



## Integrated Early Years and Childcare System

The Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario works in collaboration with four Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) who represent Lanark, Leeds and Grenville, Cornwall, Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry and Prescott and Russell. Regular communication, particularly during school closures, allows all parties to stay informed and validates the childcare perspective and voice. Childcare service plans are created collaboratively with input from all childcare stakeholders to ensure all families feel supported, to meet childcare needs and ensure early learners can transition seamlessly from childcare to kindergarten.

Superintendent of School Effectiveness, Norma McDonald, presented an overview of CDSBEO's Early Years Childcare Programs across the board, and the important role of collaborative partnerships in delivering successful childcare programs. Superintendent McDonald introduced Kristine Greaves, the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager for the City of Cornwall, Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry who presented information on childcare programs within CDSBEO schools. Associate Director Bonnie Norton also provided information

"The Ministry of Education supports an integrated early years and childcare system in which school boards, Consolidated Municipal Service Managers, and childcare providers, work in partnership to provide seamless, high-quality programs for children and families throughout the day," explained Superintendent McDonald.

"I represent CDSBEO at CMSM Early Years meetings held in Perth, Brockville, Embrun and Cornwall. At these meetings, community partners come together to work collaboratively, share resources, and communicate how each community partner can support the families in our communities."

The group collaborates to prepare strategic plans, childcare service plans, examine child welfare redesign, support Welcome to Kindergarten events in schools, and to support the transition from childcare to school as seamlessly as possible.

Superintendent McDonald noted that this collaboration became particularly essential during the COVID-19 school closures, when emergency childcare sites were open in some school locations. Regular meetings were held to discuss protocols and other details related to operations during the pandemic. Additionally, staffing challenges for filling ECE positions was shared as a common challenge for the group.

Currently, the CDSBEO offers childcare programming in 21 school locations, with three types of programs offered: before and after school programming for JK to grade 6, full-day childcare programming for infant, toddler, and preschool groups, and the EarlyON centres located in Smiths Falls and Gananoque.

Associate Director Bonnie Norton discussed some of the board partnerships and the Early Years Capital Funding process.



"There are various partners involved, including as mentioned, the daycare providers, the board architect, the Ministry of Education Early Years division, and the Capital Analysts at the Ministry of Education. Licensing is required through the MOE Early Years division. We love to see these projects come to fruition in our schools, and it is highly probable that if a child attends a childcare program within one of our schools, it is likely that they will move into the Kindergarten program at that school. This opportunity provides a seamless transition for our youngest learners."

A joint capital submission in partnership with the CMSM from the United Counties of Prescott and Russell, and childcare providers Kinder Kids Early Years Inc., was successfully submitted to the Ministry of Education to renovate the childcare area at Mother Teresa Catholic School in Russell.

"On December 13th, 2021, MPP Sam Oosterhoff, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education, visited Limoges for an announcement that funding for a renovation to accommodate 24 children in a preschool program at Mother Teresa would be provided in the amount of \$505,794," noted Superintendent McDonald.

Kristine Greaves, the CMSM for Cornwall, Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry, joined the meeting to discuss the process for establishing childcare programming in a school location. She explained that an assessment is made based on community needs, through a process which assesses viability of both the new and current spaces in the system. Greaves also discussed that family grouping programs can be implemented and adjusted based on the need within the community. This process allows a smaller program to operate with mixed age children, to a maximum of 15 children. Specifically, two potential programs at Iona Academy and St. Peter Catholic School were noted.

"Thank you to all for this very informative presentation. We appreciate learning about the partnerships we are building, and we look forward to continuing these partnerships to deliver successful childcare programming for our communities," concluded Chair Lalonde.

## Eastern Ontario and Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Units Chief Medical Officers Update

Director of Education Laurie Corrigan welcomed Dr. Paula Stewart, Medical Officer of Health with the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, to present an update to the Board regarding the current status of COVID-19 in Eastern Ontario and to discuss masking for students in the school setting. Both Dr. Paula Stewart and Dr. Paul Roumeliotis (EOHU) have been instrumental in guiding the Board through the creation of the re-entry plan, as well as in providing regular consultation on the return to school.



Dr. Stewart began by providing an overview of the local COVID-19 case data for the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, and on behalf of Dr. Paul Roumeliotis, for the Eastern Ontario Health Unit. The number of new COVID-19 infections presented in the data, represent those who are eligible for PCR testing, which includes a very small group of people who work in high-risk congregate settings, or those who are at high risk of severe disease. However, Dr. Stewart noted that this would still give a picture of the overall trend.

"You will notice that we still had a significant number of cases at the beginning of February, and that things have steadily continued to decline throughout the month," explained Dr. Stewart.

Another indicator that is currently being tracked is absenteeism. The province has setup a website reporting page which includes daily data on school absenteeism. Data is submitted by schools to local public health units when absence rates are 30 per cent above baseline.

"In our region, we have been doing very well, and when the school does reach that point, in most cases, it is unrelated to COVID-19 – for example a field trip or bus cancellations. When we consider the three indicators, the number of positive cases, the case positivity rate, and school absences, it demonstrates that we are heading in the right direction."

When there is not an emergency, it means that everyone must implement measures to make a difference for those at risk. Live Well Alongside COVID-19 is being promoted by local public health to help communities implement a more sustainable approach to COVID-19. The community focus helps to prevent severe cases, protect the vulnerable, and ensure health care system capacity. It helps community members to consider risk factors, decide what's important, and the precautions to be put in place when necessary.

"The vaccine is a critical piece that is helping us to live well alongside COVID-19. When the province lifts precautions, then it's up to us as a community, to decide what we should do collectively to protect those who can become very sick with COVID-19," noted Dr. Stewart.

Live Well strategies include healthy eating, physical activity, good sleep habits, social connections, and support, practicing social distancing, hand washing and masking, and staying at home when sick.

Mask mandates in schools have been associated with lower incidence of COVID-19 infection. Overall, Dr. Stewart noted that it is challenging to measure the independent impact of mask-wearing, as schools implement layered measures for prevention. Adherence to masking policies is typically higher in school settings, versus community settings, with increased compliance with age. Additionally, Dr. Stewart noted that no objective evidence has been found for reduced respiratory function in children that wore masks, and there has been no evidence of negative cognitive impacts. Studies on the psychological, communicative, and dermatologic impacts of child mask-wearing have concluded mixed results.



"Under new provincial guidelines, students in kindergarten are strongly encouraged, but not required to wear masks. Students in grades 1 through 12 are required to wear a mask indoors, in school, and on school vehicles."

The masking policy for kindergarten students was initially implemented on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021, under the direction of public health. The Board of Trustees voted to implement the new, updated provincial masking policy for kindergarten students moving forward.

"Thank you for your time today, Dr. Stewart. We appreciate your knowledge and guidance over these last two years as we navigate the pandemic," concluded Chair Lalonde.

## CDSBEO Anti-Sex Trafficking Protocol

The Anti-Sex Trafficking Protocol was designed to support coordinated action by all community partners to prevent, identify and recognize sex trafficking and develop responses to facilitate early and appropriate intervention. By providing a summary of key principles, strategies to raise awareness, procedures for intervening with students at risk for sex trafficking or being trafficked, as well as outlining the process for ongoing training for staff, the new protocol defines the Board's commitment to promoting and maintaining safe and positive school climates.

Developed by the CDSBEO in partnership with the Upper Canada District School Board, Conseil des Écoles Publiques de l'Est de L'Ontario, and Conseil Scolaire de District Catholique de l'Est Ontarien, the protocol adheres to Policy/Program Memorandum 166 Keeping Students Safe: Policy Framework for School Board Anti-Sex Trafficking Protocols (PPM166), which was announced in July 2021. Schools are an ideal place to facilitate education and awareness with students. Teachers and other education staff are well placed to educate on prevention and promote healthy relationships, notice troubling changes in behaviour, and connect with students as caring adults.

Superintendent of School Effectiveness Brent Bovaird introduced Pam Dunk, CDSBEO Behaviour Crisis Coordinator, who provided an overview of the protocol, which contains key principles, strategies for awareness and prevention, and resources to help educate children and youth and those who are at increased risk of being trafficked.

In her introduction, Dunk noted that human trafficking is one of the fastest growing crimes worldwide, with the average age of recruitment into sex trafficking in Canada being 13 years old, with young women and girls particularly at risk, though boys and people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA are also targeted.

"The final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls highlighted that, "while Indigenous women represented only 4 per cent of the Canadian



population in 2016, they comprised nearly 50 per cent of victims of human trafficking. Of those, nearly one-quarter were under the age of 18," explained Dunk.

Based on three key principals, the protocol identifies the role of parents, guardians and caregivers as key partners, the importance of multi-sectoral relationships with community groups and agencies, and the importance of fostering student voice to inform the evolution, delivery, and implementation of the protocol. Also included are culturally safe awareness and prevention strategies for students, which includes awareness on the signs that a student is being targeted or trafficked, various curriculum-based programs about healthy relationships, consent, personal and online safety, and processes which enable students to bring concerns forward safely. Tools for families and parents are also included through information on topics such as cyber-safety, how concerns can be reported, and approaches to overcome barriers to participation for Indigenous, newcomer, and other families.

"Anyone can be at-risk of being trafficked, however, there are some specific risk factors that may make an individual more vulnerable," noted Dunk.

"Language barriers, isolation, or lack of community and social supports may leave youth with increased vulnerability. Individuals with an unstable home or family environment, and children and youth in care or transitioning out of care. Indigenous peoples are especially vulnerable to sex trafficking due to historic and ongoing systemic discrimination. First Nation youth transitioning from remote Northern communities to schools in urban centres can also face increased safety risks. Additionally, students with disabilities may experience bullying and isolation and may have difficulty understanding the intentions of others. Students who are 2SLGBTQIA+ also experience high rates of bullying, assaults and sexual abuse, along with homeless and marginalized youth."

The protocol also identifies reporting and response procedures for staff and administration.

"It is very important for staff to listen without judgement, to thank the student for trusting them, and to let them take the lead in sharing," explained Dunk.

"The board will review its protocol after the first year of implementation and going forward as part of the regular policy review cycle. The Ministry of Education will collaborate with school boards, as well as anti-human trafficking partners, to develop a performance measurement framework. This framework will monitor the effectiveness of training and whether the protocols respond to the needs of students."

"This has been an excellent overview of the details of this protocol. Thank you to the CDSBEO Safe Schools team for their role and contributions in creating and implementing this very important initiative," concluded Chair Lalonde.