

School Mental Health Plan

2020-2021

School Mental Health Team

Counsellor: Kim Engler and Kim Van Steenis

LST: Kim Engler

Instructional Coach: Rebecca Aiken

Universal supports (MHCB): Angela DeFrancesco

MHCB: Cherie Corcoran and MHCB Team

Admin support: Jon Ganton

AHS Mental Health Nurse: Erin Williams

Complex Needs team: Rebecca Aiken, Kara Fitzgerald, Darlene Kowalchuk, Maren Barrows

Others: (e.g. Mental Health Nurse, parents, students, FCSS)

School Context:

Population: 187 students, with 170 students choosing in class learning and 15 students choosing distance learning. Our population is fairly evenly split between Junior and Senior High School; 99 students in grades 7-9, and 88 students in grades 10-12. 11 certificated teaching staff, 3.5 Educational Assistants (3 at 1.0 FTE tagged to students with complex needs and 0.5 general support), 0.5 Librarian (also used as a reader), 1.5 Secretaries, 2 custodians.

Diversity: Wide socio-economic backgrounds, a mixture of town based and agricultural families who are primarily of European descent, with ~15% of our population identified as First Nation, Metis, and Inuit. ~11% of our students have an academic coding (as mentioned three of those students are coded as severe/complex.)

2020-2021 Focus: **Building resiliency within our school community.**

The last 2 years have been ones of great growth and great challenge. After the death of our grade 9 student during the spring of 2019, it became apparent that our school community needed help for students and staff to continue to heal, build capacity and resiliency. Our overall goal for 2019-2020 then generalized to Supporting Mental Health. A great deal of effort was put into increasing awareness of mental health and mental illness, as well as increased education on the topic for staff members and an

emphasis on communication among students and staff members. Just when we felt that we were starting to gain ground on this as a staff early in 2020, COVID struck and changed the way we were planning to roll out the rest of the year.

This year we will continue to work with our students on building resiliency, also continued healing from the loss of a classmate and the abrupt loss the remainder of the in school year and now the feelings of being overwhelmed and anxiety returning to school during an ongoing pandemic.

A great deal of time is spent working one on one with students to help them navigate a variety of interpersonal situations and working on coping with stress as well as referring them to specialized supports through AHS and private counselling. We feel that the best way to support our students is to work with them, building relationships that can then foster a positive mental health environment and help them make good decisions about their mental health, anxiety levels and risk factors prior to crisis points. Having “a person” in the building is integral for every student to realize this goal. The role of being “the person” is taken on by many staff members. We work together to help students find success and avoid some of the pitfalls that may present themselves especially in this new higher stress pandemic environment.

Guiding principles:

What are we currently doing to build resilience and positive mental health for our students?

Universal: The application of universal supports have had to shift due to the COVID regulations. At TJSHS the protocol has students cohorted by grade and learning within limited and assigned physical environments to prevent the potential for infection spread between grade cohorts. We can no longer have the whole school assemblies, extracurricular teams and clubs, grade competitions, dances, food sharing or other things that helped make school a fun and exciting place to be. Working within this framework but still being creative and offering opportunities and support to the students has been challenging. The MHCB Success Coach, Angela DeFrancesco provides presentations to all health classes (cohorted) on a variety of topics including: online behavior, bullying, relationships, Stress Busters, Brain Smoothie. Although our Student’s Union is currently not running, the teachers involved are still discussing ways to be involved at the school individual classes. One example would be the continuation of Spirit Days where each grade earns points for involvement by wearing the theme for that month. Our next theme will be Tie Die, etc. Last year we were fortunate to have all staff trained as Go To Educators for Mental Health. All teachers spend a great deal of time in the school, building relationships with students so that they feel they have an advocate among the teaching staff. Staff are also actively trying to

teach students how to set and maintain healthy boundaries.

Previously we had run a breakfast program; addressing the needs of approximately 50 students a day. Although COVID made us rethink the way we were providing this service, we felt that it was important for these students to start the day with something in their system. Instead of the comprehensive breakfast program that we were running we have moved to a basket in each morning class that is restocked daily and handed out to students who need it by the teacher.

Targeted:

As well as the universal supports mentioned above, MHCB Success Coach Angela DeFrancesco is working within the grade cohorts to provide targeted supports that are geared toward the needs of a more limited group, such as, Second Step programming with our grade 8 class, or Coping with stress in some other grades. Although it has become impossible (currently) to do cross grade groups, we have carved out a bit of time for Angela to meet with some groups individually outside of their main grade cohort, such as Grade 10 girls group.

We have also had class specific presentations from AHS , Saffron and MADD to extend the curriculum that they are learning in the classroom.

Individual/Specialized: (e.g. Mental Health Nurse, MH Therapist, BGRD Psychologist)

We had a number of students who work one on one with Megan Uchacz(Wellness Coach) last year. Since we have moved to a MHCB universal support model, Kim Engler has taken over the one to one meets with those students and is working on building resiliency and capacity in an as needed capacity. Kim Engler and Kim van Steenis meet with students to provide emotional, guidance and academic support. Increased communication with home for a number of students is an important element of our wrap around support. We have a number of students across grades who are using a “Tap out” system in class when they need to access a quiet area to regulate, although with COVID we have had to have a more planned approach when we do this as space is limited. We have continued to work closely with Erin Williams to provide best practice support for students who have additional mental health concerns. Other students and their families have been referred to Erin Black.

Where are the gaps in services for students?

Universal: Currently the gaps that we are facing are due to the need for increased caution around COVID 19. We are finding it difficult to come together as an entire school to celebrate and build back our school culture after closure. The gap that this has created is frustrating for both staff and students as we want create a fun and

Targeted: We still see the need for increased intervention for our Grade 8 class. This is an ongoing and continuing process as we get to know them again and address their needs.

Individual/Specialized: Our community still relies heavily on AHS for mental health support. Many of our families can not afford to access these supports (or even the gas money to drive to larger centers) without assistance and the wait times for these supports can be extremely long. We also struggle with access to these services as counselling services in the town are limited. The support that we had received previously from Jordan's Principle is no longer available to the same degree, so things that we had been hoping to have (particularly additional EA support) are no longer guaranteed.

What do we plan to do for the 2020-2021 school year to build resilience and positive mental health for our students?

Universal: We plan to help our staff and students survive this unprecedented situation with increased understanding that this is not "normal" and that is still ok. Having Angela (MHCB) come in and teach techniques for coping with stress and anxiety, especially under these circumstances in a fun and youth centered format is a great asset. It also allows us to be flexible as the year progresses and the needs of our students evolve. The staff are dedicated and committed to presenting an environment for the students that although different that what it used to be still has elements of normalcy and fun that help to alleviate the stress of school.

Targeted: Much the same as our universal plan, the use of what we would normally present to all of the classes, more tailored to the needs of particular groups. The smaller groups that have been tested in our grade 10 class, have so far been successful and will be tried in a variety of other grade cohorts. This gives the students a chance to learn specific strategies in a safe and supportive environment.

Individual/Specialized: Counsellors continue to work on PD involving support of students. Counsellors have an open door policy for any student in need during the school year.

Areas of Need for Consideration in :

What is needed to best support our school community?

- Students need someone to talk to; sometimes to listen to their concerns and help them formulate the best approach to tackle them, sometimes to provide a supportive shoulder.

Who can help support these areas of need?

- School Counsellors, Wellness Coaches, teachers,

How will this be accomplished?

- Counsellors are available throughout the day for students who need support or are in crisis and if outside of assigned time, have their classes covered by other staff members. MHCB Team provides seminars and presentations for students (media, test anxiety, Mind Up, wellness topics), AHS providing info sessions (vaping).

Professional Development for school staff?

- Staff would like to continue to do PD around Mental Health and overall wellness . Examples that have been popular: Jodi Carrington, Gordon Neufeld, First Aid, Mental Health Awareness, VTRA, TES. Counsellors are constantly working to expand their knowledge of best practice for helping students within the school.

Where does our Mental Health Plan fit in the scope of Comprehensive School Health?

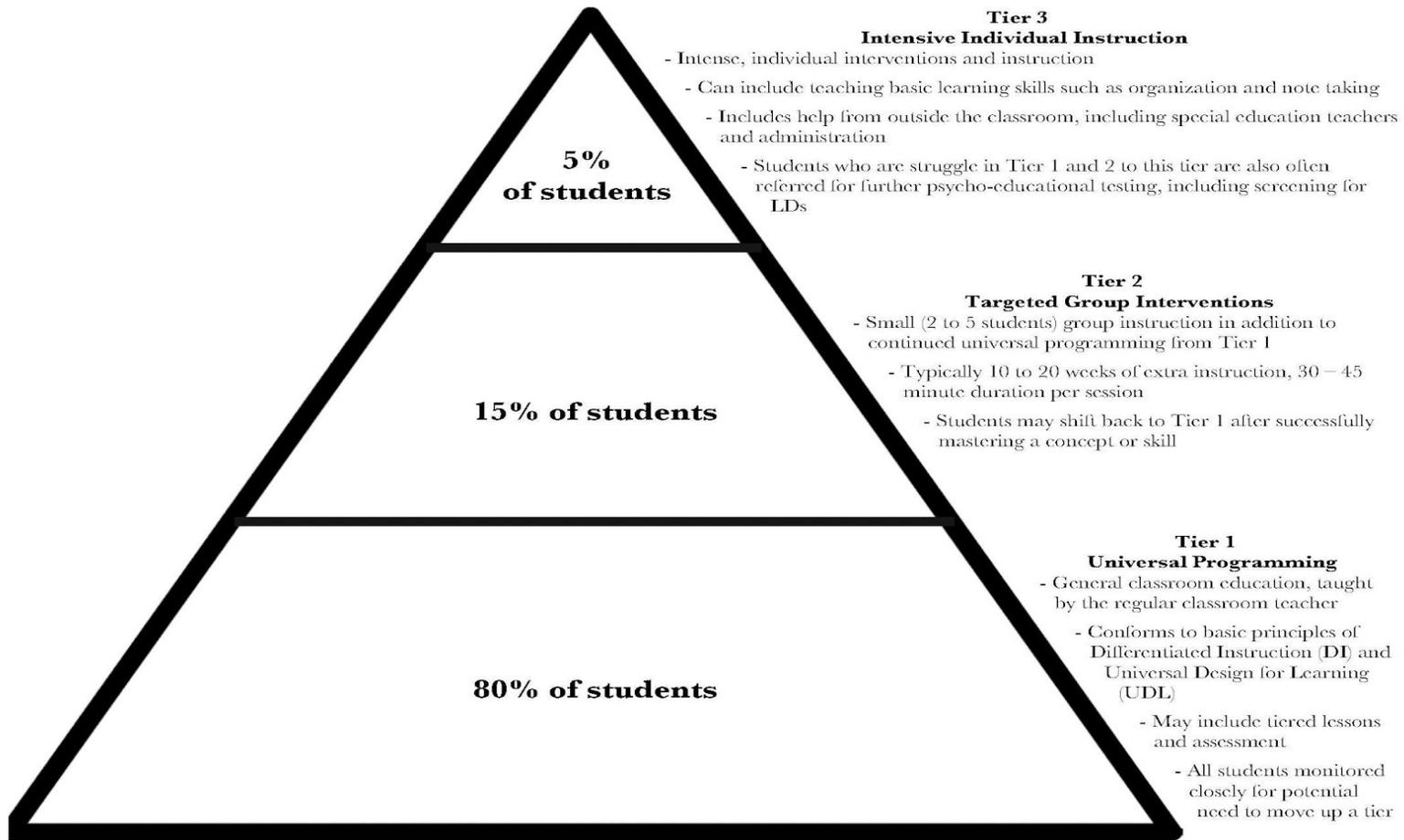
Although Throsby Junior Senior High School incorporates all of these areas as often as possible our current 2020-2021 Mental Health plan focuses most on Positive School Climate to support the mental health of our students.

Comprehensive School Health	Mental Health Plan
<p>Active Living:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Daily opportunities for phys ed ● Encourage students to go outside and move around during lunch ● Team opportunities are currently on hold due to COVID ● Non team-based opportunities are currently on hold due to COVID 	<p>Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individual ● Family support ● Groups (must be limited to cohorted groups only due to COVID) ● Grade-level ● Classroom ● School-wide
<p>Healthy Eating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Healthy choices ● Healthy alternatives (Snack attack, providing snacks and small lunch items for students who do not have any. Run out of the office) ● Breakfast Club (now available through baskets in the classrooms, distributed by staff and replenished daily) 	<p>Parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Navigating services ● Parent Information Nights (virtual due to COVID) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Online/Social media awareness ○ Parenting teens ○ Anxiety and Depression ○ Substance use ○ Other?
<p>Positive School Climate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School-wide activities, done with in cohorts and shared afterward (theme days, Halloween) ● Supporting Positive Peer relationships ● Staff/student relationships (sometimes with Mediation) 	<p>School Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Professional Development ● Mental Health Days

2020-2021 Goals/Mental Health Plan:

(e.g. To create and sustain a solid foundational, proactive Mental Health Plan to ensure we are not just moving from crisis to crisis)

Goals	Delivery/activities	Roles and Responsibilities	Timeline
Organization of Mental Health Seminars	Create an in classes cohorted of Seminars for students, geared toward positive mental health and wellness.	Contacting Speakers for Seminars: Kim Engler Support and contacts: Cherie Corcoran Angela DeFrancesco Organizing Mental Health Day: Kim Engler and Jon Ganton	October 2020 - Ongoing Meeting with groups on Fridays.
Supporting Staff and students during a more stressful and anxiety producing environment	Slowing down when possible to prevent students from getting overwhelmed Taking time as a staff to talk and check in with each other; Do nice things for each other	THS School Staff: 18 staff members Being extra aware and cognizant of what is going on and of our own well being.	2020-2021
Increasing face time with students who need support increasing resiliency	Create more availability for students	Emotional and Academic Guidance/Post-Secondary Counselling: Kim Engler and Kim van Steenis	October 2018 - ongoing
Provide Info nights for Parents, Potentially shared digitally	CYF Caregiver series	THS shares information on sessions Presentation by AHS and Mental Health Foundation	November 2019



Universal:

Targeted:

Intensive:

Mental Health Education

Parent:
Student
Teacher

Mental Illness Education

Parent
Student
Teacher

Staff Wellness

Role of Various Support Positions for Schools

Learning Support Teachers	Role: Coordination of services (e.g. referrals, resources etc) and <u>intervention for students</u> (e.g. academic support, behaviour support plans)
Counsellors	Role: facilitated the development of a <i>School-Wide Mental Health Plan</i> ; coordinate universal mental health and career development supports for ALL students. NOTE: Individual/personal counselling may be part of the Counsellor's role depending on FTE allocated for Counselling at the school level and level of counsellor training.

<p>Family School Liaison Workers</p>	<p>Role: Universal mental wellness promotion and targeted solution-focused interventions (groups, individuals); resources for school staff and families; liaise with other community-based services; help track/support students in care (Success in School Plans).</p>
<p>Mental Health Capacity Building Coordinator</p>	<p>Role: Provide leadership, direction and structure to support the overall vision, mission and objectives of the MHCB Initiative.</p>
<p>Other Mental Health Services: Mental Health Nurse Mental Health Therapist</p>	<p>Role (Nurse): Consultation with staff and parents regarding management of psychotropic medication and coordination of mental health services.</p> <p>Role (Therapist): Clinic-based therapy for children/youth.</p>
<p>Instructional Consultants/Coaches</p>	<p>Role: Provide variety of services for schools as required in support of student learning and development: coaching, consulting, resources, professional learning workshops, case conferences etc. Assist school-based leads in accessing other services as appropriate including psychoeducational assessments.</p>
<p>Other Consulting Services: Psychology Speech-Language Therapy Occupational Therapy Physical Therapy Deaf and Hard of Hearing Blind and Low Vision Educational Audiology Alternative and Augmentative Communication Assistive Technology</p>	<p>Role: Provide variety of services for schools as required in support of student learning and development: coaching, consulting, resources, professional learning workshops, case conferences etc.</p>