Slide 1

The Impact of COVID-19 on Child and Youth Mental Health: Implications for Education

ConnectED 24

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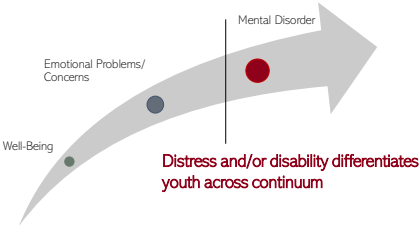
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- MH before the pandemic
- Risk factors
- MH during the pandemic
- Implications for education

Slide 3

- MH before the pandemic

Slide 4

Child and Youth Mental Health

Slide 5

Continuum of Mental Health

Mental Disorder
Emotional Problems/Concerns
Well-Being

Distress and/or disability differentiates youth across continuum

Slide 6

Continuum of Mental Health

Mental Disorder
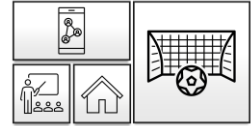Emotional Problems/Concerns
Well-Being

Change from baseline
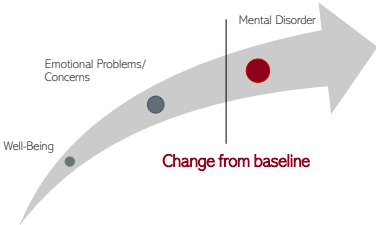
Youth more vulnerable than adults because…

Influenced by their environments
– have less autonomy
– influences presentation of impairment or symptoms
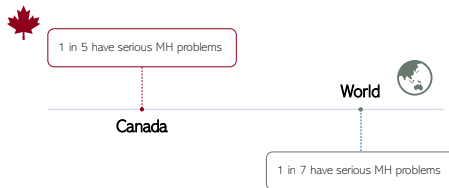
7

Do not 'code switch' out of a mental disorder
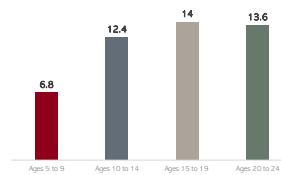– exists across contexts
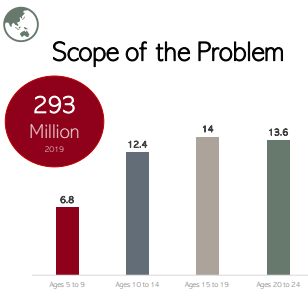– entrenched

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Scope of the Problem

1 in 5 have serious MH problems

World

Canada

1 in 7 have serious MH problems

9

Scope of the Problem

6.8 — Ages 5 to 9
12.4 — Ages 10 to 14
14 — Ages 15 to 19
13.6 — Ages 20 to 24

10

Scope of the Problem

293 Million 2019

6.8 — Ages 5 to 9
12.4 — Ages 10 to 14
14 — Ages 15 to 19
13.6 — Ages 20 to 24

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14% 4-17yrs

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Australia Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing (2nd)

16.3 — Boys
11.5 — Girls

Age 4-17yrs

13

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Overall Ranking

Comparison of 38 economically advanced countries

Netherlands RANKED 1st
Canada RANKED 30th — 30th
Chile RANKED 38th
32nd

UNICEF, 2020

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Mental Well-Being

Comparison of 38 economically advanced countries

31st
35th

Worlds of Influence
Understanding What Shapes Child
Well-being in Rich Countries

UNICEF, 2020
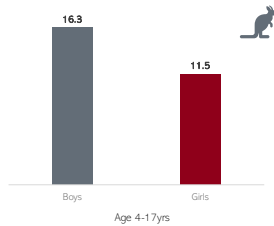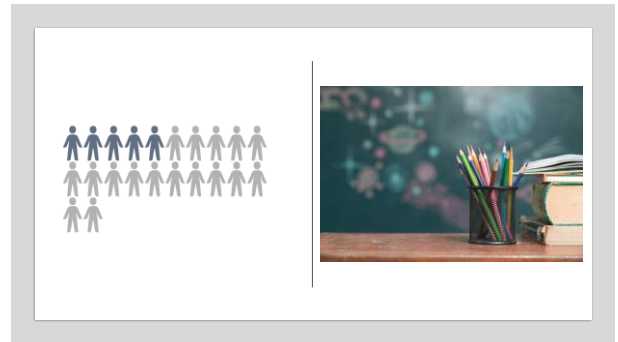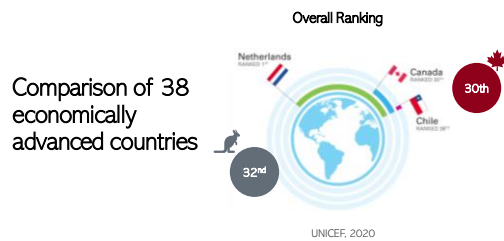
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Suicide

Leading cause of death among youth in high income countries
- 17.6% of all deaths
- Particular problem for boys
- First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youth

37th
35th

17

Risk is not equally shared

- Socioeconomically disadvantaged
  - ⇧ for children of low-income families

- Girls more affected than boys
  - exceptions externalizing problems and ASD

Vaillancourt & Szatmari, 2022

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Heterogeneity

–exposure
–vulnerability
–protective factors

outcomes
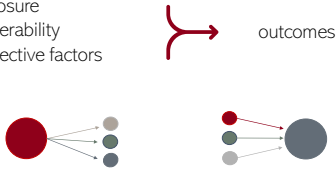
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Emergence and peak in mental disorders during adolescence
One in five adolescents have a mental illness that will persist into adulthood

ADHD, conduct disorder
Anxiety disorders
Mood disorders
Schizophrenia
Substance abuse
Any mental illness

Age in years

0   5   10   15   20   25
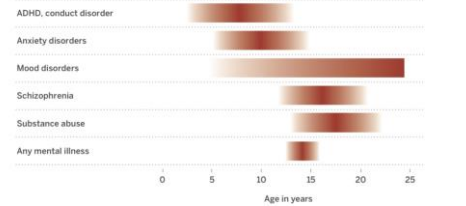
SCIENCE sciencemag.org

Lee et al, 2024

20
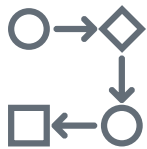
Enormous Continuity

– 50-75% of adult mental
  disorders begin before age 15

Johnson et al., 2017; Kim-Cohen et al., 2003; Kessler et al., 2001; 2007; Weisz, 1998

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Adulthood

20x Depression

Grade 5 to 12

16x SAD

High Social
Anxiety Symptoms

13x Agoraphobia

13x GAD

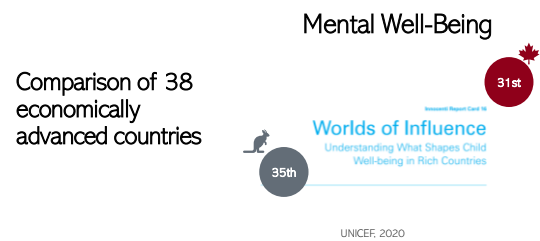Krygsman & Vaillancourt, 2022

22

MH problems in adults
– leading cause of disability worldwide

Copeland et al., 2015; Whiteford et al., 2013

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Service Gaps

Only 20% of youth receive services

– Youth with severely impairing
  MD received Tx at ⇧ rate

– Recent immigrants less likely to
  access MH care

Durbin et al., 2015; Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2017; Merikangas et al., 2011; Sawyer et al., 2001

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Service Gaps 🍁

Only 20% of youth receive services

- Youth with severely impairing MD received Tx at ⇧ rate

- Recent immigrants are less likely to access MH care

Service Gaps 🦘

Only 25% of youth receive services

- Youth with severely impairing MD received Tx at ⇧ rate

- Recent immigrants less likely to access MH care

Durbin et al., 2015; Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2017; Merikangas et al., 2011; Sawyer et al., 2001

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- MH during the pandemic

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Pandemic Decline

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Emergency department visits and hospital admissions for suicidal ideation, self-poisoning and self-harm among adolescents in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic

% of hospital admissions ⇧ for teenage girls in Ontario:
- suicidal ideation
- self-poisoning
- self-harm

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A comparison of psychiatric inpatient admissions in youth before and during the COVID-19 pandemic

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A comparison of psychiatric inpatient admissions in youth before and during the COVID-19 pandemic

Jeanne L. Park PhD[1,2], Chris A. Clark MSc[1], Mercedes Bagshawe BA[1,2], Jennifer Kuntz MSW[1], Andrea Perri MN[1], Avril Deegan MSW[1], Brian Marriott MSW[1], Abdul Rahman MBBS, FRCPC[1], Susan Graham PhD[1,2], Carly A. McMorris PhD[1]

29% — Relative ⇧

29% — Self-harm & Suicidality

69% — Externalizing/ Behavioural Issues

28% — Internalizing/ Emotional Issues

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Indirect effects of COVID-19 on child and adolescent mental health: an overview of systematic reviews

- 18 systematic reviews of 366 studies

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Pooled Prevalence

32% depression

7.5%
Avenevoli et al., 2015

32% anxiety

10%
Steinsbekk et al., 2022

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Clinical | Ages 12-17 years

Mental health symptoms in children and adolescents during COVID-19 in Australia

35.8
19.7
22.6
44.2
16
21.1

Anxiety
Depression

10%
Steinsbekk et al., 2022

7.5%
Avenevoli et al., 2015

■ No Diagnosis ■ Total

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11.1 million paediatric ED visits

Comparison of paediatric emergency department visits for attempted suicide, self-harm, and suicidal ideation before and during the COVID-19 pandemic: a systematic review and meta-analysis

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32% ⇩ any health

22% ⇧ suicide attempts

39% girls

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Comparison of child and adolescent health service utilisation for eating disorders before and during the covid-19 pandemic: A systematic review and meta-analysis

Sheri Madigan, PhD, Tracy Vaillancourt PhD, Gina Dimitropoulos, PhD., Shainur Premji, PhD, Selena Kahlert, BSc, Katie Zumwalt, MD, Daphne Korczak MD, Kristin von Ranson, PhD., Paolo Pador, BSc (hons), Heather Granshorn, Ross D. Neville, PhD

Accepted: *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*

52 studies and >148,000 ED-related visits

54% ⇧

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• Risk factors

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Risk Factors

01	02	03
Caregiver mental health	Screen time	School (sport) closures

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Caregiver Mental Health

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MH of youth strongly linked MH of caregivers
– Nesting effect

NASEM, 2019

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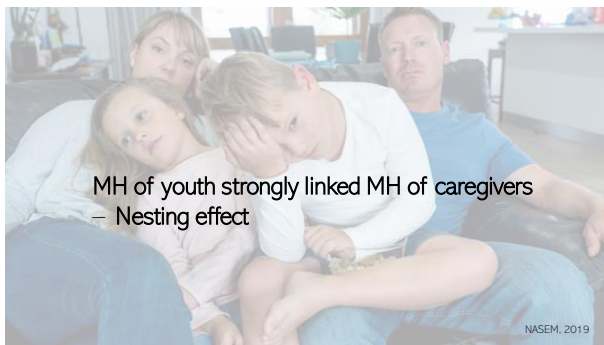
1. daily SARS-CoV-2 infection rates

2. ⇩ human mobility

⇧ prevalence
– MDD
– Anxiety disorders
– Females > males
– Younger > older

Global prevalence and burden of depressive and anxiety disorders in 204 countries and territories in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic

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+ 53·2 million cases of MDD

+28%

+ 76·2 million cases of anxiety

+26%

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When the Bough Breaks: A systematic review and meta-analysis of mental health symptoms in mothers of young children during the COVID-19 pandemic
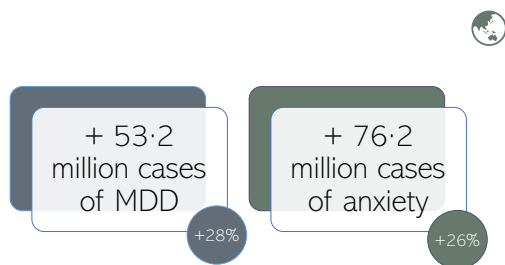
42

27% depression

42% anxiety

pooled point prevalence

43
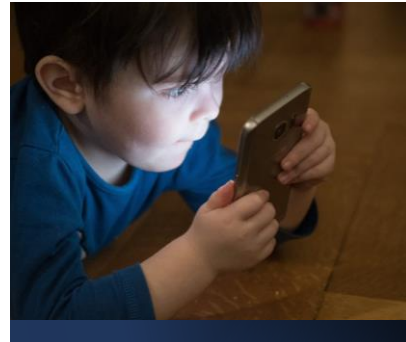
Social
Media Use

44

⇧ 52%

45
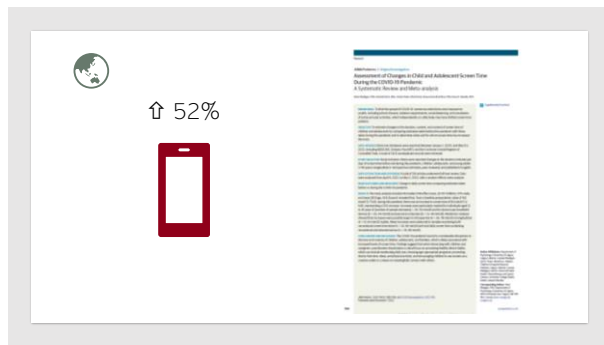
2019

online harassment

poor sleep

low self-esteem

poor body image

Social media use

higher depression symptoms

Kelly et al., 2019

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Higher screen use associated with poorer MH

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School Closures

BACK TO SCHOOL

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UNESCO's COVID-19 global monitoring of school closures
- > 91% of world's school population

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Academic Achievement   Safety   Mental Health   Physical Activity

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Slide 51

Academic Achievement

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- 42 studies; 15 countries

- learning deficit
  - $d = -0.14$

- "arose early in the pandemic and persists over time"

nature human behaviour

A systematic review and meta-analysis of the evidence on learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

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The Longer Students Were Out of School, the Less They Learned
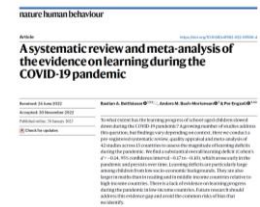
- every week closed, learning levels ⇓ ~1% of a SD
- 20-week closure ⇓ learning outcomes by 0.20 SD
- equivalent to ~1 year of schooling

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Child-related Policies in the First Year of the COVID-19 Pandemic in 40 Countries

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Effects of education on adult mortality: a global systematic review and meta-analysis

Summary
...

Risk of death ⇩ 2% with every additional year of education

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Safety

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Family Violence

child abuse-related factors

family violence

police reports

child protective services referrals
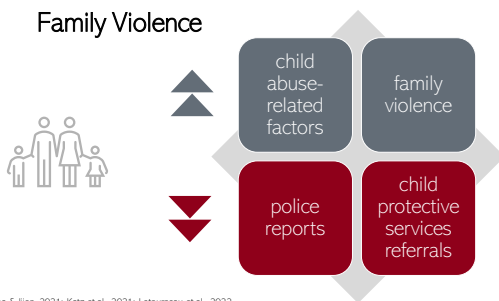
Cappa & Jijon, 2021; Katz et al., 2021; Letourneau et al., 2022

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Why decline in reporting?

Educators: primary reporters of child abuse and neglect

Vaillancourt et al., 2021

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Mental Health

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Visits to Alberta Emergency Departments for Child Mental Health Concerns During the COVID-19 Pandemic

# of visits
- 11,540 pre-pandemic
- 18,997 pandemic

- MH ED visit rates during school closure periods > than during school open periods

Newton et al., 2023; *Pediatric Emergency Care*

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"…adverse mental health symptoms and health behaviors among children and adolescents".

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"Removing children from school environments and limiting opportunities that support their MH, such as social learning activities, is problematic".

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Physical
Activity

63

64

theglobeandmail.com
Physical activity— the forgotten core area of child development during the pandemic

Tracy Vaillancourt, March 15, 2021

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DrTracyVaillancourt
@vaillancourt_dr · 2021-07-16

I predicted this would happen. We need to do a better job at retaining girls in sports. The benefits are enormous.

theglobeandmail.com
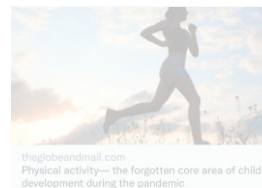Thousands of Canadian girls not committed to playing sports post-COVID, study finds

theglobeandmail.com
Physical activity— the forgotten core area of child development during the pandemic

Tracy Vaillancourt, March 15, 2021

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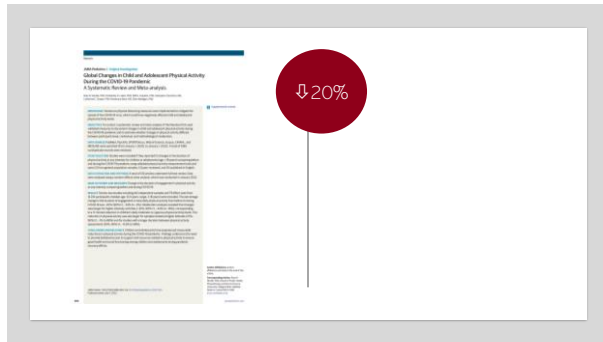

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Convention on the Rights of the Child
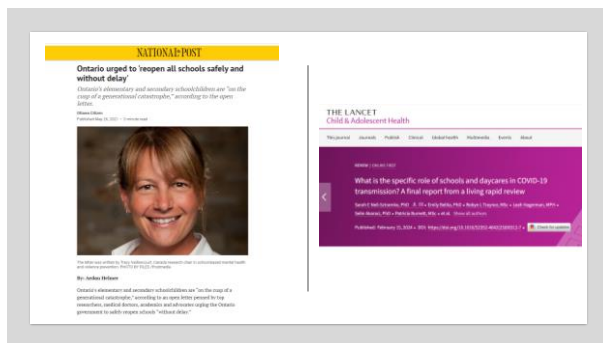
Article 28.1.e

"take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates"

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Last to close, first to open

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- Implications for education

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How can we fix it?

74

Focus on school-based mental health

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Why school-based mental health?

- Already established relationship between educators and children and their families

Vaillancourt et al., 2021; see also Halladay et al., 2020; Kutcher & Wei, 2020; NASEM, 2021;Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013

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Capacity to ⇧ awareness about…

| Mental Health/ Wellness Promotion | Identify Students At-Risk | Prevention/ Intervention | Connect with services |

Stepped care

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Promote help seeking via stigma reduction

Create mentally healthy learning environments

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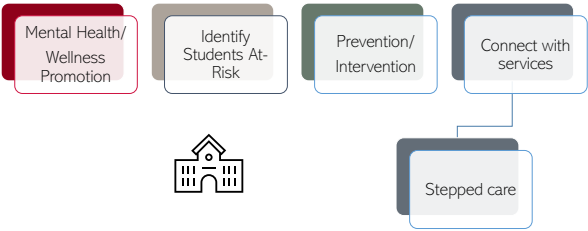
Already doing job and doing it well

Schools are…

- 1st point of contact
- most common setting for provision of MH services

Georgiades et al., 2019 Canada; Costello et al., 2014; Green et al., 2013; Merikangas et al., 2011; Ryan et al., 2014

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What should schools focus on?

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1. Mental health literacy
2. Social-emotional development
3. Mattering and relationships
4. ⇩ bullying and discrimination

NASEM, 2021; RSC, 2021

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Strengthen student wellbeing and development

- Implement evidence-informed, whole-school wellbeing approaches
- Create positive school cultures that value student voice
- Build partnerships with students and families to connect them with the support they need
- Provide equitable access to services by building partnerships across agencies
- Expand counselling services in schools
- Improve support for students at all transitions through school
- Ensure schools are inclusive and safe

Every student is known, valued and cared for

- Increasing the proportion of students reporting a sense of belonging
- Increasing attendance rates

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Mattering

Tendency to evaluate oneself as important or significant to others

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Students' Perceptions of Mattering During COVID-19

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Students' Perceptions of Mattering During COVID-19

| 01 Elementary in person | 02 Elementary online | 03 Secondary blended | 04 Secondary online |

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Help Build Resilience

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Take care of educators

"Resilience is contingent on the adults in the lives of children being healthy"
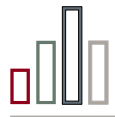
Vaillancourt & Luthar, 2022; NASEM, 2019

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COVID-19 Pandemic

United Nations (2020) called for "a rapid accumulation of data on the scale and nature of impacts among children".

In Canada, there was [is] a striking lack of data on the wellbeing of children and adolescents.

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Invest in comprehensive population-based follow-up studies

Vaillancourt et al., Royal Society of Canada, 2021 Children and Schools Report

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