

Curriculum Considerations During Pandemic Learning And Beyond

Strong relationships between educators and students are at the core of learning and well-being. A strength among educators is their ability to connect with students. The sudden implementation of Hybrid/Virtual Learning has made it more challenging for educators to make these connections. Educators are no longer able to sit in close proximity to students, to notice body language or facial expressions, to hear tone of voice, to pick up on a shift in attitude or mood, or to develop caring relationships with students in the ways in which they are accustomed. Students are spending more time learning from home, while navigating social isolation and having limited/different access to supports.

While we journey through Pandemic Learning, it is important to be mindful that certain subjects may present content that can be sensitive or possibly emotionally impactful to students. Care should be taken to ensure **ALL** students, and in particular those who may be vulnerable, are checked in with, monitored, and followed up on.

Subjects that address topics like **suicide, death, addiction, abuse, mental or physical illness, the pandemic**, etc. can effect a student emotionally. Caution should be taken especially during Pandemic Learning to try to ensure no harm is caused.

It is especially important to understand that attention in class to the issue of suicide, while potentially interesting for many students, can be distressing for those who may be struggling with suicidal ideation and may make the option more viable for particularly vulnerable students. It should be noted that these students may not have told anyone about their distress.



Subjects such as Health and Phys. Ed. and the Humanities may contain curriculum content that can be emotionally impactful, and educators should always be mindful of this. This is especially true during the COVID pandemic, when our connections with students and their access to supports and services is more limited.

Guidance for Educators

Things to think about when planning your coursework:

- ☐ Is there content in my coursework that could potentially impact a student emotionally? How can I ensure everyone is ok with the material or should I choose different content? Am I asking my students to explore literature, non-fiction, poetry/lyrics, writing topics, research projects, etc. that emphasize

sensitive topics, darkness and despair? Or that requires students to reflect heavily on current Pandemic issues that may be upsetting? If so, can I choose to explore something more positive and uplifting?

- ❑ Framing sensitive topics within the wider context of mental health literacy can be helpful (e.g., teaching about ways to maintain positive mental health, recognize signs of common mental health problems, develop good coping habits, and locate helpful services).
- ❑ Can I incorporate Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in my course content? SEL is the process through which children and adolescents acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions—The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning ([CASEL](#))

If you are concerned about a possible mental health issue:

- ❑ If urgent, refer to the Getting Help page on the TDSB website [Immediate Support/Help](#)
- ❑ If you are unsure about the most appropriate action to take, let the student and/or parent/guardian know that you will get back to them once you consult with your Administrator. Ask them if they would be comfortable being contacted by a School Social Worker, Psychologist, Child and Youth Counsellor/Worker, and/or Guidance Counsellor, if deemed appropriate.
- ❑ Follow up with your Administrator to inform them of any actions you have taken or to consult about the best course of action to support the student/family.

If you are concerned about a student's safety:

- ❑ As per your legal and professional obligations, consult with your Administrator immediately about your concerns to determine the appropriate course of action. [TDSB Suicide Prevention Protocol](#)
- ❑ Although these situations are rare, if you believe the student to be in imminent danger, call 9-1-1.
- ❑ Share these Mental Health Resources with your middle/high school students: [High School Handout.pdf](#) and their families [Handout-Caregiver.pdf](#)