level to provide feedback to the Catholic Parent Involvement Committee</p> <p>Engagement with HWCDSB Equity Officer and Indigenous Lead and community mental health workers for specific learning and resources for priority populations</p> <p>Provide learning opportunities for the HWCDSB Student Mental Leadership Steering Committee about the needs of priority populations</p> <p>Develop partnerships with community agencies to invest in HWCDSB students and families</p>
<p><b>Broad Collaboration</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System integration and coordination of Board strategies for mental health and well-being</li> <li>Identify pathways both Board specific and community oriented to support mental health</li> <li>Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention Protocol/ Bullying Prevention, Intervention and Follow Up</li> <li>Bullying Prevention, Intervention and Follow Up</li> </ul>	<p>Align policies and practices that support optimal student mental health with strategic goals, planning and resource allocation decisions</p> <p>Create awareness of available referral options to facilitate appropriate support for students. Linking and mobilizing resources, schools and community services can then achieve significant positive outcomes for students</p> <p>Continue community collaboration and coordination of school pathways with community planning tables for suicide prevention</p> <p>Creating safe schools where the focus is on supporting a preventative and responsive school climate that is spiritually, physically, socially, and emotionally safe for all students.</p>	<p>Embed policy within strategic planning</p> <p>Increase data collection and assessment of key indicators of student mental health and evaluate programs currently in place, as well as new programs to be implemented</p> <p>Define pathways within and between schools and local service organizations with clear goals and responsibilities of each party</p> <p>Have clear points of contact between respective organizations and clearly identify who can troubleshoot any difficulties</p> <p>Participate in community suicide prevention tables to share resources and information to identify and close gaps for children and youth in crisis</p> <p>Creation of staff professional development utilizing stakeholder input to improve responses to reports of bullying in the system</p>



# Messages from the Chairperson & Director



Patrick J. Daly Jr.  
Chairperson of the Board

Student mental health has long been a priority for the HWCDSB but never more so during these past two-plus years of COVID-19. Understanding the link between student mental health, and faith formation and achievement is key to the HWCDSB's Mental Health and Addiction Strategy 2022-2025. Studies indicate that in any given year, one in 5 Canadians will experience a mental illness. We know that young people are more likely to experience mental illness and/or substance use disorders than any other age group. Many continue to await treatment.

That is why early intervention programs are so vitally important. As we recover from the pandemic and the impact on student learning and mental health, our strategy remains focused on mental health promotion and prevention, community partnerships, and school/system level services and supports in our continued commitment to creating safe, welcoming and inclusive school environments where all students are supported in their learning.

This commitment to child and youth mental health is reinforced by Superintendent of Education, Toni Kovach, Mental Health Lead, Michelle Hayes and the many individuals who have been involved in the development of this updated Mental Health and Addiction Strategy and the many individuals in our system who continue to support and advocate for student mental health and "place Christ and the teachings of the Catholic Church at the centre" of students' learning experiences.



David Hansen  
Director of Education

Since the first Mental Health and Addiction Strategy was introduced in 2014, we have learned a great deal about student mental health, its impact on student achievement, and overall well-being. That learning has not only informed our HWCDSB Mental Health and Addiction Strategy for 2022-2025 but is a key focus of our efforts to "enable all students to realize the fullness of humanity of which Our Lord Jesus Christ is the model."

Through professional learning, awareness and education, evidence-based data, training and system collaboration, and resource development and services, our staff and schools are well equipped to support student mental health and wellness through a tiered approach that begins with mental health literacy and promotion programs and, at the higher end of the continuum, creates pathways to specialized care.

Student mental health and well-being impacts all students and belongs to everyone. This Mental Health and Addiction Strategy not only sets out the necessary organizational conditions for positive mental health but provides opportunities for students and staff to grow in their understanding of mental health issues and build communities of care.

Thank you to everyone involved in its development. This updated Student Mental Health and Addiction Strategy will continue to assist us in making our schools safe, accepting, and inclusive places for the students we serve.

"Let us thank all those who teach in Catholic schools. Educating is an act of love; it is like giving life."

POPE FRANCIS



"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

PROVERBS 3: 5-6

## Messages from the Superintendent of Student Mental Health & Mental Health Lead

"HWCDSB Cares" is the essence of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board Mental Health and Addiction Strategy to Support Student Mental Health. All within the HWCDSB community are called to be responsive and caring to the whole person: soul, mind, and body. Indeed, the interconnectedness of faith along with having a sense of well-being, is essential for students to learn and thrive. The HWCDSB mental health plan reflects the importance of supportive and knowledgeable staff, collaborative parent/guardian and community partnerships, and a commitment to providing students in the HWCDSB with experiences that promote and foster mental health and wellness.

The HWCDSB Mental Health and Addictions Strategy permeates with optimism and hope, where the priorities of reducing stigma about mental health; engaging in prevention and early intervention strategies; building resiliency, offering specialized support for those whose struggles require more direct and personalized interventions; and providing culturally relevant and sensitive support that recognizes the uniqueness and diversity of every individual, are found throughout the work. Mental wellness exists in school and classroom environments that are inclusive and welcoming for each student, where caring relationships are cultivated, and where all students believe each is a valued, contributing member of the school community. In advancing student mental wellness, together there is the opportunity to build capacity within staff, student, and parent/guardian to promote, support, and nurture the mental well-being of all students within the HWCDSB.

As the HWCDSB Mental Health Lead, I have a passion to lead work in creating warm and welcoming classrooms and schools. The idea that "Each Belongs" is a motto that drives my work.

The HWCDSB is committed to creating conditions for social and emotional well-being and supporting the positive mental health of students and staff. Mental health and well-being are issues of everyday life that impact families, schools, workplaces, institutions, neighbourhoods, and communities and are impacted by the quality of those settings.

As we move forward into the next three years, we continue to focus on mental health literacy and strategies for wellness, with an emphasis on supporting those priority populations that were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We want our students and staff to know that HWCDSB cares.

My sincere hope is to reach all members of our Catholic school community with messages of support and tools to bolster their mental health and wellness.



Toni Kovach  
Superintendent of Education  
Mental Health, Well-Being &  
Engagement



Michelle Hayes, M.S.W., D.CPsych(s)  
HWCDSB Mental Health Lead





## Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board

*Believing, Achieving, Serving*

Father Kyran Kennedy Catholic Education Centre  
90 Mulberry Street  
P.O. Box 2012  
Hamilton ON L8N 3R9

Phone: (905) 525-2930 • Fax: (905) 525-1724  
24/7 Emergency Telephone - 905-522-6680  
Visit our website at: [www.hwcdsb.ca](http://www.hwcdsb.ca)



<https://www.facebook.com/hwcdsb>



@HWCDSB

