

Mental Health Supports for Students in Ontario Schools

Presentation to the Global Leadership Exchange

June 1, 2026

Ministry of Education

Ontario 

The Ministry of Education in Ontario

- Responsible for delivering a high-quality publicly funded education system from kindergarten to grade 12
- Oversight of the province's childcare and early years system.
- The Province of Ontario has 2,078,435 students (2024 statistics).
 - 72 District School Boards in 4 systems - 31 English-public, 29 English-Catholic, 4 French-public, 8 French-catholic
 - 3,976 Elementary Schools (1,430,734 students)
 - 885 Secondary Schools (647,701 students)
- 235,476 full time staff
 - 133,603 teachers
 - 93,967 education workers in schools (e.g., educational assistants, early childhood educators; custodians, school office staff)
 - 7,900 Principals and Vice Principals



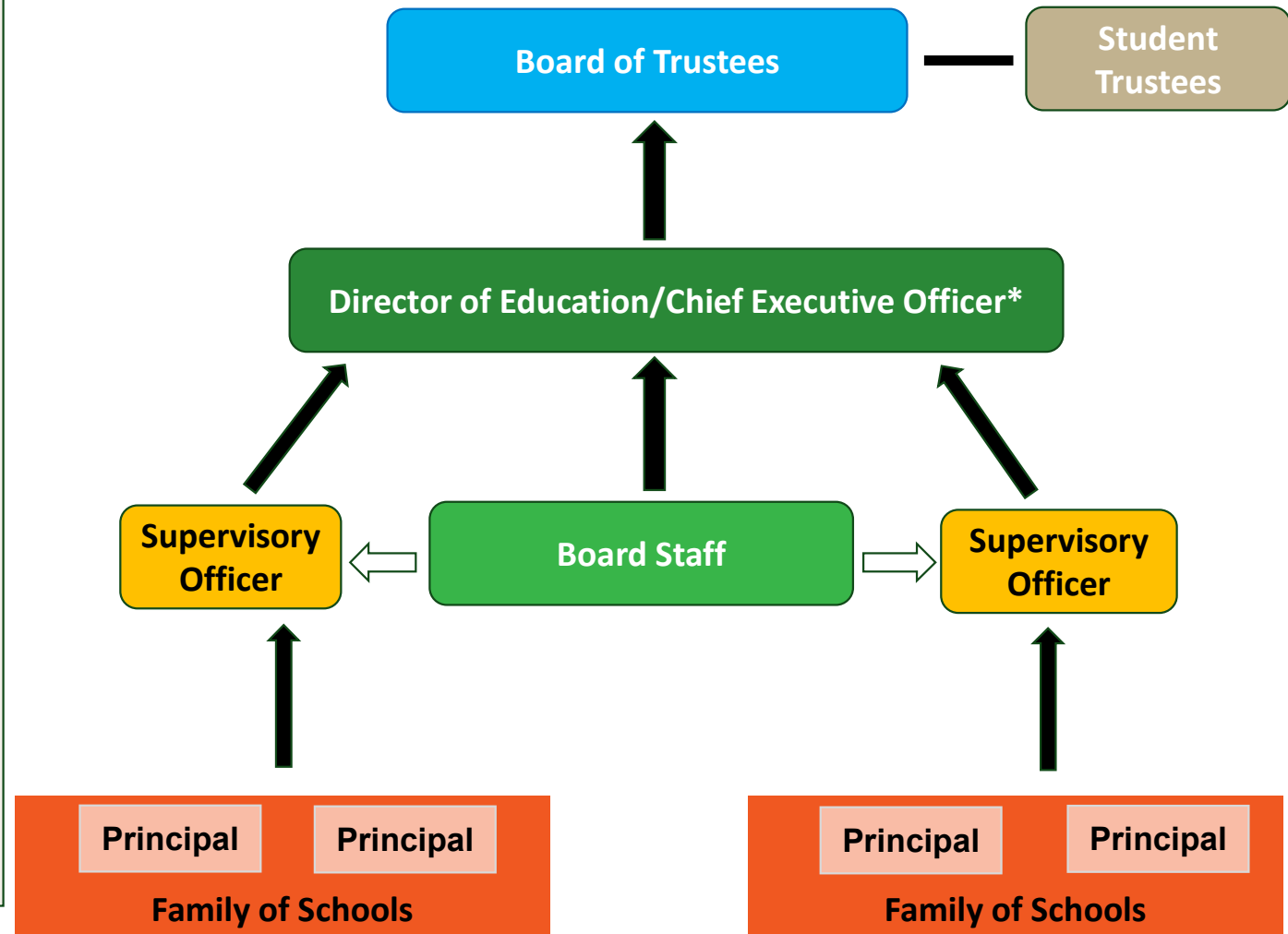
The Ministry of Education in Ontario

- 10 School Authorities:
 - 4 geographically isolated boards
 - 6 hospital-based school authorities
- 7 Directly Operated English Schools:
 - 4 provincial schools: for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind or have low vision or deafblind
 - 3 demonstration schools: for students with severe learning disabilities
- Consortium Centre Jules-Léger: French school offering same services as English schools above.



Ontario's School Board Structure

- A school board is a separate legal entity governed by elected school board trustees.
- School boards derive their powers, duties and other authority to provide educational services in a given geographic area from the Education Act.
- They are accountable to the taxpayers that elected them and to the provincial government.



Why School-Based Mental Health Is Important in Ontario

70%

**of mental health and
addictions issues begin in
childhood and adolescence**

(Source: Mental Health Commission of
Canada)

1 in 5

**Ontario students ages 4-17
meet the criteria for a
significant mental health issue**

(Source: Ontario Child Health Study,
2019)

271,148

**Students received school-
based services for mental
health challenges in 2024-25**

(Source: EDU Board Mental Health
Survey, 2025)



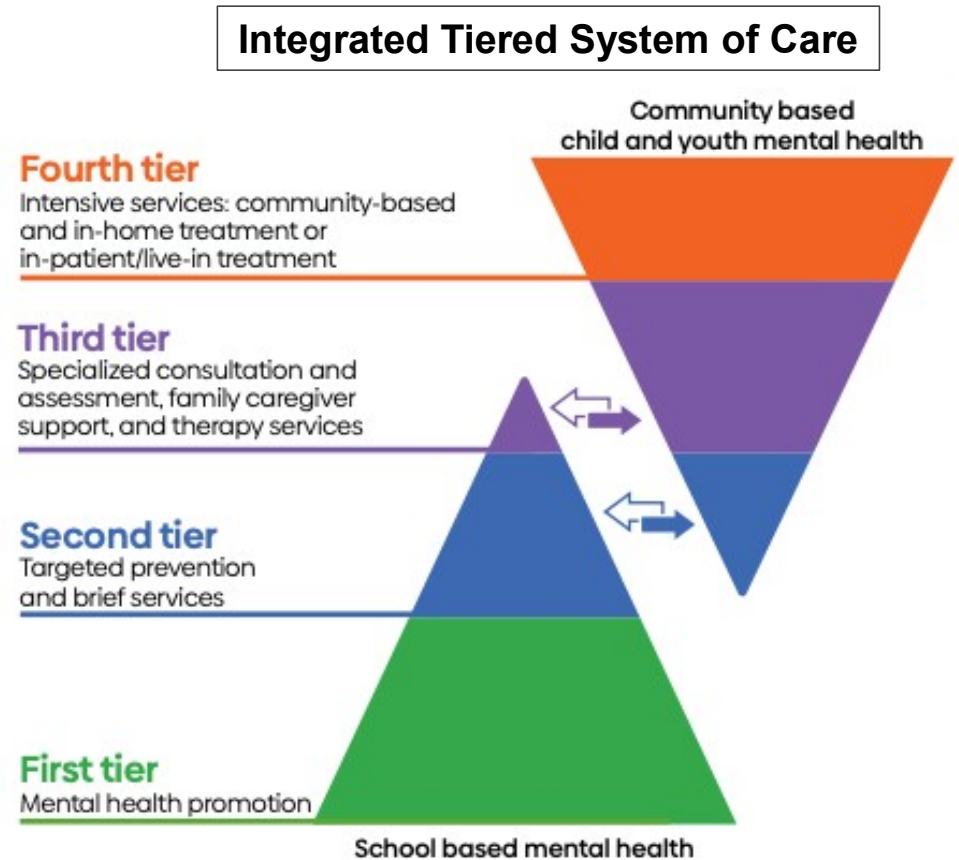
The Role of the Ministry of Education

- The **Ministry of Education** (EDU) plays a **lead role** in promoting a comprehensive, provincially integrated mental health system, through schools by supporting the mental health and well-being of every student.
- The ***Education Act***:
 - Requires that all school boards “promote student achievement and well-being and promote a positive school climate that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils” (Section 169.1).
 - Gives the Minister of Education authority to issue policies and guidelines for school boards respecting student mental health, including the use of learning materials related to student mental health (Section 8(1) 29.6).



Multi-Tiered Approach to Student Mental Health

- Mental health supports in Ontario schools are delivered across an integrated tiered system of care which includes school boards, child and youth mental health agencies, and hospitals.
- A multi-tiered system of support highlights the critical role that schools have in everyday wellness and helps systems and schools identify and respond to students' mental health needs in a comprehensive and integrated manner.
- Most school-based work is focused on Tier 1 (mental health promotion) and Tier 2 (targeted prevention and brief services).
- For more intense needs, it is the role of school mental health professionals to respond to immediate crisis to help to stabilize students while they wait to access appropriate community or health services and to provide needed ongoing care while students are at school.



Roles and Responsibilities Overview

Government

Ministry of Health

- Legislation, policy direction and funding
- Responsible for the broader provincial system of mental health & addictions in Ontario
- The Ministry of Education participates in the whole of government approach to support strategic investments related to Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions Strategy

Ministry of Education

- Legislation, policy direction and funding
- Collaboration and partnership across government including Ministry of Health
- Data collection to inform policy and funding decisions

Service Role Implementation Partners



School Boards

- Hiring and training of school staff
- Implementation of Ministry Policy
- Delivery of programs and services based on local needs
- Collect data and report to the Ministry
- Collaboration with Ministry of Health Mental Health partners

School Mental Health Ontario

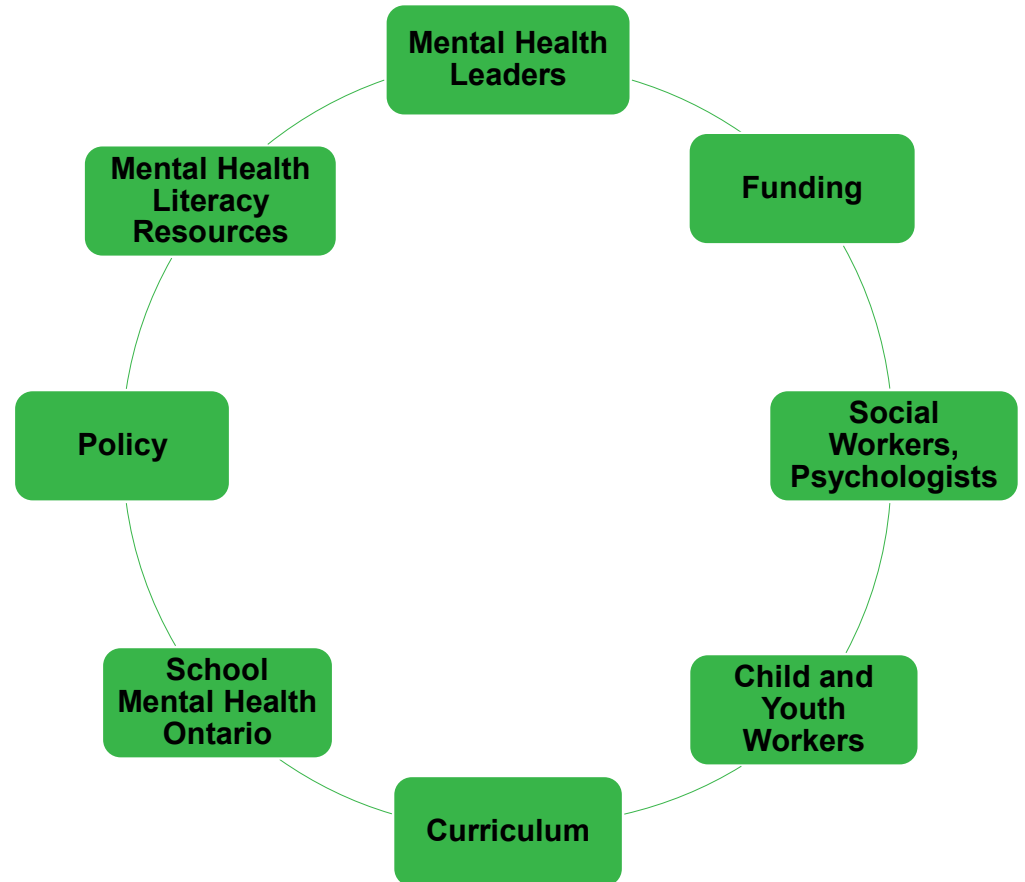
- Develop evidence-informed resources
- Training of educators, mental health professionals and other school staff
- Coaching and support for school board leadership teams on mental health
- Collaboration and partnership

Ministry of Health funded mental health organizations including Youth Wellness Hubs

- Provide core services, ranging from prevention services, counselling, addictions and therapy to intensive and specialized services
- Work with school boards and local services providers to coordinate care

How the Ministry of Education Supports Student Mental Health

- The ministry develops policy, programs and provides funding to school boards to implement evidence-based, consistent mental health supports.
- For the 2026-27 school year, \$91.9 million will be provided to district school boards for the exclusive use of mental health supports through Core Education Funding.
- The ministry partners with **School Mental Health Ontario** who receives funding from the ministry to fulfill its mandate to support school boards with implementing their mental health strategies and action plans.



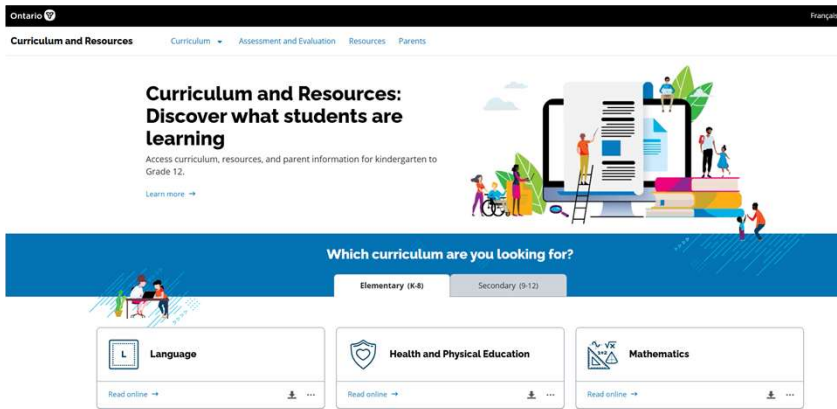
Whole School Approach to Student Mental Health and Well-being

- A whole school approach involves all parts of the school community working together and being committed to supporting the mental health and well-being of students.
- In Ontario this may include:
 - Schools
 - School Board Leaders
 - Educators and other school staff
 - Regulated School Mental Health Professionals
 - Non-Regulated Mental Health Professionals
 - Parents/Caregivers and Families
 - Community Partners



Curriculum, Policies, and Resources to Support Student Mental Health in Schools

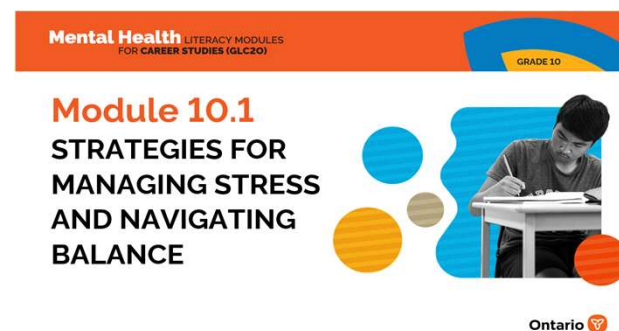
Mental Health and Well-Being in the Ontario Curriculum



- Mandatory learning related to mental health and well-being begins in kindergarten and is found in every Grade of the Grades 1-8 Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum as well as in the recently revised Grade 10 Career Studies course (2024). These concepts are also woven throughout the secondary HPE curriculum.
- The HPE curriculum enables students to develop an understanding of the factors that contribute to healthy development, a sense of personal responsibility for lifelong health, and an understanding of how living healthy, active lives is connected with the world around them and the health of others. HPE proactively contributes to the physical and mental well-being of students.
- The ministry partnered with School Mental Health Ontario to produce mandatory mental health, substance use and digital literacy learning modules for students in Grades 6, 7, 8 and 10 that are aligned with curriculum.
- These modules include engaging videos, worksheets and discussion guides, and focus on topics such as the difference between mental health and mental illness, signs stress has become problematic, resources that can provide support for those experiencing mental health concerns, substance use, and how to navigate online environments safely.

Learning Modules for Students

- To support student mental health literacy, substance use and digital safety learning across Ontario, EDU has released a series of teacher-led modules developed by SMH-ON, with input from nearly 40 organizations. The modules include educator guides, student worksheets, transition tools, and parent communication resources.
- [**Mental Health Literacy Modules for Grades 7 and 8**](#) mandatory since January 2024, aligned with the 2019 Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum, and help students manage stress, understand mental health and illness, recognize signs of mental health issues, reduce stigma, and seek support when needed.
- [**Mental Health Literacy Modules for Career Studies**](#) mandatory since September 2024, aligned with the updated Grade 10 Career Studies course and help students learn how to manage stress, recognize warning signs, and access support.
- [**Substance Use and Digital Safety Modules for Grade 6 Students**](#) released in November 2025. These modules support the learning components on digital citizenship and online safety in the Grade 6 Language curriculum, and substance use (namely vaping, cannabis and alcohol), components in the Grade 6 HPE curriculum.



Policy and Program Memoranda that Support Student Mental Health and Well-Being

- [Policy/Program Memorandum \(PPM\) 169: Student Mental Health](#) was issued In July 2023, to provide policy direction to school boards on student mental health.
 - The PPM includes 11 requirements that school boards must report to the ministry on.
 - School board feedback on PPM 169 has been positive to date as it gives boards the lever to make student mental health a priority.
- In April 2024, the government announced an updated [Policy/Program Memorandum \(PPM\) 128: The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct](#), setting out new restrictions on vaping, cellphones and social media use in schools.
 - Funding was provided to both education and health sector partners to strengthen mandatory learning and provide supports for students with addictive behaviours related to vaping and excessive personal mobile device use.
 - The ministry continues to monitor the implementation.

Ministry Data Collection on Student Mental Health

The Ministry of Education collects the following data annually to inform funding and policy decisions related to student mental health:

PPM 169 – Student Mental Health

- Mix of qualitative and quantitative questions to all school boards to monitor implementation of the 11 requirements outlined in the PPM.
- The PPM has a 5-year review cycle to ensure that information and practices related to student mental health and addictions are current and evidence-informed.

Annual School Mental Health Supports Survey

- School board level survey of staffing details and capacity related items
- Data shows trends in number of students served, mix of mental health workers providing services, wait times.

Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) Student Questionnaire

- As part of EQAO testing, students in grades 6, 9, and 10 are asked if they know about the supports that are available if they have questions or concerns about their mental health.

Questions ?

Please send any questions to the Mental Health Branch:

studentmentalhealth@ontario.ca