

MENTAL HEALTH UPDATE

Student Support Services Issue 2

Summer 2015

Summer Edition

We have many successes to celebrate and more exciting work ahead!



Building Resiliency Through Relationship:

When you are engaging with the children in your care what is your connection: to correction and direction ratio? Would you say you spend more time connecting with children or correcting behaviour?

Neuroscience is confirming the importance of relationship and connection to the growth and development in children. It is really pushing us to “think differently about learning, not as skills and information taught through direction, but rather as a life long process ignited by connection (Clinton, 2013)”. Research is continuing to support that healthy development and learning can only happen for children in an environment of healthy relationships with caring adults.

Relationship matters most. “Whenever teachers and caregivers engage in strategies that build relationship they are making a deposit in their emotional piggy bank. (Clinton, 2013) For more insight and practical strategies on how to work on embedding more connection in your caregiving, see some of Jean Clinton’s work via articles and videos on the Ministry of Education website. Clinton, J (2013) *The power of positive adult-child relationships connection is the key.* McMaster University.



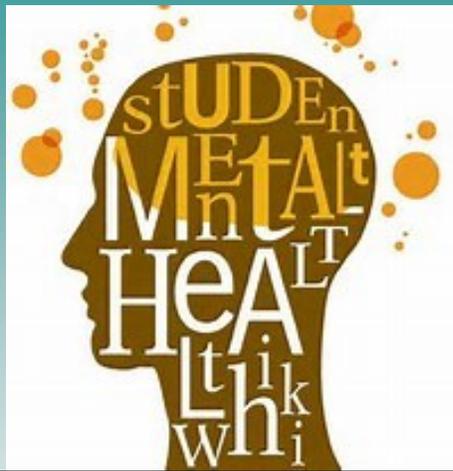
Summer Institute: We are pleased to have collaborated with Franco-Nord again for our second summer institute training for ASIST: Suicide Skills Training. On July 21st and 22nd we held a two day training with board staff and community partners. Both days are always full of new learning and skill building opportunities around this very difficult but important issue. We are continuing to move forward on both our board plan and community plan to build capacity in the area of suicide prevention via education and training.

In This Issue

- Building Resiliency Through Relationship
- Debriefing : A relationship building opportunity
- Youth Action Committee
- Student Support Services Update
- The Importance of Self-Regulation to Student Achievement

“ A child’s resilience is always a reflection of the world in which the child grows up, not a quality of the individual child alone.”

Michael Ungar (2015)



Debriefing and Rebuilding Trust: By Bryan McCutcheon

After an incident with some of our kids we often miss our best opportunities to help us (adult and child) grow past the memories of the event. We often hear the phrase, *what happened yesterday doesn't affect how I deal with the child today*. Even if that is true, it might still affect how the child deals with peers and the adults around them.

Debriefing is something that we should be doing with all parties involved in an incident: the staff involved, the child involved, along with any students or staff who may have witnessed a difficult incident. We are pretty good about asking if anyone is physically injured, however our follow through on the emotional well-being of these witnesses is often forgotten. With a simple how are you doing and taking the time to listen, we show our students that the caring we talk about is real, and that we are interested and want to help them. Now, if they need to talk they may have someone they trust to reach out to.

We also need to debrief the student involved in the incident and not only so they know what they did was wrong, but also so we can help them know that we do not confuse them with the incident they were involved in. We can help them rebuild a relationship with us at the same time we are helping them sort out what went wrong, and what they could try next time to get a different outcome. If we have a healthy trust relationship with our difficult students we may find them seeking us out before they escalate to an emergency state, because they know we are there to help them take control of the situation.

Remember, nothing is lost by trying to talk about an issue once it's over, and you may find there is everything to be gained.



“Mastering the art of resilience does much more than restore you to who you once thought you were. Rather, you emerge from the experience transformed into a truer expression of who you were really meant to be” ~Carol Osborn

Student Support Services

Update: We have had a great year as a team! As a group we have been continuing to discuss best practices for providing service to our students. In support of this, we have thoroughly enjoyed our clinical consultations with Dr. Epstein from ThinkKids.org. He has led us in many great discussions around how we collaborate for solutions with our students to achieve increased wellness in our classrooms.

Additionally, we have had great feedback from our schools piloting the *Tools For Life* program. I am looking forward to updating everyone on how we will be moving forward with this initiative in the fall. We have several schools interested in bringing this program to their students.

Transition to School Summer Pilot:

We are very excited about the success of our summer pilot. In the winter of 2015 we received funding from a proposal we put forward for an enhancement to the existing transition to school program at One Kid’s Place. In collaboration with Children’s Aid of Nipissing-Parry Sound and the Near North District School Board, we ran an 8 week program for junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten level students who could benefit from tools to support self regulation and resiliency. We had 12 families participate for the summer. We have some early data that supports our feeling that this was a successful and necessary program, that sets these young students up for success!

**Youth Action Paper:
YAC Children’s Mental
Health Ontario**

The Youth Action Committee with Children’s Mental Health Ontario consists of a group of 12 youth between the ages of 13 and 24. Their mandate includes strengthening youth voice across the Province specific to mental health issues. In 2012 they conducted the Speak Up Speak Out project that involved 300 students from across the Province.

The result of the project was the Youth Action Paper that issued several recommendations around how to create safer and more supportive school environments for students struggling with mental health and addiction issues. Some of the recommendations that came out of the paper include: the creation of peer mentor programs; improving collaboration between administration, teachers and students; the creation of safe zones or hubs in the school for kids to use to access support or quiet space; more teaching about mental health in the curriculum; and increased professional development opportunities for classroom teachers. For more information on this innovative work and ideas about creating mentally healthy schools from a youth perspective visit:

<http://youthspeakup.webs.com/res-building-a-better-school-environment-for-youth-with-mental-health-and-addiction-issues.pdf>



The Importance of Self-Regulation to Student Achievement

“ I am no longer afraid of storms, for I’ve learned to sail my ship.” ~ Louisa May Alcott

There is a growing body of research around the importance of self-regulation to children’s ability to learn and grow. When children are calm, focused and alert, they are better able to control impulses, ignore distractions and understand or anticipate the impact of their behaviour on others. All of which are essential in a classroom environment. However, self regulation skills begin in the brain when infants are taught through soothing and responsiveness that they can manage distress because they have caring adults around them to help manage and learn these skills. Self-regulation is not the same as self-discipline or compliance.

When we look at self-regulation we have to consider all 5 levels of stressors that impact children: biological, emotional, cognitive, social and pro-social. All five are intertwined and depend on one-another. We must consider all of them when helping children to develop self –regulation skills.

The first step in helping children learn these skills is to reduce the overall stress level. In order to achieve this we must be mindful of all five stress domains and where we can make alterations to the environment to support less stress exposure.

Secondly, help the child to identify what it feels like to be emotionally, physically and cognitively calm. To achieve some self awareness.

Thirdly, we can help children identify and implement ways to get themselves to the zone of calm, focused and alert more often.

“Self-regulation is every bit as much about doing all those things that increase a child’s energy levels (sports, play) as learning how to deal with situations or stimuli that the child finds draining.” (Shanker, 2013). Shanker, S (2013) *Calm, alert and happy*. York University.

Did You Know?

“70% of mental health issues will onset before adolescence .”

“6,000 kids in Ontario are waiting a year or more for treatment. An estimated 12, 000 will be waiting by 2016.”

http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/news_and_events/cmho-report-card-2015.php

“Around 20% of the world’s child and adolescent population have mental health disorders/problems.”

“... yet this population is the most underserved as far as resources go. Neuropsychiatric disorders are among the leading cause of disability in youth world-wide.”

http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/mental_health_facts/en/

“Changing a school’s climate and connectedness for the better is associated with increases in student performance in reading, writing, and mathematics.”

<http://www.nasponline.org/advocacy/Academic-MentalHealthLinks.pdf>

Free Resources Already at Our Fingertips!

Stress Tool Kit

Developed by The Psychology Foundation of Canada, the Kids Have Stress Tool program helps parents, caregivers and educators understand childhood stress and how to provide children with the tools to deal with stress effectively. It is a broad-based primary prevention program which provides parents, caregivers, and communities with the knowledge, awareness and skills to help young people become healthier and more resilient through learning how to manage their stress.

The program includes a range of resources designed for **parents**, those who work with young children in **early learning settings**, and for **classrooms**, and its FREE! In addition, curriculum links have already been made and are available from your Student Support Services team.

<http://psychologyfoundation.org/index.php/programs/kids-have-stress-too/>

Healthy Transitions: Promoting Resilience and Mental Health in Young Adolescence

Healthy Transitions is a mental health promotion / early identification / intervention program for young adolescents. Interactive and activity-based classroom sessions give middle school students the opportunity to enhance knowledge, attitudes and skills important for resilience and mental health. The program has been generously funded by the Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health at CHEO, and its FREE! Curriculum links are available through your Student Support Services team.

<http://www.child-youth-health.net/>



Additional Resources



Government of Ontario Mental Health Strategy Information

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/mental_health2011/mentalhealth.aspx

Mental Health Resources for Teachers

http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/professionals/mh_for_teachers_classrooms.php

General Mental Health Information for Students/Parents and Professionals

www.teenmentalhealth.org
www.kidshelpphone.ca

Talking about Mental Health In The Classroom

http://www.camh.ca/en/education/teachers_school_programs/resources_for_teachers_and_schools/talking_about_mental_illness/Pages/tami_teachersresource.aspx

When Something's Wrong Handbook:

Ideas for Teachers. www.cprf.ca/publication/handbook_pdf.html

We are always looking for ideas for information that you would like to see highlighted in upcoming issues. Also, we are interested in celebrating some of the wonderful things that so many of you are doing on a daily basis to contribute to the wellness of our board community. Please contact us at 472-1201 ext. 2255 with your ideas!