

PEI Home and School Federation
AGM, April 15, 2023
Round Table Summary: Student Well-Being

Where Are We Now?

The Roundtable Discussions identified that Student Wellbeing is not yet embedded into school culture on the Island. There is a lack of clarity about the Student Wellbeing Team (SWBT) purpose, role and processes. There were questions about the processes to access SWBT support (e.g. referrals from school staff/parents, self-referral for kids aged 12+). SWBT Experts explained that referrals are triaged and then connected to service(s) within the SWBT or, in some cases, to other services provided in school or to specific professionals within the health system. The timeline for the review process once a referral is submitted is unpredictable, and there may be waitlists for certain services. SWBT team services are available year round, even when school is out; there is also a parent program that runs through the summer. SWBT are student-centred and have received good reception, but parents are often overwhelmed/exhausted by the “next steps”. Parents are notified and their consent is sought, but children aged 12 and over can opt to not inform their parents if they seek assistance from the SWBT. Some parents are concerned about informed consent, that their children can seek and receive counselling without parental knowledge/ consent, and “the system” affirming children’s behavior.

What Are the Challenges?

- Schools operate on the idea that dysregulated children aren’t losing out when they are pulled out of class for support, but the parent perspective holds that kids, especially in older grades, don’t want to be taken out of class as they feel singled out
- Needs and services required vary from school to school
- Communication issues and challenges in getting different groups to collaborate are identified as possible reasons why Student Wellness isn’t a part of school culture

What Do We Need?

- Must embed Student Wellness into school culture
- We need equity of services and programming across the Island
- Key programs should be standardized across the province
- Incorporate essential aspects of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) into the curriculum
- Every school needs to have support staff: Guidance Counsellor, Youth Service Worker, Behavior Resource Teacher
- Schools need increased access to mental health support and counseling services
- Need improved communication about the services provided by the SWBT and how to access support from SWBT

What Strategies and Suggestions Have Been Presented?

- School counselors can present about wellbeing, mental health to classes (e.g. suggested to present in Grade 4 health class)

- Communication about what the SWBT does and how students/families can access their support can be improved through schools' internal channels (emails, newsletters) and external channels (e.g. community newsletters, social media, presentations on health, wellness and safety at the Home & School Locals)
- Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia have similar programs to Student Wellbeing Teams, but PEI's system is more embedded in the schools
- Manitoba has a survival id program for Grades 4-6 to give kids strategies for SEL early on, in which peer training groups focused on SEL are established in schools

What Are the Action Items Identified for PEIHSF?

- Advocate for every school needs to have support staff: Guidance Counsellor, Youth Service Worker, Behavior Resource Teacher
- PEIHSF should consider encouraging that clear and consistent guidelines be established and communicated to all stakeholders regarding SEL programs, support services available to students and their families (through SWBT), and clarifying how much parental consent is required when students wish to make use of the services offered
- Questions were raised regarding the Ministerial Directive on Gender Diversity (https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/md_2021_06.pdf) asking if PEIHSF supports all Ministerial Directives or if the Federation's support is on case-by-base basis. Is it the role of PEIHSF to advise the Minister prior to such mandates/directives, and then give PEIHSF support afterwards, to to advise prior but then not necessarily support afterwards?
 - PEIHSF needs to discuss and clarify our role(s) in advising the Minister, our positions on Ministerial Mandates, and associated Department of Education and Lifelong Learning (DELL) and Public Schools Branch (PSB) policies