

A large, rectangular iceberg floats in the ocean under a cloudy sky. The water is dark blue, and smaller ice chunks are visible in the foreground. The overall scene is serene and cold.

3 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

# Mental Health & Equity Plan

The Protestant  
Separate School  
Board of the Town of  
Penetanguishene

2024-2027

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# Our Team

Our Lead Team developing, supporting, and sustaining mental health planning, development and strategies at The Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene (PSSBP) consists of:

- Supervisory Officer, Tim Overholt
- Mental Health & Multidisciplinary Lead, Christy Hamill
- Early Years Lead, Joanne Merkley
- Principal, Julia McLaren
- Vice-Principal, Wilson Cowan
- Indigenous Lead, Lisa Montgomery
- Tech. & Spiritual Lead, Luke Kent
- Special Education Lead, Melissa Gignac
- Literacy Lead, Michelle Caldwell
- Manager of Finance and Treasurer, Sean Turner

## **Our Community Partners include:**

- Children's Treatment Network
- Kinark Child and Family Services
- The Covenant Church, Youth Programs
- Riverwise Psychological Services
- Occupational Therapist – Karen Vandenbrug
- Speech/Communication Clinic
- North Simcoe Youth Wellness Hub
- Catholic Family Services of Simcoe County
- Family Connexions
- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- New Path Child and Family Services
- PreVenture Clinic
- Seasons Centre for Grieving Children
- Metis Nation of Ontario (Midland Office)
- Empower – Sick Kids program/mentoring
- Community OPP Officer
- Catulpa Community Support Services
- Lives in the Balance, Collaborative & Proactive Solutions
- Special Education Advisory Committee
- North Simcoe Therapy Network
- One Stop Talk
- Kids Help Phone

# Mission & Priorities

## Our Mission

Our mission is to provide an environment in which every student will experience a sense of mattering, belonging and develop their sense of identity. Including understanding how to notice, respond to, seek help for and care for their mental health as well as being able to positively respond to others' mental health needs.

Students  
report a  
sense of  
mattering  
at school

85%

## Our Purpose

The Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene is focusing on equity and mental health over the next 3 years in all the work that we do. This includes ensuring that, as the Lead Team, we continue to collaborate and partner with a diverse range of communities and partnerships that expand the base of mental health support and services available to our students. We continually assess upcoming needs and focus on noticing and offering support in ways that are inclusive and respond to potential bias. We will continue to strengthen and support the annual, monthly, and as needed processes in place to ensure collaboration and ongoing quality improvement. We are committed to working within an anti-oppressive framework and are aware that there is much work to be done in this area. We are committed to working within an identity affirming lens and responding with compassion within all the work we do.

### CHALLENGES:

1. The PSSBP has not been included in the funding for Mental Health and Addiction Nurses provided to other provincial boards.
2. There is no direct funding for in-school regulated mental health professionals for PSSBP.

# Our Strengths and Needs

## 1

### Data informed areas of strength

Our main strengths are the Lead Team and collaborative planning and resource sharing across curriculums (math/literacy/PHE), Special Education, Early Years, Indigenous and Spiritual programming.

Data is provided from parent, student, and staff surveys, the mental health and addictions scan, attendance, and demographic data.

## 3

### Closing gaps and meeting needs

The board mental health and addictions scan points to several areas of need for our attention:

- Supporting and further engaging student and parent voice in our planning and development.
- Continuing to build and ensure strong pathways to care with our community partners.
- Working on stigma reduction and increasing help-seeking education and behaviours for students, families, and staff.
- We will focus on developing strong, accessible, Evidence Based Care (EBC) pathways for our students with special needs.

## 2

### Equity and identity affirming work are driving forces for the direction of planning, discussion and action steps over the next 3 years

We began using an equity framework to inform school and class practices several years ago. It is our intention to continue to build on that success, continually exploring and putting into action practices that support students' sense of identity, belonging and mattering. We will continue to partner to ensure accessible mental support is available.

## 4

### Process strengths

We have developed strong annual processes to ensure that our protocols and supports are up to date, these include:

- Inclusion of mental health/equity discussion at PD days, staff meetings and lead meetings.
- Continuation of trauma-informed student profiles to assist in providing strong foundations for relationship development across the grades.
- Inclusion of mental health information in every newsletter.
- Annual review of all mental health protocols, including professional development to support implementation.

# 2024–2027 Goals

## 1

**Deepening of our understanding of bias within the school and board by exploring equity and diversity and the impact on mental health.**

Professional Development planned for board and school staff using the following reflection tools as starting points:

- 1) <https://smho-smso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Leading-Mentally-Healthy-Schools-Reflection-Tool.pdf>
- 2) <https://smho-smso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Mentally-Healthy-Classroom-Reflection-Tool.pdf>

## 2

**Increasing ability to recognize and respond to students with mental health needs within the entire school and board.**

Annual review of processes and protocols that support safety, reduce risk, and support recognition and response to students with mental health needs. Ongoing professional development, including mental health and equity in all professional development and meetings throughout the year.

## 3

**Increasing our understanding of the intersection of mental health and special education needs to improve our ability to recognize and respond to these needs in our school and board.**

Professional development ongoing for school staff, and consultation process available to support recognizing and responding to these needs in our school/board.

## 4

**Ongoing evaluation and improvement in our welcoming and responsive school climate.**

Goals within the board and school Improvement plan support the advancement of acts of kindness, and further development of welcoming for staff and students. Annual review of goals, professional development, and monthly review of student needs via staff meetings, help support and meet this goal.

# Our strategy

**Using a 3 year strategy with annual action plans we will implement strategies in a tiered model to improve understanding of and response to mental health needs within the school community:**

- Leadership team collaborating across diverse range of school projects.
- Improving and implementing changes depending on presenting needs.
- Building relationships with community partners.
- Cultivating a welcoming culture of learning and growth mindset.
- Celebrating the achievements of staff and students.
- Noticing and supporting overall organizational health.

**Intended Impact in 3 years:**

- All staff will understand the impact of sense of belonging, social emotional learning, and equity on student success.
- Every teacher will be supported in using the PHE curriculum to further student understanding of mental health.
- All staff will understand how compassion and relationship building can impact student success and organizational health.
- Every student will have identity affirming experiences, mattering and belonging at Burkevale, engaging students in planning and projects.
- Every student will have knowledge about how to care for their mental health and what resources they can reach to for support.
- Helping Professionals will use culturally relevant and evidence based care to support students.

PROJECTS	DETAILS	OUTCOME
Evidence Based Programs available	BRISC, BDI, Preventure, CPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students and families report improvements</li> <li>• Staff report feeling well supported</li> </ul>
School Climate Survey	Bi-annual measurement of sense of belonging, well being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% of grade 8 students felt they mattered (22/23)</li> </ul>
Welcoming environment	Daily greetings and walks for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff &amp; Students report benefitting from both</li> </ul>

### How will we accomplish all the goals we have set?

- Use of Professional Development days to increase staff capacity and understanding.
- Use of Communities of Practice to deepen and further understanding to move into ways to support educational practices that further goals set.
- Use of staff meetings to sustain ongoing learning.
- Use of lead meetings to assess and support ongoing improvements.
- Collaborating across partners and budgets to support projects and professional development.
- Increasing engagement with student and parent voice in mental health planning.

## Action plans in place:

The School Climate Survey is a main source of well-being data for Burkevale. We will further that data by adding focus groups for qualitative data over the next 3 years.

To date the mental health and addiction strategy has increased the knowledge of mental health and well-being within the school community, staff, and students in multiple ways at the Tier 1 level. We have also provided Tier 2 & 3 services, and pathways to care in the community for mental health services. We are deeply committed to continuing this work

- Funding during the pandemic had allowed us to hire a regulated health professional to work at the school directly with students to support mental health. Unfortunately this funding is no longer available but we have secured the support of a Child and Youth Worker to support social emotional learning.
- We will be focusing as a Lead Group on how to most effectively use funding to support the greatest number of students.
- There will be a focus on continuing to develop pathways to care in a variety of ways – social, spiritual, physical health, mental health and support of local Right Time Right Care planning processes.
- We would greatly appreciate support to be able to engage in partnership with the Mental Health and Addiction Nurses available to other public school boards in Ontario.
- We will be investing in evidence based care and supports to help guide our work with evidence of progress and challenges from our students receiving services.



Consulting with regulated health professionals supporting PSSBP.

Staff & consultants learn in collaboration to support students.



Focus on building skills throughout the year to support mental health for all.



# 2023/2024 Impact:

## Activities over the 2023/24 school year supporting mental health at Burkevale :

- 60+ students and families are supported directly by student well being services.
- 95% of students can recall a time when someone was kind to them at school, focusing on kindness has been a successful and consistent goal and will continue through to 2027.
- 82% of students feel safe at school, and 84% feel that they matter to someone at school. We have incorporated goals to raise those statistics so that all students feel safe and that they matter at school.
- 100% of staff have received professional development on suicide awareness/intervention.
- 60% of educators have received support in engaging with PHE to support mental health awareness with students.
- Investments in equity and professional development – certificates in anti-black racism completed.
- Ongoing projects to support kindness at school and in the community via the safe school committee, with student leadership initiatives.
- Investments in technology and professional development to support evidence based care in mental health service over the 2023/24 school years.
- Ongoing commitment to safe and healthy workplace with continuous training in Collaborative Proactive Solutions and Behaviour Management Systems, to enable a safe, trauma informed and compassionate school environment.
- Communication strategy that allows sharing of information about mental health and equity, at board, school, and family connection points (leads/staff meetings, newsletters).
- Upcoming events in May/June will further support engaging families through provision of a webinar and completion of the Preventure Program for students.
- Summer Programming for Social Emotional Learning in Early Years will be available again in July/August 2024.

## RESOURCES

<https://smho-smsso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Cultural-humility-tool-for-school-staff.pdf>

<https://smho-smsso.ca/blog/online-resources/centring-black-indigenous-and-marginalized-perspectives-in-mental-health-promotion-at-school-examining-and-decentring-whiteness/>

# Our 2024/25 Action Plan

## 1

**Ongoing collaboration with all board leads, finance manager and supervisory officer.**

Monthly leads meetings allow for:

- Collaboration across portfolios.
- Sharing success stories.
- Incorporating equity and mental health in all planning.
- Review of strategic planning/what's done and what actions need working plans.
- Review of budget, what's possible within year, what collaborations would enhance implementation across portfolios.

## 2

**Mental Health and Equity part of all staff meetings and PD days**

- PSSBP has a sustainable process to provide Mental health information in all staff meetings and PD days. This allows for implementation of professional development as it connects to curriculum throughout the year.
- Professional Learning Communities with Educational Assistants are planned throughout the year to support ongoing implementation of strategic plan.

## 3

**Ongoing, annual implementation processes:**

We will continue with the following to ensure 3 year strategic goals are actionable annually:

- Provide opportunity for parent/student feedback via collaboration on school climate surveys.
- Have flexibility within lead team to create opportunities for implementation of new working plans to support data as it emerges from surveys/feedback.
- Provide Evidence based programming such as Preventure, and pathways to individual and group counselling.
- Implementation of the grade 7 & 8 mental health literacy modules.
- Annual review of tragic events and life promotion/suicide prevention protocols.

## 4

**Pilot for 2023/24**

Collaboration across the lead team has allowed for a new role for the 2023/24 year. We had an educator/SERT available 6 hours/week, to provide in class support, small group support and consultation to staff to support implementation of SMHO resources. As we move forward we can see a role for SERT's to provide SEL in small groups when needed. We will also have a CYW available 3 days a week to support social emotional learning in collaboration with the school team.

Review of strategic plans, and recognition of youth reports wanting more learning about mental health in elementary years supports this pilot. Data has been collected, analysis to be reviewed in fall 2024 and then data collection again end of 2025 for success/outcomes.

# We thank you for your ongoing support of our programme

## Acknowledgements

We could not do this work without the support and funding from School Mental Health Ontario and the Ministry of Education. The investments in student mental health is deeply appreciated.:

**Within the PSSBP we acknowledge and appreciate the many partners who work with us to support student mental health, well-being and success.**

Our lead team is essential to this work and really gets the work done on site at our school.

For a more complete list, please see the names and partners on the first page of this document.

For more information or any questions please contact:

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Signatures:



June 10, 2024

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June 10, 2024

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