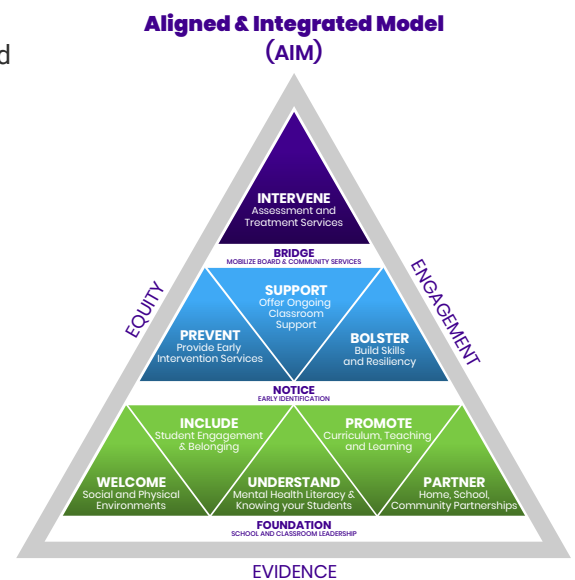# Reflection Tool for Educators

What is this?

This reflection tool is designed to prompt thinking about building a mentally healthy class community, to spark ideas for actions that enhance conditions for learning, and to provide possible strategies to support student mental health and well-being.

Why might I find it helpful?

When students feel safe, welcome, and included, they experience a sense of wellness and belonging and are more likely to be ready for learning. As a caring educator, you are already creating conditions for a mentally healthy class community, whether virtually or in-person. This reflection tool will help you to think through an anti-oppressive lens when supporting student mental health, by providing questions to prompt you to reflect on your practices explicitly and intentionally. It may also help you to identify strengths and areas for action, improvement, and growth.

How is this tool organized?

The reflection questions are organized using the five categories in Tier 1 of the Aligned & Integrated Model (AIM). Tier 1 is the essential work you and other caring adults in your school community do every day. This work includes your efforts to **welcome** and **include** students, to understand them and build knowledge of mental health, to **promote** mentally healthy habits and to **partner** with parents, students and other staff to create a supportive environment and good conditions for learning. Note that this is set on the strong foundations of a health-promoting school. Learn more about the Canadian Healthy School Standards to expand your knowledge in this area.

Aligned & Integrated Model (AIM)

EQUITY

ENGAGEMENT

INTERVENE
Assessment and Treatment Services

BRIDGE
MOBILIZE BOARD & COMMUNITY SERVICES

SUPPORT
Offer Ongoing Classroom Support

PREVENT
Provide Early Intervention Services

BOLSTER
Build Skills and Resiliency

NOTICE
EARLY IDENTIFICATION

INCLUDE
Student Engagement & Belonging

PROMOTE
Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

WELCOME
Social and Physical Environments

UNDERSTAND
Mental Health Literacy & Knowing your Students

PARTNER
Home, School, Community Partnerships

FOUNDATION
SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM LEADERSHIP

EVIDENCE

WELCOME
Social and Physical Environments

* In what ways do I communicate to students, their families and their caregivers, so that they know they are welcome in our physical or virtual learning space? *(e.g., student choice, multiple languages are encouraged, used and visible in the learning environment, intentional introduction of pronouns, ongoing dialogue with parents/families/caregivers).*

* How can students be empowered to meet their needs? What did I notice during remote learning that my students needed, and how they met their own needs? *(e.g., space to move/take a break, protocols for washroom and hydration needs). What did I notice during remote learning that parents and families needed? How will I build on this new learning?*

* What structures can I use to co-create the language we use in our classroom community? *(e.g., deciding what we call ourselves when we are referring to our learning community).*

* How do I create a space where students can check in with themselves and share what is important in their lives? Do I check in with individual students throughout the day? Am I aware of students who may need some extra support that day?

* How do I ensure students know they can share about their identity?

* Do I consider the lived realities, experiences, and identities of all the students and families in the learning community?

**Mentally Healthy
Return to School Toolkit**
Practical Resources to Promote and Protect
Mental Health at School

August 2020

The First 10 Days (and Beyond)
**Creating Caring Connections and Supporting Student Mental Health and
Well-Being During the Return to School**

Getting ready
It is the start of a school year like no other. Something none of us prepared for, and for which there are few roadmaps or signposts to guide us. We are welcoming students back to school during a moment in time when there are more questions than answers. So, how do we proceed?

We proceed together.
It is possible to prepare for the future without knowing what it will be. The primary way to prepare for the unknown is to attend to the quality of our relationships, to how well we know and trust one another. *Wheatley (2004) Disturb Me, Please*

We learn.
We need to learn about safety protocols and, in some settings, find strategies for straddling physical and remote learning. But to truly receive students well, honouring the vast range of experiences and emotions that they will bring in their backpacks, we need to educate ourselves about other things too.

Resource suggestion:
If you're looking for a resource to support you with creating a welcoming social and physical environment, check out The First Ten Days (and Beyond). It contains activities relevant for both elementary and secondary students.

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INCLUDE
Student Engagement and Belonging

* How can I lead or support conversations about inclusion and identity, and the systems that undermine them? *(e.g., systemic racism, oppression, and marginalization).*

* How am I preparing myself to support conversations about anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, anti-Asian racism and oppression?

* How are students empowered to use their voice and share their own ideas? How are students empowered to challenge the thinking of our community?

* How do I collect and use input and feedback from the learning community?

* How do I encourage students to come to me or seek other support when bullying or discrimination, including when it is based on race, gender, class, etc., takes place? How do I listen, believe, and act to ensure that all involved are heard and incidents are addressed quickly?

* How are students included in the instruction and assessment practices?

* What considerations do I give to the impact of academic pressures on the learners?

* What steps do I take to ensure that I am taking an asset-based, decolonizing approach to my teaching?

* Am I prepared to serve as an ally for students who have been marginalized because of their gender identity, sexual orientation, faith, socioeconomic status, learning differences, health challenges, etc.? What more do I need to learn so that I can be a strong ally for all students at school?

Resource suggestion:
These resources provide educators with the opportunity to reflect, learn, engage, and prepare for conversations with students.

* Supportive Resources for Adult Allies

# UNDERSTAND
Mental Health Literacy and Knowing Your Students

* What opportunities are there for our learning community to acquire and practice skills that support positive mental health? How is it embedded in our daily routines and structures? *(e.g., morning meeting, gratitude circle, opportunities for movement)*

* What strategies and tools do I model for students to reflect and share my own awareness of mental health? How do I communicate about mental health in ways that removes/reduces stigma and encourages open and supportive dialogue?

* How do I get to know my students' strengths, needs, and interests?

* When I notice that a student may be feeling overwhelmed, do I explore strategies that support them in ways that are culturally responsive and honour their lived experiences?

* What existing knowledge do I have and/or what resources do I use to help support my understanding of mental health problems common for students this age?

* What tools/resources do I have so that I can recognize when they may be struggling? Have I involved families? *(e.g.,* ONE CALL desk reference, Supporting Minds at School).

* What learning strategies do I use to support students who are struggling with their mental health? *(e.g., chunking, validation)*

Resource suggestion:
Building our own mental health literacy as educators will help us support students. The self-paced, online MH LIT – Mental Health in Action course is designed to provide educators with basic knowledge and information related to mental health, strategies to enhance student mental health, and everyday practices for use in the classroom.
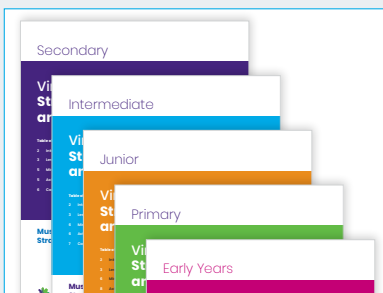
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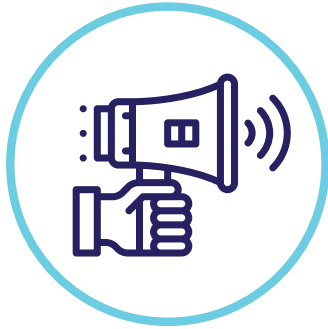
PROMOTE
Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

* How do I embed learning about mental health and well-being into everyday teaching and make connections to different areas of the curriculum? For example:
  * Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource
  * Faith and Wellness: A Daily Mental Health Resource
  * Health & Physical Education Curriculum – Mental Health Literacy Lesson Plans
  * School Mental Health Ontario Read Alouds

* How can I prepare for lessons that relate to promoting positive mental health in the classroom? What tools can I use to support these conversations? *(e.g.,* Educator Resource Guide*)*

* Are there natural places within curriculum that would allow for conversation about mental health and mental illness in a developmentally appropriate way? *(e.g., novel studies involving characters who model a strong sense of self and healthy relationships and characters who struggle).* What do I need to consider before introducing content that could be sensitive for some students? For more information about this see our Decision Support Tool.

* When I select content for instruction, are there ways I can strongly embed messages of hope and flourishing, even when topics addressed are difficult?

* Have I considered how my assessment practices may impact student mental health in ways that are more or less helpful? How do I encourage learners to reflect on their strengths and areas for improvement? Does my assessment data inform my instruction and respond to individual student needs?

* How do I extend learning about mental health and social emotional skills beyond curriculum to incorporate strategies that represent the lived experiences and identities of students?

Resource suggestion:
School Mental Health Ontario offers a variety of resources to support learning around both mental health literacy and social emotional learning skills. One example would be our set of six virtual field trip lesson plans and videos that are available for all divisions: Early Years, Primary, Junior, Intermediate, and Secondary.

Secondary
Intermediate
Junior
Primary
Early Years

PARTNER
Home, School, Community Partnerships

* How does our school community center the identities, voices and lived experiences of all partners (staff, students, families, community members) in developing a mentally healthy environment that honours multiple experiences?

* Is our learning community a space that welcomes the voices and perspectives of others to support teaching and deepen learning opportunities for students? *(e.g., public health, social workers, other approved partners).*

* Do I recognize or seek to understand the strengths and lived experiences of the students family?

* What is my role in helping students share their learning? In what ways am I connecting and building relationships with caregivers/families?

* How do I increase my level of comfort and/or equip myself to have conversations with caregivers about student mental health concerns in an informed, reflective and responsive way?

* How do I ensure I am approaching a conversation with parents/caregivers/guardians from an anti-oppressive lens? Am I acknowledging my personal bias around the way I perceive mental health and the ways in which it plays out in student behaviour?

* Do I know how to access additional mental health supports for students who may be struggling (school social worker, school counsellor, etc.)? The SMH-ON website offers tools to help you navigate the Circle of Support and System Pathways within your school.
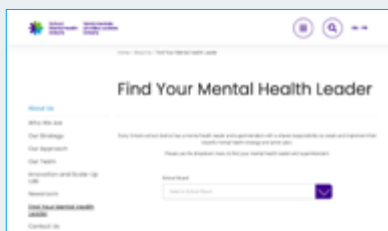
Resource suggestion:
Every Ontario school district has a Mental Health Leader and Superintendent with a shared responsibility to create and implement their board's mental health strategy and action plan. Use this link to find the mental health leader and superintendent for your school board.

Now that you've used this reflection tool, return to the **Educator Resource Guide** to explore areas where you would like to learn more, or find resources to support your identified needs.

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