

Let's Connect About Mental Health & Well-Being—SESSION #2

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Back to School: Supporting Transitions and Re-Engagement



Therefore, as we begin this new school year let's...



...**Listen** to OUR EXPERTS--Students/Families and Caregivers.



...**Concentrate** on relationship building through intentional (re)engagement with all students, families and caregivers, each day, throughout the school year.



...**Ground** mental wellness in our daily practices throughout the school day to build positive class and school climates.



...**Increase** our understanding of how social inequities impact mental health and well-being and continue to notice, acknowledge, learn, understand, incorporate and honour the growth, resilience and learnings of students, their identities and voices in school spaces.

Understanding the Impact cont...

- Anticipate increase in mental health challenges for **some** students
- The effects of the pandemic on children and families is **not equally distributed** - racialized and historically marginalized people/communities have been more negatively impacted during the pandemic
- Depression, anxiety and stress **are natural reactions** to crisis and loss
- Acknowledge **ALL** students have resilience



What We Know...

*In February 2021, **MORE** students feel bored, stressed, nervous, and lonely (*as compared to TDSB spring survey 2020*)

10% ↓ Happy (all the time or often)

16% ↑ Nervous or Stressed (all the time or often)





- 40% of students feel **happy**
- 40% feel **hopeful for the future** (all the time or often)
- 70% of students **know how to get support** for their mental health and well-being



- 40% (approximately 12,800) of students **feel lonely** (all the time or often)
- 50% of students **are nervous or worried** (all the time or often)
- 60% of students **are bored**
- 60% of students are **under a lot of stress** (all the time or often)

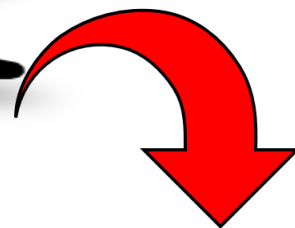
84% of students said they learn better in-person compared to virtual learning.

BACK TO SCHOOL





NOW!!!



Everyday



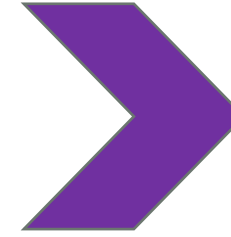
WELLNESS

A word cloud centered around the word **WELLNESS**. Other prominent words include: TRANSFORMATION, NUTRITION, BEAUTY, VITAMIN, EAT, EXERCISE, LIFESTYLE, MOTIVATION, WEIGHT LOSS, CALORIES, ENERGY, REGENERATION, PLANNING, WALK, ORGANIC, BALANCE, NATURAL, ASSESSMENT, FOCUS, GOALS, ACTIVE TRAINING, MOVE, SUCCESS, MARATHON, ENERGY, RUN, RESOLUTION, SPORT, RESOLVE, HEALTHY, ENDURANCE, POWER, BODY, PERFORMANCE, FITNESS, FOOD, ACHIEVE, IMPORTANT, and RESOLUTION. The word cloud is set against a white background with a yellow brushstroke effect behind the main word.



Tier 3
Support For a **Few**

Assist Students and Their Families to Access Support

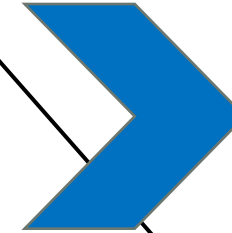


Intervene

Tier 2
Support For **Some**

Anticipate and Notice When a Student Might Be Struggling

Offer Classroom Accommodations

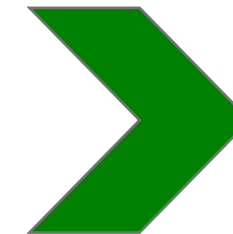


Prevent Support Bolster

Tier 1
Support For **All**

Calm Classroom Environment.

Support Students Feelings.



Welcome Include Understand Promote Partner

7 Weeks of Daily Well-Being Activities!

Grades K-3

K₃

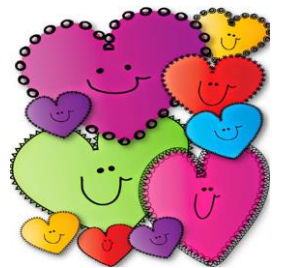
Grades 9-12



Grades 4-8

Students with Special
Educational/Complex Needs

4/8



Steps To Building & Strengthening Mental Health Toolbox for Students



Incorporating **DAILY** calming and coping strategies strengthens:

- Stress management skills
 - Emotional management skills
 - Relationship/community building skills
 - Supports enhancing critical and creative skills
- Inclusive of student identities and lived experiences.



Noticing Mental Health Concerns for Your Child



 **INFO SHEET**
to discuss your children

Noticing Mental Health Concerns for Your Child

Individuals and families have experienced the COVID-19 pandemic in unique and varied ways. For some, significant changes to daily routines, a period of isolation and loss, and various other factors may have led to new or increased mental health concerns. Symptoms and behaviors of these concerns can vary from time to time, and can affect anyone.

An excellent resource for this document is provided to help you to consider signs that could indicate that your child is struggling with an emerging or existing mental health condition. Identifying problems early, and providing early support, can help to prevent or reduce the severity of difficulties.

You have your child's best interests at heart and you will do everything you can to help them. It may be difficult to know when to seek help, but you should not wait until you are overwhelmed and unable to cope. If you are worried about your child's mental health, please contact your GP or a mental health professional for advice.

There are many signs to watch for whether your child might be experiencing a mental health problem, and offer help. While we use the term "signs" throughout, we recognize that each child may actually have a behavior or emotion that is a sign of a problem.

Noticing Mental Health Concerns for Your Child

Signs that may indicate a mental health concern for younger children:

- frequently changing mood/emotions
- easily hurt feelings, crying, anger
- ongoing temper tantrums, throwing things, hitting people, etc.
- ongoing sadness and lack of interest in things they normally enjoy
- withdrawal from friends and family
- increased need for contact and reassurance
- little motivation or interest in schoolwork, activities
- difficulty concentrating
- low frustration tolerance, irritability
- increase in headaches, stomach aches, other aches and pains
- decreased energy, problems with sleep or appetite changes

Signs that may indicate a mental health concern for older children and teens:

- outbursts of anger or distress
- frequent irritability
- feelings of anxiety and panic
- excessive worries and fears about the safety of family, friends, self
- increased defiance and opposition
- school refusal
- use of drugs and/or alcohol
- withdrawal from family activities
- withdrawal from friends
- ongoing negative remarks about self
- interest in activities from younger years
- declining grades, low motivation to complete tasks
- changes in eating and sleeping
- frequent talk about death and dying
- giving away possessions

W *When did the concern start?*

I *How **Intense** is the concern for my child?*

T *What is the **Timing** and how often does it happen?*

H *How is the concern impacting on my child in their daily life?*



C Practice **Calm** together. Breathing exercises or simply being present in the moment and listening to “quiet” together

A Find the **Awesome** in the everyday (including the great outdoors) and model gratitude

R Set **Routines** that are easy to follow and include time for fun, connection and rest!

E **Engage** in physical activities – get outside and let nature sooth your child’s spirit.

Reaching Out...& No Problem Too Big or Too Small



Design #1 – Pocketbook

- Multi-fold approach
- Opens into poster format

Design #2 – Booklet

- Intertwining pages
- Nonlinear narrative
- Easily self-printed

Design #3 – Poster

Print-ready files for professional printing



Easy & Fun Mental Health Activities For Home



Deep belly breathing

Social-emotional learning supports mental health through life

Deep belly breathing

Get ready

1. Have your child get comfortable by either standing or sitting. Encourage them to keep their back straight and shoulders and head relaxed.
2. If they're comfortable with it, ask them to close their eyes.
3. Have your child place their hands flat on their stomach.

Go

- Now, ask your child to breathe in deeply through their nose, filling the belly with breath.
- Point out how hands move out.
- Encourage them to hold their breath.
- Slowly breathe out through the mouth to feel the stomach contract and hands move in.
- Repeat 5-6 times.
- Practice deep belly breathing any time your child seems stressed or upset.

School Mental Health Ontario | Social-emotional learning supports mental health through life | www.smho-smso.ca

Text instructions for deep belly breathing

Snowstorm in a bag

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Snowstorm in a bag

Get ready

1. Collect items from around your home.
2. Gather straws, baggies (or a zip-see-through container with a lid that you can make a hole in for a straw), light materials that will float such as Styrofoam, feathers, glitter, and tissue paper.
3. Put some of the materials inside the container/baggie, close it and place the straw in the hole.

Go

- Have your child take a big breath.
- Blow slowly into the straw.
- Watch how the materials float around the container. Does it look like a snowstorm or something else?
- Repeat.
- Ask your child how it feels when they do this.

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Social-emotional learning supports mental health through life

Emotion charades

Get ready

1. Gather a bowl or another container, paper, pens/pencils.
2. On slips of paper, write or draw different feelings depending on the age of your child. For instance, happy, sad, angry, scared, worried, sleepy, frustrated etc. Place the papers in the bowl/container.
3. Everyone in the family can play!

Go

- Decide who will go first. Have that person pick a piece of paper from the bowl.
- Have them read the feeling to themselves, or, if needed, help your child read the feeling.
- Now, they will act out the feeling without words while the other players try to guess what it is.
- Once someone gets the right answer, it's the next person's turn to pick a piece of paper and act out the feeling.

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Text instructions for emotion charades

What's the temperature?

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What's the temperature?

Get ready

1. Gather paper, crayons or markers.
2. Write or draw different feelings on a piece of paper (e.g. happy, sad, angry, excited).
3. Ask your child to pick one feeling for the activity.

Go

- Have your child draw a big thermometer on a piece of paper.
- Mark off different points along the thermometer from 0 at the bottom, to 5 at the top.
- Write the feeling your child picked at the top of the paper.
- Talk about the different intensities of that feeling with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. For example, if your child chooses angry, 1 might be not at all angry and 5 might be furious.
- Describe a situation and ask your child to rate where on the thermometer that situation might make them feel.
- This can be used during different times to help your child recognize the feeling and the intensity.
- Make a new thermometer using a different feeling.

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Gratitude moment

Get ready

1. Gather paper and a pencil (optional).
2. Introduce the activity to your child. For example, "We are going to take a few minutes to talk about some of the things in our life we are grateful or thankful for." Explain what it means to be grateful or thankful.

Go

- Share something you're thankful for as an example.
- Everyone takes a turn sharing what they are grateful/thankful for.
- Repeat as often as you would like.
- Consider writing down comments and posting them in the home.

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Text instructions for gratitude moment

Four finger affirmation

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Four finger affirmation

Get ready

1. Gather paper and a pencil (optional).

Go

- Ask your child to choose four words that make them feel calm and confident. It might be a sentence or just four words. Examples: "I am loved today," "I believe in me," "Be brave, fasten, smile, love," "I can handle this."
- Explain that each word they choose will match a finger on their hand.
- Have them say the words (affirmation) aloud or in their head and connect each finger with their thumb.
- Tell your child they can repeat this as many times as they like, aloud or to themselves.

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Social-emotional learning supports mental health through life

Kindness jar

Get ready

1. Gather a large see-through jar and dried beans, small pasta, marbles or jelly beans (or any small items you have a collection of in the house).
2. Explain to your child that the jar will be used to capture "acts of kindness" for everyone in the family who is participating.
3. Talk about what an act of kindness is (e.g. sharing a toy with a sibling).

Go

- The beans/items are added to the jar for each kind act that someone notices someone else doing.
- Share with each other when an "act of kindness" is noticed.
- The sharing can happen when the family is together, such as during a meal.

NOTE: This is a great activity that children can share via telephone or video calls with others such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

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Text instructions for kindness jar

Notice the positive

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Notice the positive

Get ready

1. Gather materials to write on (e.g. Post-it Notes, paper) and write with (pens, markers, etc.).
2. Gather a container, basket, jar or bin to collect messages.
3. Explain to your child what a positive message means and model some positive messages (e.g. The picture you drew made me smile).
4. Practice noticing and saying positive messages with your child.

Go

- Decorate a "positive message" container such as a basket, jar or bin.
- Encourage your child to write or draw positive acts or comments they notice.
- Fill the container during the week with each person's comments or drawings of positive messages they notice or hear.
- Read the positive messages that were collected when everyone is together.

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The Educational GAP..



Strategies:

- 1) Do not **RUSH learning**; **Pace and Patience** by getting to know the student's learnings over COVID; strengths and areas requiring more support.
- 1) Evidence-based research indicates placing **WELL-BEING** in the forefront fosters and prepares the mind for new learning (reduce stress=increase learning)



Therefore Let's....

- **Prioritize** trust & relationship building
- **Reduce stress**; support hope; grounding and strengthen coping
- **Foster** school community
- **Share** without judgement/detrimental future narratives

Well Being



Behavioural Compliance

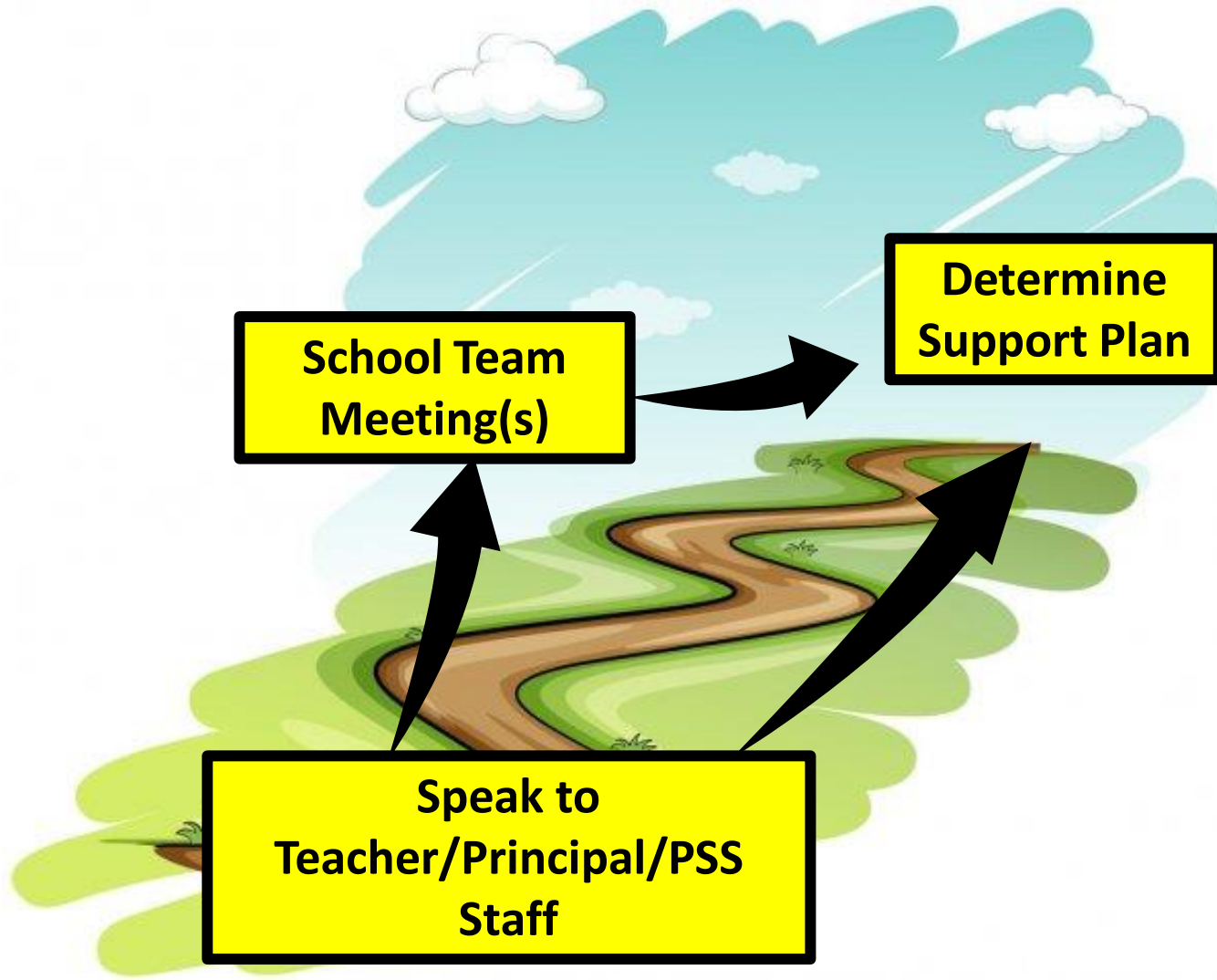
&

Connection & Routine



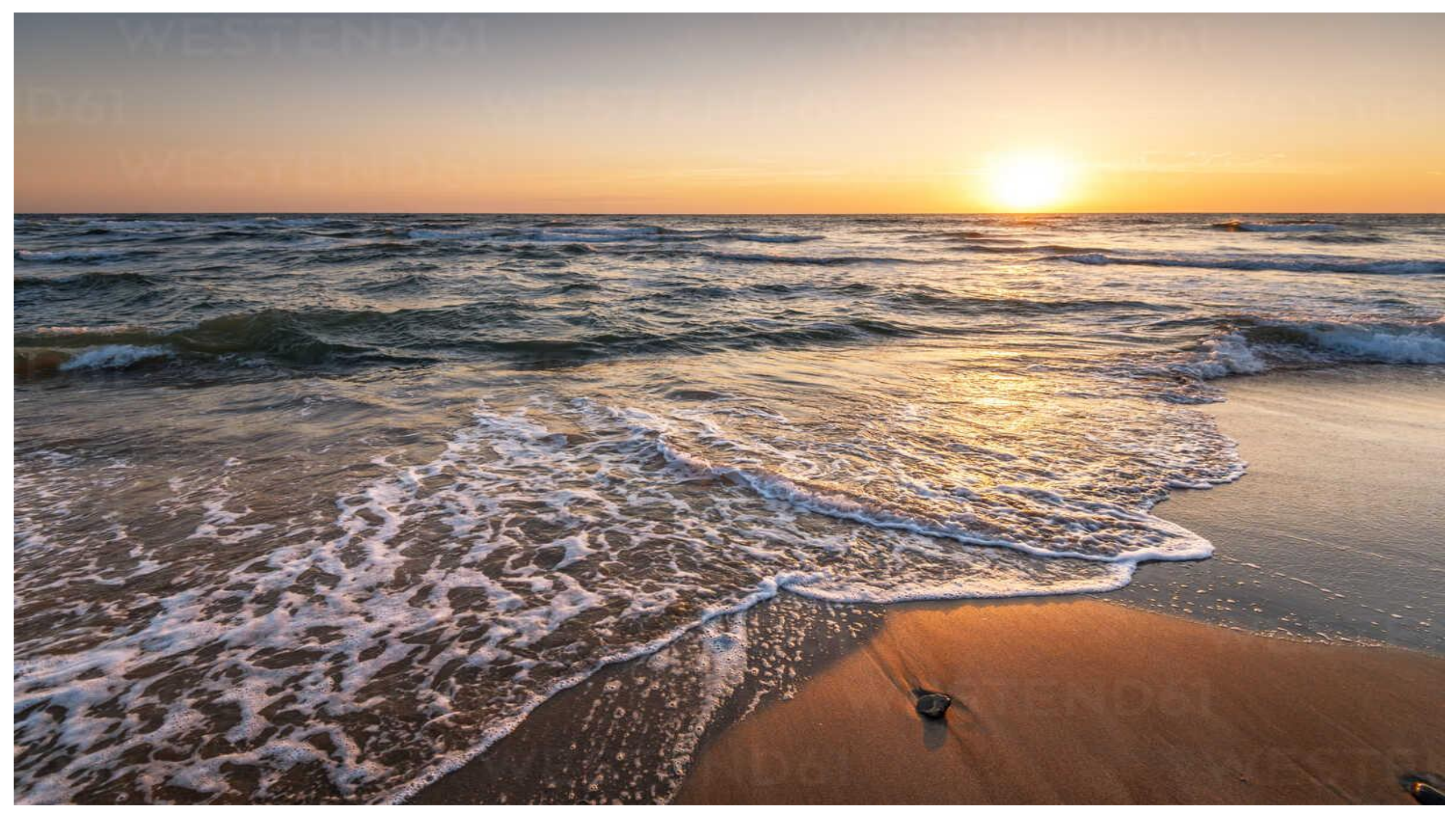
Curriculum

Pathway to School Support



Professional Support Services (PSS)

- Child & Youth Services
- Occupational/Physical Therapists
- Psychological Services
- Social Work Services
- Speech-Language Pathology Services



Virtual Office Hours—BACK IN THE FALL!!!



- **Virtual Mental Health/Well-Being Drop-In Hours for Caregivers** has been offered 2x a week since February 2021 and throughout the summer supported by Professional Support Staff (PSS)

- **Virtual Mental Health/Well-Being Themed Drop-In Hours for Students with Special Educational Needs/Complex Needs** has been offered once a week since April 2021 and throughout the summer supported by PSS staff.

JOIN US FOR VIRTUAL DROP-IN HOURS!

Connect with Professional Support Services staff to explore ideas regarding your child's mental health and well-being.

Thursdays, 5 – 6 p.m.
July 8
July 15
August 19
August 26



PARENTS/CAREGIVERS OF STUDENTS WITH COMPLEX SPECIAL NEEDS JOIN US FOR VIRTUAL DROP-IN HOURS

Join us to talk about taking care of yourself as a parent/caregiver, as well as these weekly themes:

July 7: Planning for Summer to Support Your Child's Well-Being
July 14: Understanding Your Child's Diagnosis and What it Means
August 18: Understanding Funding Available for Your Child's Unique Needs
August 25: Transition to School Planning

Wednesdays
5-6 p.m.



Mental Health Tool Kits

1. [Primary Mental Health Tool Kit](#)
2. [Intermediate Mental Health Tool Kit](#)
3. [Secondary Mental Health Tool Kit](#)
4. [Students with Special Educational/Complex Needs](#)
5. [Parent/Caregivers Mental Health Tool Kit](#)
6. [Educator Mental Health Tool Kit](#)

