

Director's Bulletin

November 17, 2011

Every Student, Every Day

Children and Mental Health

I was pleased to receive communication from the Ministry last week that funds are being released to provide additional supports to students who have mental health and addiction needs. This is good news and long overdue. Research has shown that up to 20% of children are experiencing mental health issues at any given time and school boards have been requesting funding assistance so that we can better address these issues. Currently, we have a number of initiatives underway in this area:

- We have many partnerships with community agencies to co-provide counselling supports when appropriate.
- Our Tragic Events Response Team provides quality supports and training to schools and staff when necessary.
- We are planning in-service sessions to incorporate the *Friends for Life* unit into our Grade 4 classes. This unit provides instruction for students and staff regarding strategies to deal with anxiety.
- We co-sponsored (with SCCDSB) a symposium on the issue of teen suicide in the spring of 2011. We are in ongoing discussions with SCCDSB staff to find ways to educate our respective parent communities on the subject of mental health.
- Last year, we provided Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) to all Psychological Services staff and two staff from each secondary school.
- Our Parent Involvement Committee is planning an April 2012 event to promote awareness for parents in the area of children and mental health.

The recent announcement from the Ministry of Education informs us of a multi-ministerial initiative between the Ministries of Education, Health and Child and Youth Services to provide the following supports over the next three years:

- A K-12 Resource Guide and website to be developed for teachers.
- Resources to support professional learning opportunities to focus on capacity building in the area of mental health will be made available to district school boards.
- All 72 school boards will be provided funding to provide release time for the aforementioned professional development opportunities.
- Funded by the Ministry of Child and Youth Services, selected community-based agencies have been allocated resources to hire new mental health workers to support students in schools. This support will come in the form of counselling, therapy, crisis intervention and transition support. Participating agencies are to consult with local school boards to discuss use of the resources.
- Funded by the Ministry of Health & Long Term Care, 144 Registered Nurses with mental health and addictions expertise will be hired across Ontario to help school boards recognize and respond to student mental health and addiction issues.



Lambton Kent
District School Board

Student Achievement ✓ *Community Success*

Jim Costello, Director of Education