

School Mental Health Ontario

At the September 17th Board Meeting, Theresa Kennedy, Associate Director of School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO) presented information to Trustees. The presentation emphasized the importance of mental health literacy and introduced the SMHO Provincial Strategy and Action Plan. Key topics included identity-affirming mental health, PPM 169 for school mental health, and the 2024-2025 priority resources. The presentation highlighted the role of school boards in promoting student mental health through a multi-tiered system of support, including mental health promotion, prevention, and early intervention. It also underscored the importance of leadership, community collaboration, and the use of evidence-based, scalable interventions. The session concluded with a focus on optimizing school mental health learning supports and services, and the importance of creating a welcoming and inclusive environment that supports mental health and well-being for all students.

"Thank you so much for joining us tonight to highlight these important initiatives, and our partnership, which will certainly benefit our students," concluded Chair Wilson.

Teacher Learning and Innovation Allocation Fund (TLIA)

Principal of Curriculum Brenda Reil provided the Board of Trustees with an overview of the Teacher Learning and Innovation Allocation Fund (TLIA) for the 2023-2024 school year. The Ministry of Education funding allocation for TLIA across the province, enabled CDSBEO to support teacher collaboration and responsive learning aligned with provincial priorities such as literacy, mathematics, curriculum implementation, student well-being, and STEM education. Teachers submitted proposals in the fall, and successful projects were implemented with consultant support. The sharing session, which took place in June, revealed positive impacts on both educators and students, enhancing learning and fostering a more inclusive school culture. The TLIA funding led to lasting changes in teaching practices and deeper student engagement, emphasizing the value of student voices in promoting self-regulation and mental health.

Personal Support Worker Program Update

The Board of Trustees received an update on the Personal Support Worker (PSW) Program from Jennifer Lentz, Principal of St. James Catholic Education Centre. The program, which is recognized provincially, includes 330 hours of in-class instruction, 90 hours of supervised

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clinical experience, and 270 hours of co-op placements. It offers ten additional certifications, including Mental Health First Aid, and is the only school board program in Ontario to do so. In 2022-2023, around 9,500 PSWs were trained in Ontario, with 20 per cent from district school boards. The CDSBEO program will continue to benefit from Ministry funding until March 2026, enabling free enrollment. This semester, 84 students are enrolled across four locations, with high interest for the next semester. The program provides six senior credits toward the Ontario Secondary School Diploma, with 28 OSSDs awarded to adult learners last year. Since 2012, the program has graduated 1,424 PSWs, making a significant local impact.

"In the many years that we have offered the PSW program, I have attended many graduations and each time I attend it always leaves such a lasting impact. This is a vibrant and much needed program, and our graduates certainly do work very hard to obtain their certification," concluded Chair Wilson.

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