

## Featured Mental Health Initiative

### Multilingual Mental Health Initiative

Wellington Catholic District School Board (Guelph/Wellington County, ON)

#### Background

Wellington Catholic District School Board (WCDSB) services more than 8,000 students in the City of Guelph and the County of Wellington, with grades ranging from Kindergarten through to Grade 12. The board values equity and inclusion, academic excellence, and engaged learning with the guiding principles of critical thinking, collaboration, innovation, global citizenship, communication and learning to learn.

#### Promising Practice

Currently, there are very few mental health and well-being resources in Ontario that are written in the languages of the newcomer populations in Guelph. WCDSB has observed that the language barriers, in addition to the lack of multilingual resources available in Ontario, has impacted newcomer families' ability to access the support they may need. Therefore, this initiative will work to ensure that all families, including newcomer and refugee families, can access mental health resources within WCDSB, and within the greater Guelph community.



WCDSB's English as a Second Language Team, and Mental Health Clinician Team, will focus on creating resources that support students and their families in understanding and promoting mental health and well-being. It will equip teachers with the resources they need to support multilingual students who are struggling with mental health or trauma. Additionally, resources available in their respective languages will allow parents to monitor and assess when their child may require additional mental health support, and how to directly access those supports. WCDSB hopes to address language inequalities and barriers to service by promoting mental health and well-being for all students as a preventative measure, as well as providing ongoing support to students, and their family members, who are struggling with mental health issues.

#### Impact

Stress and trauma can have a lasting impact on the well-being of students and families if left unsupported, so the WCDSB wants to support the needs of newcomer families, given their unique experiences. This initiative will allow for greater access to mental health support by addressing the language barriers that are faced by many newcomer families. It will help students and their families learn about mental health, including signs

and symptoms one might be experiencing, strategies they may use to cope with stress, and how they can access resources for their families.

### Sustainability

Once resources are translated into various languages, they can be distributed to all of the schools within the school board. This will allow all staff (teachers, youth workers, social workers, principals, etc.) to access materials and connect with families about mental health and wellness, in a language the families are fluent in. With access to the translated resources at each school, newcomer families will benefit for years to come.

### Modifications

Here are suggestions to modify this approach for different learning environments.

- Host focus groups with newcomer families in your school communities to discuss how your school can best support their children's mental health
- Consider researching free online mental health resources available in various different languages and promote them on your school's website and social media
- Consider engaging trusted community members who speak the chosen language of newcomer and refugee families to support by sharing information and ensuring families can access support as needed

A PHE Canada campaign



Presented by

