

<b>TOPIC:</b>	<b>External Presentations in Schools</b>
<b>EFFECTIVE:</b>	<b>September 2000</b>
<b>CROSS-REFERENCE:</b>	
<b>REVISION DATE:</b>	<b>September 2017</b>
<b>RESPONSIBILITY:</b>	<b>Superintendent of Education</b>

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

At times, staff may wish to arrange external presentations as appropriate teaching/learning strategies for their students. These presentations may assist in the achievement of relevant curriculum expectations, in the implementation of provincial or local policies/legislation, or in the development of students toward graduate expectations.

**PROCEDURES:**

Principals and staff should consider the following before arranging an external presentation to students.

1. The decision to allow an individual or group presentation is the responsibility of the principal. In making the decision, the principal will keep in mind the unique character of the school community.
2. Where any presentation may be deemed controversial:
  - 2.1 The principal will have been assured by the school staff that the presentation forms part of an existing program and will satisfy a significant educational need;
  - 2.2 The principal will ensure that the supervisory officer is consulted
  - 2.3 The principal should ensure the School Council is aware of the nature and purpose of the presentation
  - 2.4 The principal will ensure that the presentation is limited to students enrolled in the course;
  - 2.5 The principal will ensure that students have been given the opportunity to opt out of the presentation and have an alternate program assigned;
  - 2.6 The principal will ensure that a letter is sent to the parents of all students enrolled in the course outlining the nature, content and purpose of the presentation. No student under 18 will be admitted to the presentation without parental consent.
  - 2.7 The principal will ensure that any literature associated with a presentation is distributed through school staff and is in keeping with the school's usual practice for selection of supplementary resources.
  - 2.8 The principal will ensure that the staff as a whole is aware of the school's rationale to enable them to answer questions which may arise in the community.
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Appendix 1 highlights best practices related to external presentations.

## Considerations for One-Time Presentations, Videos, Social Media Campaigns, and Written/Web Materials related to Mental Health

Principals and staff may be approached or may seek out one-time presentations, videos, social media campaigns and/or written/web materials as part of school plans to enhance mental health awareness and literacy of students, staff and families. These guidelines are provided to support high quality activities while avoiding harmful outcomes. Staff may also consult their school PSSP staff, Area Senior Manager of Special Services and/or the Mental Health Lead.

Mental health literacy activities include information/knowledge, skills and beliefs that help school personnel, students and/or families to reduce stigma, promote positive mental health, identify risk factors and signs of mental health and substance use problems, and promote help-seeking behaviours.

### Essential Ingredients of a Mental Health Awareness & Literacy Activity

- Evidence-based
- Inclusive and culturally sensitive
- Provides follow-up support
- Part of a comprehensive plan; not a stand-alone activity
- Aligned with school and board mental health initiatives
- Delivered in the appropriate format, time and day of the week

### One-time Presentations & Guest Speakers

Presentations from individuals with lived experience are a very powerful and effective strategy to increase awareness and reduce stigma. While tempting to have enthusiastic yet untrained students, families or staff members 'share their story', **it is essential that speakers with lived experience be trained and supported through a professional speaking program to minimize risk for the speaker and audience.** Locally, trained TAMI (Talking About Mental Illness) speakers can be reached by contacting the Halton Region Youth Net Coordinator.

**Why?** Sharing personalized experiences with mental illness is demanding work and hearing about someone else's experience with a mental illness can be triggering. Trained speakers have honed their message to ensure that it is accurate and informative and that risky topics such as eating disorders, suicide and self-harming behaviours are talked about in safe ways to avoid triggering audience members who are at-risk. The experience of presenting may be stressful resulting in an increase in symptoms for the presenter who may require support. Additionally, trained speakers are not from within their own school community as speakers are at risk for increased stigma from some audience members, especially when presenting in their own school community.

**Who?** Positive mental health and mental health promotion presentations are suitable for all audiences and can be delivered in a large assembly. Presentations or videos that deal with specific mental illnesses should be delivered to smaller audiences to allow for dialogue and closer monitoring of student responses.

**When?** Do not hold sessions on Mondays or Fridays or at the end of the day as you will want to monitor students to determine who requires assistance and support.

See Appendix A for additional planning questions.

## Videos

Videos are a powerful method to increase awareness. Ensure that the video you are presenting has been produced/sponsored by a reputable organization and/or has been vetted by a mental health professional.

**Why?** Students producing biographical videos run the risk of over-identification of themselves with their illness and other risks (see one-time presentations above).

**Who?** Positive mental health and mental health promotion presentations and videos are suitable for all audiences and can be delivered in a large assembly. Presentations or videos that deal with specific mental illnesses should be delivered to smaller audiences to allow for dialogue and closer monitoring of student responses.

**When?** Avoid showing videos that deal with specific illnesses on Fridays or at the end of the day as you will want to monitor students to determine who requires assistance and support.

See Appendix A for additional planning questions.

## Social Media Campaigns

**Social media campaigns should be vetted by a mental health professional** to ensure that they are providing accurate information, de-stigmatizing, promoting help-seeking behaviours and provide information about high risk behaviours in safe ways.

## Written Materials & Websites

There is an abundance of written materials and websites dedicated to mental health. Only use materials from reputable professional organizations. If needed, consult with the Mental Health Lead or Area Senior Manager of Professional Services. Here are some recommended websites:

myHDSB- Mental Health Site

<https://www.myhdsb.ca/Departments/StudentServices/MentalHealth/Pages/default.aspx>

mindyourmind.ca

kidshelpphone.ca

ementalhealth.ca

cmho.org

cmha.ca

psychologyfoundation.org

anxietybc.com

teenmentalhealth.org

excellencefor childand youth.ca

hincksdellcrest.org/ABC/Welcome

## Appendix A

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed Speaker/Presentation/Campaign: \_\_\_\_\_

Features/Characteristics	Plan-Act Comments	Assess-Reflect Comments
<p><b>Alignment:</b>            How does this initiative support student learning?            What are the goals (prevention, motivation, education)?            How does this align with our school improvement plan and the board's Mental Health strategy?            In what ways is the presentation culturally sensitive and inclusive?</p>	<p>What messages are being shared about positive mental health and high risk behaviours? Are these supportive messages or are they potentially activating to youth who are at risk?</p>	<p>What are our success indicators?</p>
<p><b>Credibility:</b>            What credentials does the presenter/website have?            Has this presentation been delivered in other schools and what was their experience?            Have other schools promoted/used this website and what was their experience?</p>	<p>Name and contact information of school that has previously had this presenter.</p>	<p>Would we recommend this speaker or video again?</p>
<p><b>Impact:</b>            Have we avoided Mondays, Fridays and end of the day?            What follow-up activities are planned to embed the learning acquired from the presentation?            If we have a specific mental illness topic, are we providing this in small groups?            Are we following Guidelines for Talking with Students about Suicide?</p>		<p>What learning objectives were achieved?</p>
<p><b>Support:</b> Who is going to provide mental health back-up?            How will we handle student distress and/or disclosures?            How will we let students and parents know where they can seek help at school and in the community?            How will we let staff know where they can seek help?</p>		<p>How many student disclosures occurred? Did students know who to go to for help? What would we need to change for the next time?</p>
<p><b>Communication:</b> How will parents be notified of the presentation, and of the messages that will be shared so they can support their child?</p>		<p>Was our communication strategy effective and timely? What questions did parents have?</p>
<p><b>Cost:</b> Are there any costs or obligations for the school (financial or other commitments)?</p>		<p>Was the cost justified?</p>