



**DURHAM CATHOLIC  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**  
*Learning and Living in Faith*

## Memorandum

To: Board of Trustees

From: Tracy Barill, Director of Education

Date: April 24, 2023

Subject: **Student Services Updates**

Origin: Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education – Student Services

## Purpose

As part of our ongoing efforts to support students with special education and mental health needs, the student services department dispatches a variety of multi-disciplinary teams and offers a variety of services to the system. In addition, the department creates opportunities for specialized after school programming, and provides regular professional development and training opportunities to both educational and clinical staff. A special education review, which solicited feedback from parents/guardians/caregivers, administrators and student services staff was conducted earlier this school year and the feedback obtained is being used to develop departmental goals for the 2023-24 school year.

## Background

### **Student Services Overview:**

Our focus for this year connects with our year-long theme of ***Listening with the Ear of the Heart***, as we endeavour to listen closely to the needs and viewpoints of various stakeholders through our continuing efforts to develop departmental goals. This year, staff and students celebrated World Autism Day and Down Syndrome Day. Schools celebrated in a variety of ways, from creatively designed bulletin boards to sharing photos of unique socks on social media in honour of students with exceptionalities. Our celebrations endeavour to promote greater awareness and inclusivity for students with special education needs within our school communities. Our multi-disciplinary teams, clinical services and educational assistant staff have continued to support students with special education needs throughout the system. In March, we welcomed a numeracy support teacher to our student services team. The role of the numeracy support teacher is to support the development of numeracy skills for intermediate level students with individual education plans at select schools. To continue to enhance safety and promote

well-being for all DCDSB students, the student services department has compiled a three-year mental health strategy to guide our current and future programming and practices aimed at supporting and promoting positive student mental health.

### **Central Teams and Key Initiatives Overview:**

#### *Durham Catholic Autism Resource Team (DCART):*

Our Autism Resource Team work collaboratively with school teams to design alternative programming and curriculum modifications for students with diagnoses of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The team also supports schools to meet the communication, mental health, language, behaviour and sensory needs of students with ASD. Early Intervention Classrooms (EICs) and after school programming are also part of our strategy to support students with ASD.

#### *Durham Catholic Behaviour Resource Team (DCBRT):*

DCBRT is dispatched to schools to support staff who are working with students whose behaviour impacts their ability to focus on academics. The team specializes in approaches to develop social skills and self-regulation strategies to increase emphasis on academic success for students struggling with behaviour issues.

#### *Assistive Technology Supports:*

Hardware equipped with evidence-based reading programs is available to students whose learning profile indicates a need for it. Program training and support for students and program support teachers is fundamental to the efficient and effective implementation of the technology.

This year, a premium version of Orbit Note software has been purchased to better support the literacy needs of students with literacy needs in the system. Additionally, transitional visits to secondary schools are scheduled for students with assistive technology, to prepare them for the move to secondary de-streamed classes, and summer programming is also offered. Our special education team also supports referrals to Saganaska Provincial Demonstration School for students with a learning disability (LD) diagnosis.

#### *Numeracy Support Teacher:*

A centrally dispatched teacher is assigned to select schools to support the numeracy skill development of students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Schools are selected based on data derived from report card and Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessments for students in grades 6-8. Collaboration with administrators, program support and classroom teachers are the cornerstones to this support initiative with an emphasis on numeracy support programs such as *Math UP* and teaching strategies such as the use of tactiles and manipulatives to increase student engagement and achievement.

*Support for De-streamed Grade Nine Classes:*

Student Services staff have collaborated with Academic Services staff to support secondary teachers of newly de-streamed grade nine courses. Professional development sessions focused on Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogy (CRRP), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and creating a reflective tool for educators are a few of the actions aimed at providing teachers with pedagogy and tools to better support students with a variety of learning profiles within the de-streamed classroom.

*Project Search:*

Project Search is a partnership among the Abilities Centre, Regional Municipality of Durham and the Durham Catholic District School Board.

The program is designed to offer school-to-work transitional training to secondary students in their final year who have been diagnosed with an intellectual or developmental disability. Students will work within a classroom at the Regional Municipality of Durham and be trained in the workplace. 75% of graduates of Project Search gain full-time employment within one year of completing the program.

*Mental Health Strategy:*

We are releasing our three-year mental health strategy which highlights four key goals: to amplify voices to create culturally responsive, mentally healthy schools and classrooms, to identify and address emerging and escalating student mental health concerns, mobilize support for those disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and to build and sustain comprehensive safety nets through system and family collaboration.

*Professional Development and Training:*

Monthly meetings featuring professional development for Program Support Teachers, Applied Behaviour Analysis training (system), Universal Design for Learning professional development (secondary teachers), and a variety of professional development activities for educational assistants has been provided this school year. Additionally, Applied Suicide Intervention training and Safe Talk training sessions have been offered to administrators and educators system-wide.

*Looking ahead: Planning for the 2023-24 school year:*

Using the feedback gained from the Special Education review, the student services department has begun planning for next school year by developing goals and strategies to promote a collaborative culture aimed at improving outcomes for students with special education and mental health needs.

TB/PS

Attachment: Special Education and Mental Health Report



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# Special Education and Mental Health Updates

Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education

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# Special Education and Mental Health Updates: Agenda

- Student services staff
- Centralized supports for students with special education needs
- Specialized programs and services
- Professional development
- Mental health strategy
- Special Education Review – Goal setting

# Student Services – Staff

- Consultants
- Coordinators
- Educational Assistants
- Behaviour Support Specialists
- Behaviour Analysts
- Psychologists
- Psychometrists
- Resource & Itinerant Teachers (blind and low vision, deaf and hard of hearing, autism, behaviour)
- Speech and Language Pathologists, Communicative Disorders Assistant
- Coach Advocates for Black Students
- Social Workers
- Child and Youth Counsellors
- Program Support Teachers
- Assistive Technology Specialists & Technologists
- Orientation and Mobility Specialist

# Centralized Supports for Student with Special Education Needs

## Multi-Disciplinary Teams:

- DCART (Durham Catholic Autism Resource Team)
- DCBRT (Durham Catholic Behaviour Resource Team)
- Assistive Technology (AT) Team

# Centralized Supports for Student with Special Education Needs: Durham Catholic Autism Resource Team (DCART)

Supporting students with an Autism diagnosis in the areas of:

- Alternative Programming and Curriculum Modifications
- Communication
- Social Language
- Challenging Behaviours
- Sensory Needs/Environmental Factors
- Mental health supports





# DCART Services

Services will include a minimum of 12 weeks intensive support to the school, for students who have been referred to the team.

## Members of the DCART:

- Consultant for Autism Services;
- Speech and Language Pathologist;
- Board Certified Behaviour Analyst;
- Resource Teacher;
- Social Worker;
- Behaviour Support Specialists



# Centralized Supports for Student with Special Education Needs: Durham Catholic Behaviour Resource Team (DCBRT)

Referrals for students with significant behavioural challenges

- Supports include:
  - Data collection and analysis
  - IEP development and program implementation
  - Self-regulation
  - Communication
  - Sensory Needs/Environmental Factors
  - Social skills and emotional regulation
  - Mental health & well-being
  - Professional Learning Series
  - Modelling and implementation of recommendations & resources

# DC Behaviour Resource Team (DCBRT)



Services include consultation or comprehensive supports to students and educator teams

## **Members of the DCBRT:**

- Student Services Consultant (Team Lead);
- Speech and Language Pathologist;
- Behaviour Analyst;
- Resource Teachers;
- Child and Youth Worker;
- Behaviour Support Specialists

# Centralized Supports for Student with Special Education Needs: Technology (AT) Team

- SEA (Specialized Equipment Amount) funding from Ministry to provide hardware and software that is essential for students to access curriculum
- Chromebooks with Read & Write and Orbit Note (Premium)-text-speech and speech-text software
- SWATTT- Students with Assistive Technology Transition Trip
- Summer programs- camp, small group training





## Assistive Technology Team Members

- Student Services Consultant (Team Lead)
- Assistive Technology Specialists
- Assistive Technology Technicians

# Centralized Supports for Student with Special Education Needs: Additional Supports/Resources

- DCDSB supports parent-initiated referrals to Provincial and Demonstration schools (deaf, blind, learning disabilities)
- DCDSB uses Lexia Reading, a literacy program that is supported by the Science of Reading. Program aims to build foundational reading skills for students through personalized learning. The three-part blended-learning model incorporates individualized online learning activities, ongoing progress monitoring, and lessons and resources for data informed, teacher-led instruction.
- Use of LAMP and Touch Chat applications for students accessing support from Speech and Language Pathologists

# Centralized Supports for Students with Special Education Needs: Numeracy Support Teacher

- Work with administration and PST; teachers, EA's and students with IEPs on a regular basis
- Implement numeracy strategies based on individual needs
- Work with students to support growth and development in their attitudes and development of skills across achievement chart
- Work with Student and Academic Services to implement appropriate teaching strategies and lessons
- Collaborate with teachers for effective teaching and learning and assessment strategies in an inclusive classroom
- Model and demonstrate approaches to teaching of numeracy, such as, Universal Design for Learning; effective accommodations; inquiry-based learning; problem solving
- Assist teachers to collect data (i.e., CBM, etc.) to measure improvement in student learning

# Centralized Supports for Students with Special Education Needs: Numeracy Support Teacher

EQAO Results for Students with IEPs June 2022

SCHOOL	% that did not meet standard	Total # of IEPs	# not meeting Level 3	Below Level 1	Level 1-2	Meeting Standard Level 3	Ratio School Pop. %
1	100%	10 3.2%* Current Gr 6 11IEP 3.5%	10	-	10	-	17% 52/312
2	100%	7 3%	7	1	6	-	21% 49/233
3	100%	14 2.6%	14	-	14	-	17% 91/532
TOTAL		31	31	2	30	-	

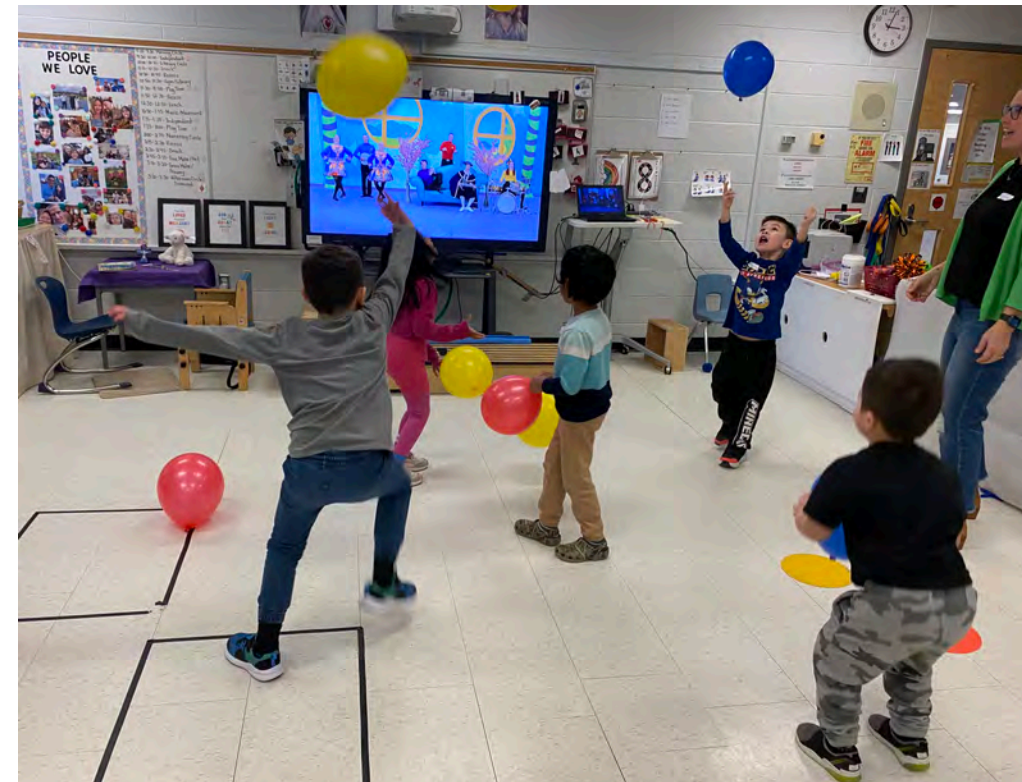


# Centralized Supports for Students with Special Education Needs: Collaborative Inquiry in the numeracy classroom





# Specialized Programs and Services: Early Intervention Classrooms (EIC)



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# Specialized Programs and Services: Early Intervention Classrooms cont.

The Early Intervention Classroom (EIC) is a communication-based Kindergarten program to support the areas of:

- language/communication
- school-readiness skills
- self-regulation
- play
- social-emotional development

The small classroom placement has a maximum of 6 students per site at three DCDSB schools





# Specialized Programs and Services: Professionals who support the EIC

- Program Support Teacher
- Educational Assistant (2)
- Speech and Language Pathologist
- Communicative Disorders Assistant
- Board Certified Behaviour Analyst
- Behaviour Support Specialist
- Consultant for Autism Services



# Specialized Programs and Services: PEAK Assessment in Early Intervention Classrooms(EIC)

Promoting Emergence of Advanced Knowledge (PEAK) is an evidence-based assessment and curriculum that supports students through a combination of the traditional verbal behavior approach and the science of Derived Relational Responding.

- PEAK helps with teaching problem solving skills and advanced language skills
- All members of DCART and EIC Staff were trained in a 2 day certification course
- PEAK is used to support student learning at all 3 EIC sites, under the direction of Kara Kenney and Michelle Adair, Board Certified Behaviour Analysts

# Specialized Programs and Services: After School Social Skills Development Programs

- PEERS for students in Grades 7-12
- Friendship Lab for both students and their parents in Grades 3-6
- Secret Agent Society for students ages 8-12
- All programs are offered to students with an ASD diagnosis

# Specialized Programs and Services: Project SEARCH

- 10-month transition to work program for students diagnosed with an intellectual or developmental disability and entering their final year of high school
- Partnership between DCDSB, Project SEARCH, the Abilities Centre and Regional Municipality of Durham Region
- 10 interns (students), 1 teacher, 2 skills trainers
- Classroom is in the host business (Municipality of Durham Region)



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# Specialized Programs and Services: Project SEARCH

- Employability skills curriculum teaches transferrable, marketable skills
- 3 internship rotations
- 1 Year Post-Graduation: follow-up by skills trainers to help with job development and retention
- 75% of Project SEARCH graduates find employment in the community one year after graduation



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# Specialized Programs and Services: K-12

## Reading Interventions

Student Services Staff is supporting the implementation of the Right to Read inquiry recommendations:

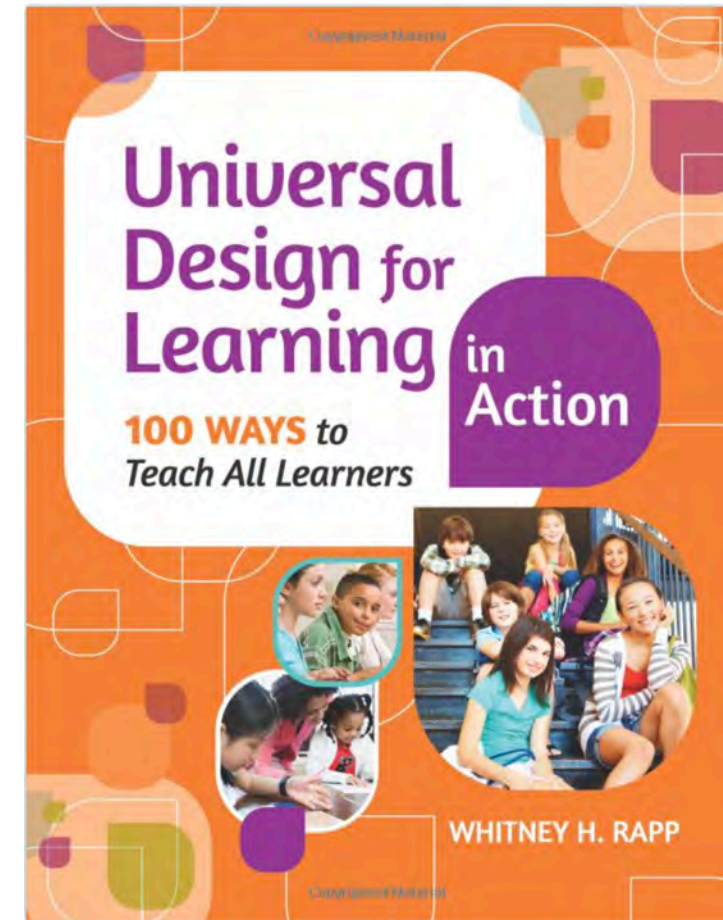
- Student services staff instrumental in sharing the key elements of the inquiry with DCDSB administrators last spring
- Speech and Language Pathologists (SLPs) are trained to assess, identify and provide therapeutic literacy interventions for students at risk for reading and writing problems
- Psych staff assess and diagnose learning disabilities and provide recommendations for programming
- Three SLPs and Chief Psychologist are collaborating with Academic Services to select assessment and intervention tools for use in K-12 classrooms

# Professional Development: Supporting De-streaming of Grade Nine

- PSTs, Student Services Coordinators and Academic Services consultants collaborated on professional development sessions for teachers in February
- Universal Design for Learning – pedagogy whereby curriculum, assessments and evaluation are designed to be accessible to students with varying entry points
- Co-ordination of school-based activities over two PA days focused around Universal Design for Learning

# Professional Development: Program Support (PST) and Classroom Teacher Sessions

- Monthly PST meetings, covering wide variety of topics (best practices, IPRC
- New PST Mentoring Program; new PSTs consolidate their learning with more experienced colleagues
- UDL books and activities (Equity Leads, Teachers of De-streamed grade nine, Secondary PA days)



# Professional Development: Sonderly Courses in Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)

- Geneva Centre Ministry Course funding for ABA was given to DCDSB on the Sonderley online platform
- \$27,000 was provided to DCDSB. All funds were spent
- A Numbered Memo in February offered courses to all educators who were interested
- 58 Educators registered for courses

# Professional Development: ABA Certificate Courses

- ABA courses are well attended by educators
- Offered after school and on P.A. Days
- In addition to the 4 ABA certificate courses, new course offerings have been created by members of DCART, including courses in:
  - Sensory Integration and Movement Breaks
  - Functional Behaviour Assessment
  - Social Language
  - Alternative Curriculum
  - Structured Work Systems
  - Boom Cards
  - How to use behavioural contracts
  - Teaching life skills



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# **SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL AT DCDSB**

**SOCIAL WORK AND CYC SERVICES**

# Pathways To Social Work Services In Elementary Schools



Each school has a consistent amount of SW time based on enrollment data & priority neighbourhood data ranging from 0.5 to 1.5 days/ week

School Team Meeting

Immediate Response

(Suicide Intervention, Crisis Response, VTRA)

Social Work Access Line

## School Social Work

Provides evidence based intervention in the areas of:

- **Mental Health**
- **School Avoidance/Attendance**
- **Personal Adjustment**
- **Family Adjustment**
- **Crisis**

Hospital Mental Health Services

Community Mental Health Services

School or Community Cultural Supports

School Based Supports/ Services

Community Social Service Supports

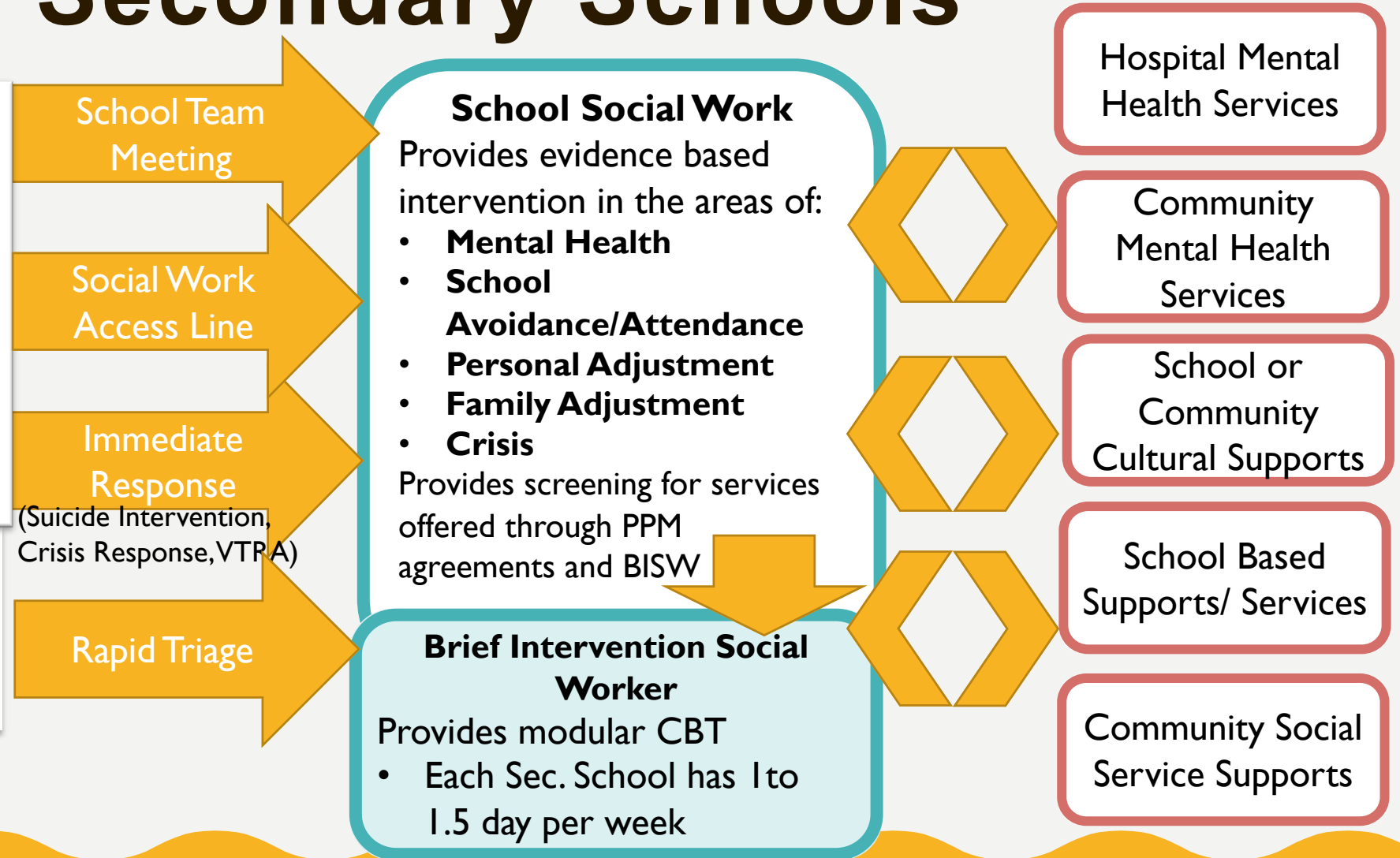
Increased focus on reducing barriers to service



# Pathways To Social Work Services In Secondary Schools



Each school has a consistent amount of SW time based on enrollment data & Priority Neighbourhood data ranging from 2.5 to 3.5 days per week



Increased focus on reducing barriers to service



# Mental Health Strategy

- New Mental Health Strategy  
**Together for Mental Health:  
Everyone, Everyday**
- Built through the collection of provincial data, as well as data from our staff, students and parents, guardians and caregivers.
- 4 Strategic priorities will inform our work:



# Mental Health Strategy cont.

## **1. Amplify the promotive and protective influence of schools by creating culturally responsive, mentally healthy schools and classrooms.**

### **Over the next three years, we will continue to focus on:**

- Supporting school and system leaders and school staff to create culturally responsive, mentally healthy schools and classrooms.
- Wellness promotion and uptake of evidence-informed, culturally responsive social-emotional learning.
- Building student mental health literacy, with an emphasis on student engagement, leadership, and agency.
- Promoting staff well-being and ensuring that staff have the tools they need to nurture their own mental health and in turn that of the students.

# Mental Health Strategy cont.

## 2. Identify and address emerging and escalating student mental health problems.

**Over the next three years, we will continue to focus on:**

- Building role-specific capacity for noticing and responding when students are experiencing emerging signs of mental health concerns.
- Increasing the use of evidence based, stepped care protocols for supporting students with mild-to- moderate mental health needs.

# Mental Health Strategy cont.

## **3. Mobilize focused support for those disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and/ or those with more serious mental health and addiction concerns.**

### **Over the next three years, we will continue to focus on:**

- Increasing the capacity of school mental health professionals to respond to the changing mental health needs of our students, particularly those with more serious mental health and addiction concerns, using evidence-based approaches.
- Building knowledge of culturally responsive supports and best practices that serve to disrupt inequities.

# Mental Health Strategy cont.

## **4. Build and sustain strong safety nets through family and system collaboration.**

**Over the next three years, we will continue to focus on:**

- Building and maintaining collaborative relationships with community partners, including culturally relevant mental health supports and initiatives.
- Ongoing work in supporting pathways to, from and through service.
- Training and protocols in suicide prevention and postvention.
- Supporting parents, guardians and caregivers of children who are struggling with mental health problems, through capacity-building and facilitating connections to more intensive supports.

# Mental Health Strategy: Professional Development

- Mental Health First Aid
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training
- SafeTalk and Life Promotion/Suicide Prevention
- Traumatic Events Systems Training
- Sharing of Excellences: Supporting Minds, Supporting Kindergarten Well-Being, Talking About Mental Illness Facilitator Session
- Student Services collaboration with the New Teacher Induction Program

# Special Education Review

- Student Services department has engaged in a comprehensive Special Education Review
- Purpose of the Review – to ensure all members of the DCDSB community have a shared vision and understanding of the Board's Special Education Plan
- Using the Ontario Human Right's Commission's Policy and Recommendations for improving education outcomes for students with disabilities, Student Services is working to recognize and remove systemic barriers, and to improve implementation of effective programs and services

# Special Education Review: Departmental Goals

- Student Services staff is now planning for the 2023-24 school year
- Focus on developing high level departmental goals that flow from feedback obtained through the Special Education Review; parent/guardian/caregiver, administrator, department feedback
- More discipline-specific goals to be developed based on Student Services department goals



# Questions

