

Update from the Knowledge Network for Student Well-Being (KNSWB)

The Project Steering Committee for the KNSWB met on Wednesday, September 20, 2017 to share updates and plan for the upcoming year.

We began by hearing from several branches in the Ministry of Education. Suzanne Gordon and Laurie Pedwell from the Indigenous Education and Well-Being Division shared updates on the new funding announced September 5, 2017 to support Student Well-Being. They also shared results of the Ministry's public consultation on well-being "Well-Being in Our Schools, Strength in Our Society". Steering committee members were pleased to hear the level of support for well-being shown in these actions.

Erica van Roosmalen from the Education Research and Evaluation Strategy Branch provided an update on the new Réseau de Savoir sur l'Équité / Equity Knowledge Network (RSEKN). There were eight excellent proposals received, and the team led by Ruth Kane from the University of Ottawa were the successful applicants. There will be a broader announcement in the upcoming days. The KNSWB will be in contact with this network to talk about where our work intersects, and how we can build synergies between our projects.

Louise Sirisko and Marla Endler from the Special Education/Success for All branch provided an update on the work of their branch, and noted the new funding announcement that specifically mentioned additional funding for School Mental Health ASSIST.

Shasta Carr-Harris and Kelly Bairos from the

KNAER Secretariat provided an update on their activities. They continue to manage an active social media presence on behalf of the Knowledge Networks, and redesigned their website to become a "knowledge hub" that will act as a depository for knowledge products generated by the networks.

KNAER is also supporting our KNSWB at two conferences this fall, the Canadian Education Association conference on student well-being, October 5 & 6, 2017, as well as the PREVNet conference "Coming Together to Promote Children's Well-Being", November 15-17 in Ottawa.

The Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University (our research partner in the network) provided an update on several of their projects. The Hamilton Youth Study, which looks at the mental health and well-being of immigrant youth, will be published shortly, and several knowledge translation summaries have been developed to discuss the results of this project, as well as the sampling methods.

With the support of the KNSWB, the School Mental Health Survey (SMHS) team held an all-day meeting to look at selected results from the study, and to develop ideas for sharing these results with school boards across the province. Several Ministry staff participated in this meeting, as well as representatives from school boards and community agencies.

The data from the Ontario Child Health Study (OCHS) will be released through research data centres in late Fall 2017. A series of papers on

the findings will follow, and the Offord Centre is exploring the possibility of a day-long conference to share these results.

The Social Planning Network of Ontario (SPNO), our community of practice for equitable and inclusive education, reported on their recent work. The SPNO has a membership drawn from 18 social planning councils across Ontario, and each of these members recruited local citizens who expressed an interest in becoming equity “champions” in their local community.

The SPNO has focused specifically on equity for students from lower SES families, as this is an area of interest and expertise for their members. They brought together their equity champions in late summer to learn about current best practices and to explore the development of evidence-based interventions.

School Mental Health ASSIST shared details of two specific projects on which they are working. “Everyday Mental Health” is a joint project between SMH ASSIST and the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO). A team of educators nominated by ETFO are working with the SMH ASSIST team to develop short, simple “everyday” activities that are based on core elements of social and emotional learning (SEL).

These core elements have been identified as the “active ingredients” of SEL by a panel of experts. The educators are nominating activities that can be used to teach these core elements. The activities are currently being tested and improved in classrooms.

In the “Leading Mentally Healthy Schools” project, SMH ASSIST worked with three Principal associations to co-create resources that guide Principals on leading mentally healthy schools.

After piloting and improving these resources last year, the KNSWB was able to facilitate the distribution of a package of these resources to every elementary and secondary Principal in Ontario. Local mental health leads and superintendents received advance notice of the resources, so that they could plan how to use them in their upcoming training sessions.

PREVNet, our community of practice for safe and accepting schools, has been exploring ways they can connect more directly with educators to share their research. They are working to expand their e-mail distribution list, have developed a research newsletter aimed at educators, and are exploring multi-media presentations of various lengths. They are hoping to introduce some of these at their biennial conference in November.

The Ontario Health Schools Coalition, our community of practice for healthy schools, is focusing on developing a better understand and linkages between educators who are teaching health and public health nurses who are working in schools. This topic came from work the Coalition completed as part of their annual conference last year. They continue to hold quarterly web-enhanced teleconferences to share knowledge among their members.

Throughout the meeting there were a number of conversations between Ministry staff and Communities of Practice about how they might share information and work together. The synergies from sharing and learning from each other were quite exciting.

As a closing note, we reflected that this marked 11 months that the Knowledge Network for Student Well-Being had been in operation, and there was a general satisfaction with the number and depth of linkages that had been made amongst the Network members.