

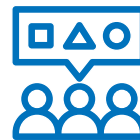


Mental Health – Governance Matters!

We know that to be ready to learn, all students need to feel a strong sense of safety, belonging and well-being at school. As a provincial implementation support team, School Mental Health Ontario (SMH-ON) provides a foundation that supports each board’s three-year Mental Health and Addictions Strategy and Annual Mental Health Action Plan.

A focus on identity-affirming mental health and well-being is a key condition for students to learn and flourish. You have an important role to ensure that the conditions for quality, consistency and sustainability are in place to support school mental health, from the system level. The development of policies and organizational structures that ensure the effective support of the board’s three-year Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, in alignment with the multi-year strategic plan, promotes mentally healthy and supportive learning environments and instills public confidence.

Your relationship with and understanding of your community brings the voice of everyone to the table. Your commitment to identity-affirming mental health and the relationship it has to achievement and student success will inform policy, financial decisions and actions. As you work together as a board, your collective commitment to mental health and well-being supports the alignment and coherence from the board table to the student desk.



“Governance is about impact on learning; equity, excellence and well-being are intertwined.”

Michael Fullan

Did you know that...

- ▶ [School Mental Health Ontario \(SMH-ON\)](#) works together with Ontario school districts to support student mental health. It is a provincial implementation support team established to help all Ontario school districts bridge research, policy and practice to advance mental health education and supports in schools. Strategic goals focus on the uptake, scalability, and sustainability of culturally responsive, evidence-informed strategies in school mental health.
- ▶ As you set the direction of the district, the board’s strategic plan creates a framework for coherence among the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy and other board and school level plans.
- ▶ The board’s Mental Health and Addictions Strategy informs and supports the SMH-ON Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Strategy.
- ▶ The board has a Mental Health Leadership Team, responsible to collaboratively develop, implement and monitor the 3-year Mental Health and Addictions Strategy and the Annual Mental Health Action Plan.



You can inspire through your actions when the board of trustees...

- ▶ Supports equity, student achievement and identity-affirming mental health and well-being initiatives through policy and fiduciary oversight.
- ▶ Fosters cohesive conditions that demonstrate the moral imperative of mental health and well-being for all.
- ▶ Supports mental health and well-being as an ongoing priority through receipt of regular updates.
- ▶ Provides leadership to the community as you reflect a commitment to mental health and well-being.

You demonstrate commitment to equitable mental health when the board of trustees...

- ▶ Prioritizes a focus on caring, inclusive, mentally healthy learning environments as a key element of the strategic plan.
- ▶ Honours community strengths, cultural assets and values as you bring the voices of everyone, including those from communities that are marginalized and vulnerable to the board table in championing equity and mental health.
- ▶ Considers through policy and budget priorities the mental health of students who are disproportionately impacted, specifically students who are Black, Indigenous, and marginalized.
- ▶ Promotes the mental health of Indigenous students through the commitment to the *Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action*.
- ▶ Includes a focus on the mental health of students with special education needs.
- ▶ Incorporates student voice and agency to inform decisions regarding mental health and well-being.

You help share information effectively when the board of trustees...

- ▶ Speaks from a unified voice and makes collective decisions in support of student mental health and well-being.
- ▶ References the board's strategic plan and mental health strategy with stakeholders as foundational documents that inform and support mentally healthy schools.
- ▶ Remains strategic in its focus and follows communication protocols in directing responses when asked for specific information about programs, initiatives, or mental health services.
- ▶ Considers information received through the lens of the board/ mental health strategic plans to achieve coherence.

“School board trustees are ambassadors for student achievement and well-being in their local communities.”

Good Governance: A Guide for Trustees, School Boards, Directors of Education and Communities – 2018

Governance matters

School boards are part of a provincial vision and have a local impact by fostering the conditions for quality, consistency and sustainability in school mental health. A shared commitment to a moral imperative that prioritizes identity-affirming mental health and well-being for every student and staff is a key governance role for trustees. It is how we together help all students learn and flourish.

To find out more, explore the School Mental Health Ontario website, follow us on twitter, Instagram

