Working together for child and youth mental health: teachers, schools and families

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But first.....let’s plan to publish together

On the cover:
- **School Mental Health**
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Page 1:
- What I want to learn

Page 2:
- What I can share with others
Let’s talk about:

- Child and youth mental health
- What we know, and what we need to know:
  - The experiences of parents, teachers, and youth
  - Effective partnerships
- Moving forward
A model of mental health

**Optimal mental wellbeing (flourishing)**
- Example: a person who experiences a high level of mental wellbeing despite being diagnosed with a mental illness.

**Minimal mental wellbeing (languishing)**
- Example: a person experiencing mental illness who has a low level of mental wellbeing.

**Minimal mental illness**
- Example: a person who has no diagnosable mental illness who has a low level of mental wellbeing.

**Maximum mental illness**
- Example: a person who has a high level of mental wellbeing and who has no mental illness.

(Keyes, 2003)
Why are we talking about mental health?

Because....

- **1 in 5** Canadians experience mental health disorders, and
- **1 in 6** get help through the health care system
- Among adults with mental health disorders:
  - 50% knew it before they were 14;
  - 75% knew it before they were 18
- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among youth 10-19
- Early identification and treatment can greatly reduce suffering, and greatly improve outcomes
What stands in the way of getting help?

- Fears:
  - If we talk about it, will it make it worse?
  - (If we ignore it, will it go away?)
  - Is it my fault?
  - Will my child get better?
  - What will happen to them?
- Access to care: wait times can vary, up to 8-12 months
- Stigma
53% of parents have told no one that their child has a mental illness but among those who did, 56% confided in a teacher (Davidson & Manion, 1996)

46% of youth identified stigma as a barrier at their school that prevents them from seeking support for mental health and/or addiction issues (CMHO 2013)

If people are not advocating form themselves and their children, health and education officials don’t know the extent of the problem
28.2% of youth indicated that mental health issues are **not covered** in their school’s curriculum and 35.9% indicated that they were covered only once in one class. (CMHO 2013)

Many teachers ‘just don’t get to the mental health curriculum’ (Rodger, Leschied & Hibbert, 2013)

Youth report:

- some parents and teachers “Don’t think mental illness is a real thing”
There is a significant relationship between mental health and:

- Achievement
- Attendance
- Staying in school
- Social relationships

- Most children and youth go to school
- Prevention and early intervention are the keys to success
- We all have a role to play

WHEN WE WORK TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE
“I think that even with, like, physical health and as well as mental health, teachers want to help generally, it’s just they don’t know how to. And when you don’t know how to help someone, it just makes you feel uncomfortable because it’s like, what if I say something wrong and then it just makes everything worse, right? Like, I think teachers generally want to help you; that’s why they’re teachers.”
Mental Health Literacy

- Knowing how to get, and keep, mental health
  - Self-care, relationships, the whole person, social determinants of health
- Understanding what mental health problems look like at home, and in the classroom
- Knowing how and where to get help
- Decreasing stigma
Levels of Literacy

- Mental health awareness
  - Basic information
- Mental health literacy
  - Deeper knowledge for those who have a role in supporting child and youth mental health
- Mental health expertise
  - Professionals with skills and knowledge to provide effective, evidence-based promotion, prevention, and intervention
What do teachers need to know about child and youth mental health?

What kind of courses do preservice teachers have access to, to help them understand mental health?

Mental Health Literacy research

Mental Health Literacy course
Winning Attitudes for Teachers:

1. Kids do well if they can
2. All students have strengths
3. All students are able to learn when the proper supports are provided
4. Appreciate the challenges of family life, and refrain from judging and blaming.
5. Some things are outside of the control of parents

~Dr. Karen Weston, Columbia College of Education, Missouri
How can we help foster parents meet the mental health needs of children?

How can we prevent the placement breakdowns that result from not feeling able to meet children’s needs?

Foster Parents Project
What does mental illness look like in a child or youth?

- Externalizing behaviours
- Internalizing behaviours
- School refusal
- Emotional dysregulation
- Tired or wired
- Loneliness
- Lack of motivation, concentration or enjoyment
Age of Onset of Major Mental Disorders

- PDD/ Autism
- ADHD
- Anxiety Disorder
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Substance Abuse
- Anorexia Nervosa
- Major Depressive Disorder
- Bipolar Disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Bulimia Nervosa

Source: DSM-IV, 2000
What kinds of support do young people need to make the decision to disclose?

What can young people teach our preservice education students?

Joan's Story
There are many policies, rules, and expectations to juggle, and the most frequent reason is stress (Clandinin et. al., 2012).

 Biggest stressors (Martin et. al., 2012)

- Multiple roles, workload
- Children’s behaviour problems
- Not meeting children’s needs
- Not enough time with their own families, not enough time for self (CTF, 2014)
Teachers’ experiences with children’s mental health

- 93% don’t feel their teacher education prepared them to deal with it (Andrews & McCabe, 2013)
- 85% name children’s mental health as their biggest concern
- They want more training and support
- Even experienced teachers don’t know how to talk to parents about children’s mental health
- 62% don’t feel that they get adequate recognition from parents (Martin et. al., 2012)
Teachers’ experiences

- 93% feel they don’t have a healthy work-life balance
- Teachers often report feelings of isolation
- 61% report stress-related illnesses

“The school teachers in Ontario face a public health crisis. Depression is the principal source of disability leave and the principal reason for prescription drug use among school teachers in Ontario .... The LTD claims processed by OTIP have doubled since 1993.” (Wilkerson, 2004)
82% of parents indicated they believe that teachers have an essential role to play in children’s mental health;
38% of the parents felt the teachers were well prepared to do so.
They report feeling judged and blamed by teachers for their child’s behavior/mental health.
Opening Up video
What are the experiences of parents with children who have a mental illness, with teachers and schools?

What would be helpful for teachers and schools to know?

What are some ways to maximize the parent-teacher-school relationships for the best student outcomes?

Robyn: emaster2@uwo.ca
“It seems constant and never ending. You’re always having to think about what conversation should I have? What conversation could I have? Should I relay this to the teacher? The principal? The school? What shouldn’t I? What is that conversation? It’s a never ending thought process which some days, I have to say, feels absolutely monumental. It just feels like the biggest mountain you have to climb. Because it’s constant. It’s just constant.”
“Every September it’s the same thing right? You’re hoping that the teacher they get in September is going to be somebody who is going to value all of the information and the wisdom that you’re going to share with them about your child. But there’s always that, you know, that little piece of you that thinks, “Oh god, I hope they get it.” Because if they don’t get it one or two things could damage all of the great work that we have done up until now. It’s as though you are reinventing the wheel every September.”
Questions to ask each other

- **To the child:** I noticed today that you are (sad, angry, anxious). What are things like for you today?

- **To the parent:**
  - I’ve noticed that Anna is having trouble concentrating at school. Are you seeing this at home as well?
  - What are the triggers for Denver’s behaviour, and how can we work around those?

- **To the teacher:** Hisham is telling us that he finds some activities at school are just too stressful. Can we share things we do at home to create a sense of calm for him?
Key Conditions for Partnerships

1. Don’t judge
2. Do your homework
3. Be the child’s advocate
4. Partner with one another
5. Like the child
What do we do?

- Prepare ourselves: **develop mental health literacy** to understand what mental illness is, and how it affects children and youth
- Create **safe spaces** for learning, living and working
- Notice what is going on
- Know how to get help
- Develop collaborative relationships
- Remember you are not alone: you are part of a team, and other members have the expertise to help directly
- Use the relationship of trust and support to **model behaviours and attitudes** that eliminate stigma, and **show each person they matter**
What happens when we stand together?

Stand Up for School Mental Health
Resources for Parents, Youth and Teachers

- Teenmentalhealth.org
- Mindyourmind.ca
- Children’s Mental Health Ontario: kidsmentalhealth.ca
- Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health: Excellenceforchildandyouth.ca
- School Mental Health ASSIST: Smh-assist.ca
- Parents for Children’s Mental Health: Pcmh.ca

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