

Step 3: Develop and carry out the action plan

Mental Health Promotion – Elementary and Secondary

Mental health literacy is the foundation for mental health promotion and addressing the mental health needs of young people. It’s about understanding how to obtain and maintain good mental health, understanding the signs and symptoms of mental illness, and knowing when to get help or how to respond to others needing help. Building the mental health literacy of students is important BUT we know from research that to be most effective, promoting mental health should be done using a whole school approach. This means all members of the school community work together to build a mentally healthy school – providing education, building partnerships, and creating positive school environments and policies that support mental well-being.

Examples of Strategies and Activities

- The Ministry of Education’s [Foundations for a Healthy School](#) framework supports a whole school approach to mental health promotion. Sample strategies and activities can be found on pages 25-27.
- Visit the HPEPH [Mental Health Literacy](#) page for resources which are organized using the Foundations for a Healthy School framework.
- Browse the activities listed in the [Ophea Ideas for Action - Mental Health](#) resource.
- Review the example activities below to help spark your brainstorming or to choose activities for your school action plan.

School and Classroom Leadership	Curriculum, Teaching & Learning	Student Engagement	Social and Physical Environments	Home, School & Community Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide professional development opportunities for school staff to increase awareness about mental health promotion (e.g. Dr. Stuart Shanker Self-Reg learning series, SMHO MH Lit online modules, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer professional development opportunities for teachers specific to the mental health components of the H&PE curriculum • Provide classroom-based programs for all students to support the H&PE Curriculum expectations for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a student group/club to promote mental health school-wide • Collect student input about what the priority area should be for mental health promotion in the school (e.g. see the Healthy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer professional development opportunities for teachers about developing positive teacher student relationships • Implement easy activities that develop connections between students and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure school staff are aware of and know how to access supports for students both within the school and with community partners • Invite parents and community members to be members of your action team

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect data to help focus the priority areas for mental health promotion in the school (e.g. learning about stress, seeking help, creating a welcoming school). Get creative with how to collect the data (e.g. Photo Speak activity, classrooms vote for ideas, suggestion box in central location, formal surveys, etc.) • Implement staff wellness activities • Review school policies using a mental health lens • Incorporate mental health promotion into the school improvement plan (e.g. link to the Healthy School Team action plan) • Provide staff with an opportunity to share practices and successes at staff meetings • Provide student engagement opportunities 	<p>social emotional learning and mental health literacy (e.g. KHST! or Stress Lessons, Bell Let's Talk in the Classroom, Ophea curriculum supports)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer clubs and activities that allow students to build social emotional skills • Offer opportunities for students to learn about themselves – their interests, skills, abilities, strengths 	<p>Schools Toolkit/Library for ideas)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students organize school event for Mental Health Awareness Week in May • Students lead wellness activities (e.g. yoga, mindfulness activities, etc.) • Students create messages about seeking help or helping peers when struggling (e.g. pocket cards for students with local mental health contacts and websites, use social media to share messages about mental health with students in the school) • Students create exam stress kits (e.g. healthy snack, stress coping strategies, stress ball, etc.) • Students lead mental health initiatives for their whole school (e.g. RNAO toolkit) 	<p>educators (e.g. smile, use their name, 2x10 activity)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement easy activities that develop connections between students (e.g. name tags on desks, Make Fast Friends activity, Getting to Know Each Other through Dance) • Create mentally healthy classrooms (e.g. SMHO everyday mentally healthy classroom resource activities) • Involve students to create safe, peaceful, and positive spaces to relax or de-stress • Promote positive mental health messages through different channels (e.g. daily mental health announcements, posters, bathroom mirror stickers or door posters, social media, newsletter inserts, wall displays, etc.) • Create engaging outdoor learning and play spaces • Organize school-wide stress buster activities (e.g. morning walks at start of day, breathing breaks, stretch breaks, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share mental health messages with parents/guardians (e.g. newsletter inserts, social media) • Discuss mental health promotion at school council meetings • Partner with community agencies to offer parenting programs (e.g. Triple P) • Include mental health promotion in school-wide and community activities (e.g. parent night, community BBQs, etc.) • Have students map mental health agencies and resources to support their mental health in their community
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