

2019

PREMIER'S AWARD SUBMISSION

▪ *JOURNEY TO ENHANCED WELL-BEING* ▪



**SOUTH EAST
CORNERSTONE**
Public School Division #209

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SECPD's Journey to Enhanced Well-Being

Background

South East Cornerstone Public School Division's vision is "Success and achievement for every student in every school". In order to support student achievement and engagement, the SECPD Board of Education recognized that supporting student mental health and well-being must be a priority. Data has been collected through a variety of channels from a variety of stakeholders regarding student and staff well-being. Increasingly the data portrayed that we required intensive supports for students and staff who work with students. As a result of the data analysis and increasing need, a multi-faceted plan was developed to provide support and education for both students and staff. The plan involved providing mental health literacy instruction for all students from kindergarten to grade 12 in conjunction with extensive training for professional teaching staff.

The road for this journey is long and winding and will be one that is on-going. The Board of Education recognizes that while we have taken our first steps and have seen improvement, the focus of well-being will continue to be a priority and need. To this end the Board of Education continues to support the collection of data and information to inform our practices.

The multi-faceted approach includes implementation of programs in which students both understand well-being and are also provided tools to access for self-help and resiliency, professional development for staff to support knowledge and understanding to lead and support student programs as well as a component of support staff to address their own needs, as well as a feedback mechanism for future direction.

Student Supports:

Kindergarten to Grade 8 Students

The SECPD Board of Education approved the implementation of the *MINDUP* Curriculum for Kindergarten to Grade 8 students. The program is "science-centric and evidence-based, with over 10 years of research conducted on the programs efficacy." <https://mindup.org/>

a. Why did we choose *MINDUP*?

- To improve children's self-control and self-regulation
- To strengthen student's resiliency and decision making
- To teach students the power of positive mindset
- To develop positive social skills such as empathy, compassion, patience and generosity
- To teach positive mental health skills (coping skills, not positive emotions)
- To link mental health interventions with academic learning
- To start young and continue throughout schooling



<https://mindup.org/>

b. What was provided for students?

- *MINDUP* resources were purchased for every school
- During the 2018-2019 school year Kindergarten to Grade 8 teachers implemented the *MINDUP* program by presenting the 15 lessons to each grade.
- School Counsellors provided support for the program when needed and co-presented lessons.

Grade 9 to 12 Students

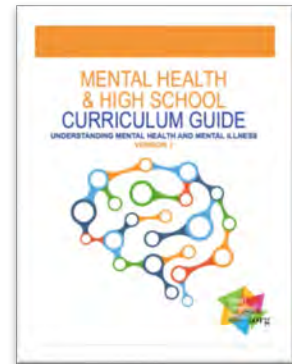
The Board of Education also approved the implementation of the *The Mental Health and High School Curriculum Guide – Understanding Mental Health and Mental Illness for all Grade 9 to 12 Students*. This resource provides a complete set of evidence-based, online modular resources.

a. Why did we choose The Mental Health and High School Curriculum Guide?

- To increase the understanding of mental health and mental disorders
- To decrease the stigma of mental illness
- To enhance help-seeking efficacy among both students and teachers

b. What was provided for students?

- 6 modules were taught to students through infusion within high school ELA courses
 - o Module 1 – The Stigma of Mental Illness
 - o Module 2 – Understanding Mental Health and Mental Illness
 - o Module 3 – Information of Specific Mental Illnesses
 - o Module 4 – Experiences of Mental Illness and the Importance of Family Communication
 - o Module 5 – Seeking Help and Finding Support
 - o Module 6 – The Importance of Positive Mental Health
- School counsellors provided support for the modules and co-presented when required
- ELA Instructional Coaches developed curriculum connection documents for all high school ELA courses, which included live links to the Mental Health modules, lesson plans, videos and learning activities and fit within the outcomes of the Saskatchewan curriculum. These were provided to every teacher teaching 10, 20 and 30 level English courses. This ensured that every student in the system would receive the course objectives as all students are required to take English. The ELA courses were a natural fit for the stimulation of discussions.
- Assessment supports were developed to support teachers with the curriculum implementation and were reported through outcomes.



Teachers

The first support the SECPSD Board of Education provided was endorsing the creation of a Wellness Committee during the 2017-2018 school year consisting of superintendents, coordinators, administrators, teachers and school counsellors. The Board of Education approved budget for the committee to meet three times throughout the year to share ideas regarding the well-being and mental health of staff and students.

An additional support the SECPSD Board of Education put into place for teachers was the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP). The Board of Education purchased a program for teachers and their families to access. Teachers were then able to access additional health and wellness supports. This direction from the Board of Education was greatly appreciated by staff.

A further support the Board of Education provided was budget approval to purchase seats in the online University of British Columbia course *Bringing Mental Health to Schools and Teach Mental Health*, which provide background knowledge about mental health literacy and mental illness.

- Kindergarten to Grade 8 Teachers – completed the free online *Teach Mental Health*

- o This course consists of 7 modules:
 - Module 1 – Introduction and Background
 - Module 2 – Stigma and Mental Illness
 - Module 3 – Human Brain Development
 - Module 4 – Understanding Mental Health, Mental Illness and Related Issues in Young People
 - Module 5 – What is Treatment for a Mental Disorder and How do we Know What is Likely to Work?
 - Module 6 – Seeking Help and Providing Support
 - Module 7 – Caring for Students and Ourselves



- Grade 9 to 12 Teachers – completed the on-line course *Bringing Mental Health to Schools*

- o This course provides the background knowledge for teachers to implement the *Mental Health and High School Curriculum Guide*
- o This course consists of 6 modules:
 - Module 1 – The Stigma of Mental Illness
 - Module 2 – Understanding Mental Health and Mental Illness
 - Module 3 – Information on Specific Mental Illnesses
 - Module 4 – Experiences of Mental Illnesses and the Importance of Family Communication
 - Module 5 – Seeking Help and Finding Support
 - Module 6 – The Importance of Positive Mental Health



The Board of Education also provisioned time for teachers to complete the online modules through the SECPSD PD Hub in their schools. This format allowed teachers to collaborate and engage in small group discussions to create meaningful learning environments.

EVIDENCE OF DIRECT BOARD INFLUENCE AND PARTICIPATION IN THE INNOVATION

The SECPSD Board of Education engaged in conversations regarding the data presented during the quarterly Wall Walks lead by system leadership. From these discussions, the Board of Education supported the proposed actions including the development of a Wellness Committee.

The SECPSD Board of Education recognized that teachers were indicating they required access to enhanced supports. In response to this need, the Board of Education approved a budget line for the Employee and Family Assistance Program to ensure that teachers have access to health and wellness supports in addition to the previously funded CUPE, SEIU and Out-of-Scope members EFAP programs.

The Board of Education supported implementation of supports and approved budget to purchase *Bringing Mental Health to Schools* for teachers and *MINDUP* resources for all schools. In addition to the purchase of the online course, the Board of Education also approved the budget to provide the 6-8

hours for teachers to complete the online course. The Board of Education emphasized the importance of this work by providing teacher assigned time in the calendar to complete.

The Board of Education requested frequent and thorough monitoring reports.

The Board of Education supported the Coordinator of Curriculum and the Coordinator of Student Services to present our journey to improved well-being to the 24th National Congress on Rural Education in Canada from March 31 – April 2, 2019.

INNOVATIVE NATURE OF THE PROGRAM OR PROJECT

The Wellness Committee made the decision to focus on staff well-being as a starting point. The South East Cornerstone Teachers' Association were members of the committee and supported the development, distribution and collection of staff surveys which were conducted in order to receive feedback from all teaching staff members focused on perceptions of student and staff wellness. The questions included:

- What are the two main student wellness concerns in your school?
- What is your school doing to promote student wellness and positive lifestyle choices?
- What are you doing to promote staff wellness in your school?
- Are there barriers with promoting wellness in your building?

In addition to the survey, student well-being and mental health concerns arose from the data gathered by Student Services Counsellors throughout the division and the known self-harm incidents including several hospitalizations of students and the tragic death by suicide of student during the 2017-2018 school year.

Discussions during Board of Education meetings, and Senior Leadership team meetings supported the plan to research possible avenues to improve well-being and mental health literacy understanding for all students. The research led us to Dr. Stan Kutcher's work.

Dr. Kutcher:

- Is a Professor of Psychiatry and the Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health at UBC.
- Established the first integrated youth mental health care services, education and research program in Canada at the University of Toronto.
- Served as Head of the Department of Psychiatry, Associate Dean of International Health and Director of the World Health Organization Collaborating Center in Mental Health Policy and Training at Dalhousie University.
- Is a renowned expert in adolescent mental health and leader in mental health research, advocacy, training, and policy and has been involved in mental health work in over 20 countries

<https://ubcxonline.exl.ubc.ca/courses/course-v1:UBCxOnline+BMHTS+2017/about>

Research has shown that applying the Mental Health and High School Curriculum Guide improved mental health related outcomes for students (<http://teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/>)

COST OF THE INNOVATION RELATED TO BENEFITS BEING ACHIEVED

With the main research work of the Wellness Committee being completed during the 2017-2018 school year, a decision was made to disband the committee until after the implementation of the staff and student supports so the costs for the committee involved travel and lunch expenses for 16 members for three meetings during 2017-2018.

In the 2018-2019 school year, the costs included purchasing the online course, *Bringing Mental Health to Schools*, and the *MINDUP* resources. The *Teach Mental Health* online course was a free resource provided by the University of British Columbia. The online courses were completed during unassigned time at each school eliminating the expenses of substitute teachers, mileage or food for the professional learning.

The initial purchase of the *MINDUP* resources was a one-time expense during the 2018-2019 school year. Depending on the size of the school, the expense was between \$75 and \$150 per school for 36 of our schools.

Enrolment in the EFAP program for teachers is a yearly commitment by the Board of Education. This program was \$30.00 per teacher annually. The Board of Education is pleased to learn that the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation will be purchasing a similar program for the staff for the 2019-2020 year and moving forward. The Board of Education has provided direction that a transition plan be put in place as teachers move from one program to the next.

The Board of Education firmly believes that the benefits of increased mental health literacy and supports for both students and staff outweigh the financial cost of implementation.

SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INNOVATION WITHIN THE PRESENT SYSTEM OR SCHOOL

MINDUP resources was a one-time cost however, the program remains in use for the foreseeable future. The *Teen Mental Health and High School Curriculum Guide* is a free resource sponsored by Sun Life Financial. Therefore, the sustainability of the innovative journey is solid. The *MINDUP* program will continue to be implemented for all kindergarten to Grade 8 students each year. In the initial implementation year the *Teen Mental Health and High School Curriculum* was implemented through the English Language Arts courses because all high school students are required to complete those courses. Moving forward, the *Teen Mental Health and High School Curriculum Guide* will be implemented through Grade 9 Physical Education or Health courses or the Grade 10 Wellness course in an effort to ensure all students receive the course once during their high school career.

New kindergarten to Gr. 8 teachers will access the *Teach Mental Health* online course at no charge from the University of British Columbia. The *Bringing Mental Health to School* online course can be purchased for \$20. Providing this course to on-board new high school teachers will not be prohibitive.

As mentioned the Employee and Family Assistance Program will now be funded through the STF. If the Wellness Committee needs to be reinstated, the Board of Education remains supportive by providing budget money for yearly meetings.

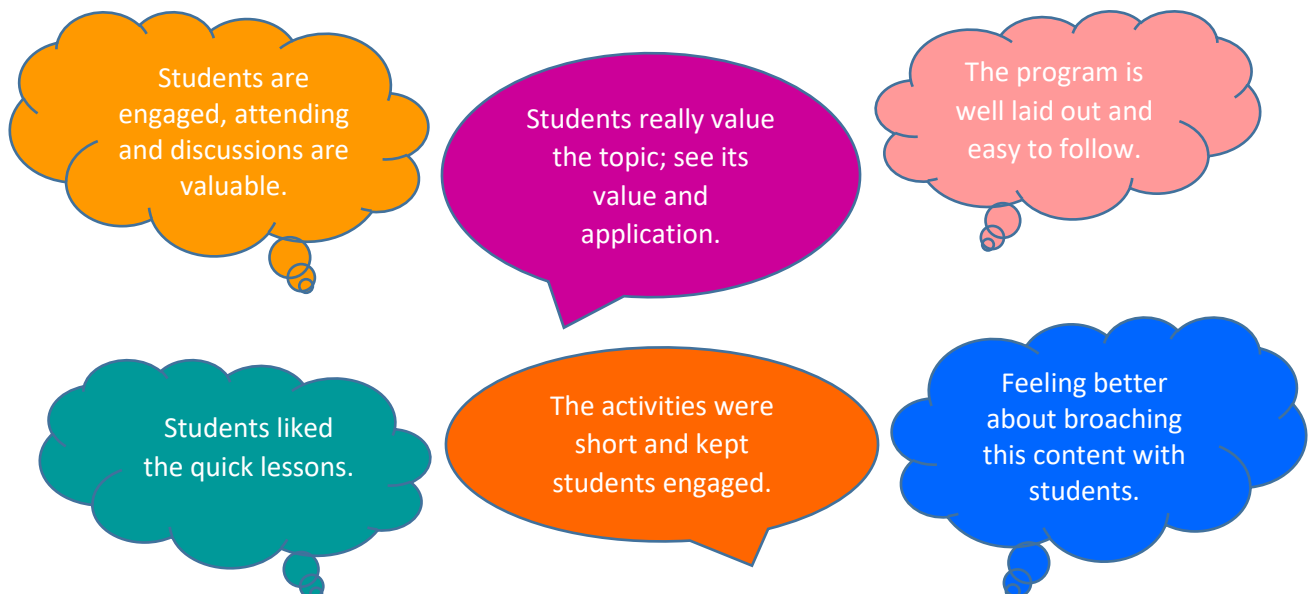
The Board of Education continues to seek out new data sources, resources and processes to facilitate our journey. Last school year students in grades 7 – 12 completed the Saskatchewan Alliance for Youth and Community Well-being. The data will provide the Board of Education further direction for supports. There is also an opportunity for grant application with this program to support further work.

CLIENT SUPPORT FOR THE INNOVATION

Students and staff have welcomed the *MINDUP* program in schools. Schools were given the ability to decide how they would deliver the program to their students. Some chose specific classes and time of day, while others allowed each teacher to decide how they would infuse the program into their subject areas. Cross-curricular connections were encouraged to maximize instructional time. Feedback from students has been positive:



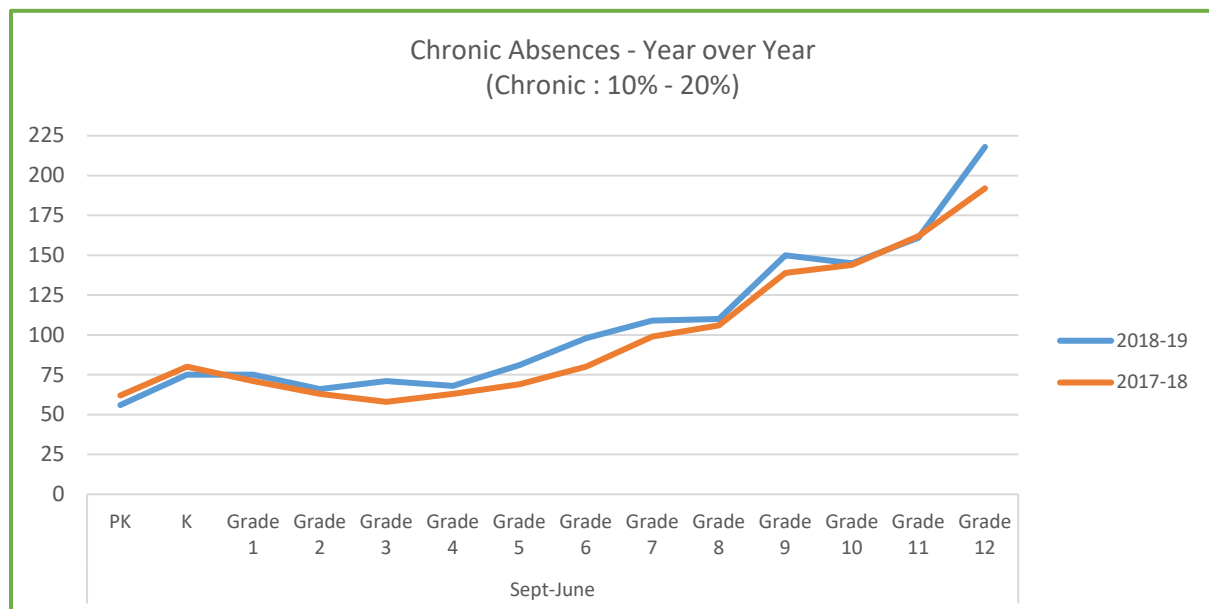
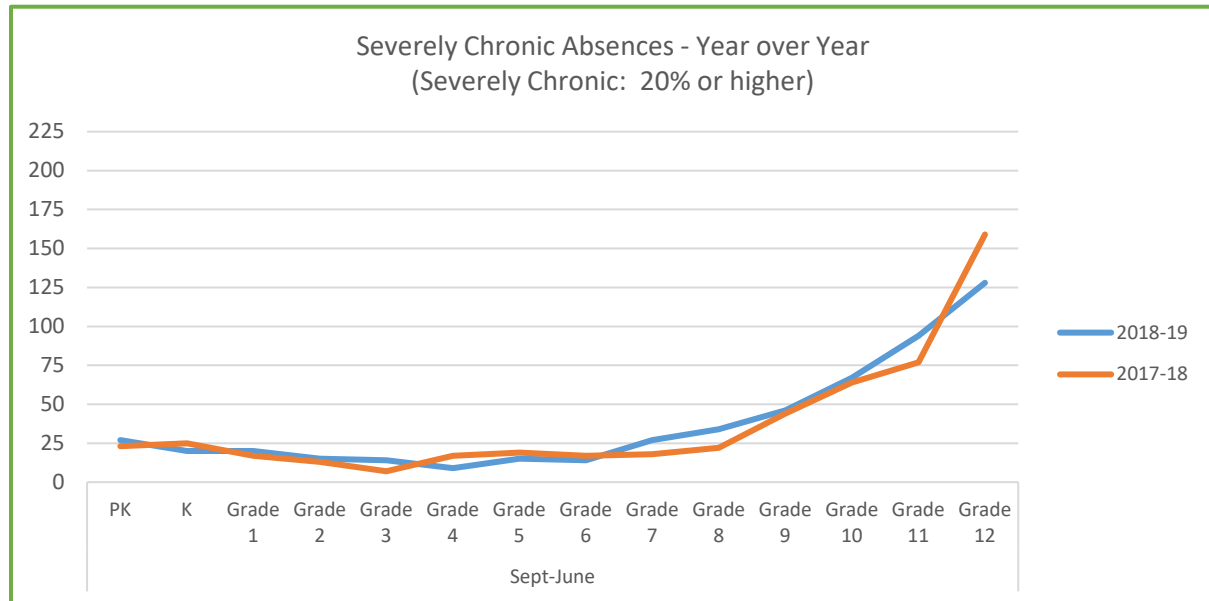
After the completion of the online course, *Bringing Mental Health to Schools*, high school teachers indicated they have gained the confidence in leading this work. Feedback from teachers for this implementation has been positive:



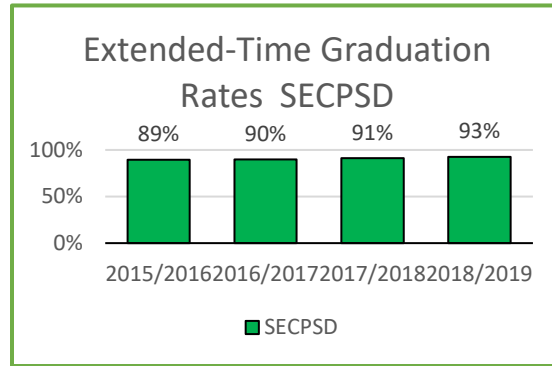
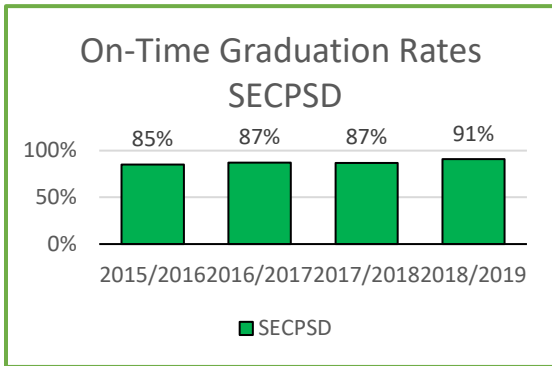
EVIDENCE OF IMPROVED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Evidence of improved student achievement because of the initiative can be tied to attendance, graduation rates and student behaviour.

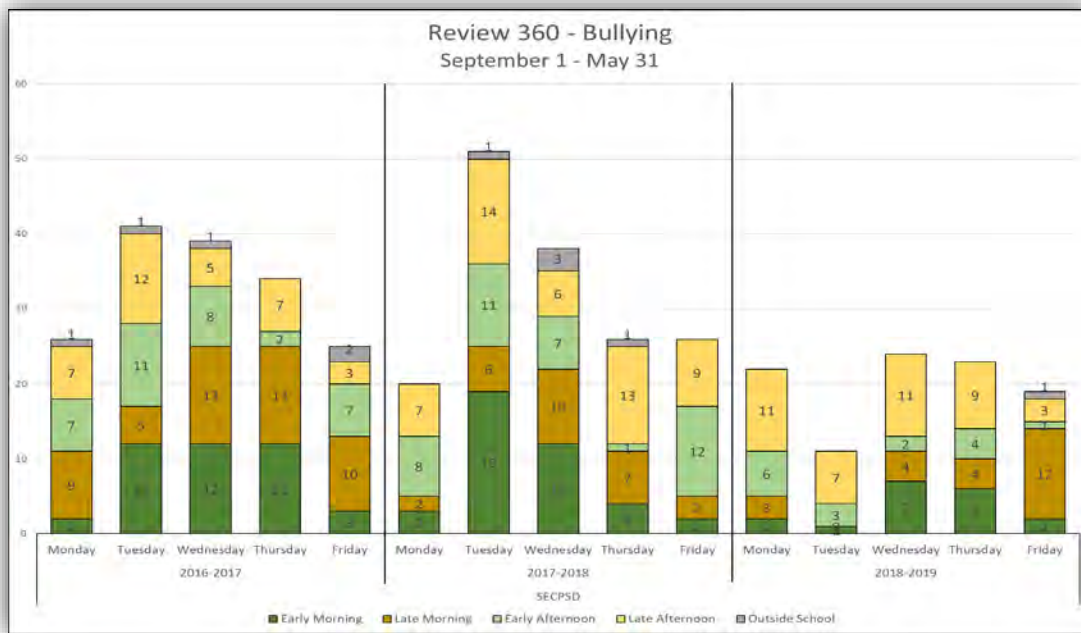
The attendance rate for severely chronically absent students decreased from the 2017-2018 to the 2018-2019 school year. This means that fewer students are absent more than 20%. As that number decreased, we saw a corresponding rise in the chronically absent students. Thus students are on a path to improved attendance. Attendance is a predictor of academic success. Increased attendance is indicative of engaged and healthy students.



Both the on-time and extended-time graduation rates increased year over year since we began our journey. It is noted that the increase for 2018-2019 year is more substantial than previous years and we believe is associated with the extensive work done to support mental health and well-being.



And lastly, there has been a significant decrease in the number of reported incidents of bullying as per student data collected at the school level through Review 360, a program which tracks student behavior. We believe that the *MINDUP* program has contributed to this.



Increasing the mental health literacy for both students and staff as well as focusing on coping strategies and accessing supports has been beneficial for both students and staff. The graduation rates, attendance rates and student behaviour data indicate we are moving in the right direction in our journey. The Board of Education is very pleased with the work to date and is committed to the journey of student and staff well-being to support success and achievement for every student in every school.

Supporting Resources:

<https://mindup.org/>

<http://teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/>

<https://ubcxonline.exl.ubc.ca/>

SECPD Curriculum Connections, Implementation and Assessment Documents:

<http://bit.ly/SECPD-MentalHealth>