

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK NEWSLETTER



ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Rose D'Alimonte MSW, RSW C. Mediator
Toronto Catholic District School Board

Dear Colleagues,

I am very excited to share with you the June 2013 edition of the School Social Work Newsletter of the Ontario Association of Social Workers (OASW). Highlights of this Newsletter include a review of our annual Ministry Day event held at the Ministry of Education, upcoming Annual School Social Work

Symposium 2013, Committee updates and several excellent articles submitted by School Social Work Colleagues representing various School Boards. It is always wonderful to read the articles submitted by

School Social Workers in our Newsletter! Thank you for sharing your knowledge and daily practice experience with us!

We are also excited to announce that on November 7, 2013, the School Social Work Committee of OASW will be hosting its 26th Annual "The Voices of School Social Workers" Symposium. Similar to last year, the format of Symposium 2013 will

include key note speakers in the morning, followed by afternoon workshops showcasing the work and expertise of School Social Workers across the province. Symposium brochures and registration forms will be circulated in early September 2013. **Ministry Day** is an annual event for the School Social Work Committee. This year, Andréanne Fleck Saito,

School Social Work Committee Ministry Representative, organized a successful day of information sharing and dialogue with Ministry officials. The day began with an inter-ministry panel reviewing the current Mental Health and Addiction Strategy. The afternoon panelists provided

us with an overview of current initiatives related to Student Success/Learning to 18 and highlights of key initiatives related to inclusive education and safe and accepting schools. In this Newsletter, you will find an article summarizing the panel discussions. Specific questions pertaining to school attendance were also raised. In particular, concerns related to identified gaps in some of



Sabrina Gonsalves & Rose D'Alimonte

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the policies and procedures for students presenting with attendance and mental health concerns. Audrey Cartile Director A. of Student Success/Learning to 18 extended an invitation for Committee members and School Social Work Chiefs to meet and provide further targeted feedback related to elementary student attendance concerns. We look forward to sharing with you the results of these discussions in the next Newsletter.

The School Social Work Committee continues to be actively involved as members of the **Coalition of Children and Youth Mental**

Health. School Social Workers will once again participate in the next Summit planned for April 3rd and 4th, 2014. The theme is: "Whole Community Approach". The Coalition organizers are currently accepting submissions for Summit presentations. I encourage you to consider featuring the work of School Social Workers at this Summit. For further information, please feel free to contact me at 416-574-0262.

Finally, the School Social Work Committee would like to acknowledge

Sabrina Gonsalves from the Toronto District School Board for her work on this Committee. Sabrina has been a member of the School Social Work Committee since 2005 and has actively participated in the organization of several Symposiums and Ministry Day events. Sabrina served as Committee Chair for three years. During her leadership, Sabrina successfully coordinated the 2011 School Social Work Survey and guided the publication of several School Social Work Newsletters. She

is a strong advocate for the profession of School Social Work and will be greatly missed by all Committee Members: in particular, I will miss her!

On behalf of the School Social Work Committee, I wish you all a restful and enjoyable summer vacation.

Look forward to seeing you at Symposium on November 7, 2013!

Best wishes,

Rose

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Krista Rivest BSW, RSW, Thames Valley District School Board &
Miguel Guayasamin MSW, RSW, Halton Catholic District School Board

We are pleased to bring you the June 2013 edition of the OASW School Social Work Committee Newsletter. In this issue, there are several interesting pieces on mindfulness and how this is being integrated into the practice of School Social Work. The *School Social Work Committee Annual Ministry Day* article provides a thorough summary of our day with the Ministry as well as links to some helpful resources. The

piece on *School Social Workers as Safe Schools Advisors in the TCDSB* shares three of the ways that School Social Workers have the distinct opportunity to support safe schools. These articles and many more features can be found in the following pages.

Having the chance to help to facilitate the sharing of School Social Work news, initiatives and issues is a great opportunity. We encourage

you to consider contributing your knowledge and expertise by writing a piece for any of our upcoming newsletters! Please feel free to make any submission or connect with us at guayasaminm@hcdsb.org or k.rivest@tvdsb.on.ca.

Wishing you a safe, relaxing and rejuvenating summer break,

Krista and Miguel

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE ANNUAL MINISTRY DAY

Rose D'Alimonte MSW, RSW C. Mediator
Toronto Catholic District School Board

As many of you are aware, the School Social Work Committee of OASW has had a longstanding relationship with the Ministry of Education. For the past 25 years, members of the School Social Work Committee and School Social Work Chiefs and Managers have had the opportunity to participate in full day meetings with Ministry representatives. The purpose of these meetings has been to liaise with Ministry Officials, responding to current and proposed legislation, policy and programs; and, to voice the

vital role of School Social Workers in promoting quality education, health and well-being for all Ontario students, families and communities.

On April 22, 2013, representatives of the School Social Work Committee and School Social Work Chiefs and Managers met with a tri-ministry panel to discuss the Children and Youth Mental Health and Addiction Strategy. Representatives included, **Barry Finlay**, Ministry of Education (MOE) Director, Special Education Policies and Programs Branch; **Marian Mlakar**, Ministry of Child and Youth

Services (MCYS) Director, Children and Youth Risk Branch; **Sheree Davis**, Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) Director, Community and Population Health Branch and, **Jane Brackley**, Senior Policy Advisor.

All four panel members confirmed that the mental health and addiction strategy is a shared responsibility across all three Ministry sectors. According to Marian Mlakar, the base funding committed to this initiative amounts to 93 million dollars annually. The priority of this strategy

is threefold: building capacity to ensure fast access to high quality mental health services, early identification and support (i.e. health literacy, referral pathways) and helping vulnerable children and youth with unique needs (Aboriginal youth and youth with complex needs). Ms. Mlakar emphasized the need for the mental health and addiction strategy to also include services for students during key transitions such as secondary to post-secondary.

Barry Finlay reported that to date:

- 21 workers have been hired to work in court to divert and support youth presenting with mental health needs
- 144 school based mental health and addiction nurses have been hired
- There have been many new mental health workers hired in the community
- All school boards now have funding for permanent mental health lead positions
- The provincial ASSIST team will continue to help Ontario school boards to build capacity to support student mental health and well-being, through effective implementation of research based programs and strategies.

Another key system priority identified includes the transformation of Section 23 classes/programs to ensure alignment with the comprehensive mental health and addiction strategy. Tele-psychiatry has also been expanded for children and youth to access in remote areas.

Sherri Davis from MOHLTC highlighted the need for primary care providers, such as family physicians and nurse practitioners, to work in partnership with mental health recipients. With the guidance from CAMH, four service collaboratives have been established in the following communities: Thunder Bay, Ottawa,

Simcoe/Muskoka and London. These service collaboratives are made up of a group of service providers from diverse sectors that work together to plan and deliver a seamless continuum of mental health and addiction services in their community. Ms. Davis concluded that the Institute for Clinical Evaluation Services (ICES) is leading the development of an evaluation framework for the Mental Health and Addictions strategy. Data collected is linked to all involved Ministries.

***“ALL SCHOOLS
BOARDS NOW HAVE
FUNDING FOR
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POSITIONS”***

To ensure the “Moving on Mental Health” initiative is indeed creating and supporting pathways to care, Jane Brackley has been assigned the task of evaluating this initiative. According to Ms. Brackley, initial feedback from the “on the ground stakeholders” reveals the “system is confusing... individuals don’t know what is available...services are variable across the province... (and) people are experiencing difficulty navigating their way through services...”. Ms. Brackley spoke of “establishing lead agencies in every community” to assist in creating and supporting accessible and transparent pathways to care. Funding models and legislative, regulatory, and accountability tools will also be developed “to ensure resources are being used to the best benefit”.

In the afternoon, Committee members and Chiefs/Managers received an overview of initiatives

from the following Ministry Branches: **Audrey Cartile**, Director A, Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategic Policy Branch; **Ruth Flynn**, Director, Inclusive Education Branch; and, **Marg Connor**, Director, Learning Environment Branch - Safe and Accepting Schools. The panel shared a video entitled “Hear me out” - a brief documentary of students who have experienced social inequity in their schools (particularly racism, homophobia and sexism). To view this video, follow the link:

<http://youtu.be/r2uNl6A8voE>

Recent legislation, policy and guidelines for equity and inclusive education were reviewed, including the most recent Accepting Schools Act and Bill 13.

Suggested helpful resources (all of which can be viewed online) included:

- Stepping Stones resource guide developed by Dr. Jean Clinton and Dr. B. Ferguson
- Safe and Accepting Schools toolkit, Thames Valley District School Board
- Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan
- Enhanced Online School Climate Survey Tool
- Institute for Education Leadership.

Audrey Cartile provided an overview of student success data, in particular, 83% of students currently graduate from high school – the target goal is an 85% graduation rate. According to Ms. Cartile, research shows that if a student misses 2 credits in their first year of high school, that student is at a 50% risk of not completing secondary school. Ms. Cartile identified School Social Workers as “key at identifying those students who are at risk”. Key elements of student success were shared with a focus on “creating

pathways to success". Programs such as dual credit, SWAC, SAL, Adult and Continuing education and Specialist High School Majors are examples of creating pathways to success for students. Other key initiatives include

improving educational outcomes for children and youth in care.

Overall, the day proved to be very successful. Audrey Cartile expressed interest in furthering the discussion related to the identified elementary school attendance concerns. Ms.

Cartile invited members of the School Social Work Committee and School Social Work Chiefs/Managers to a subsequent meeting to further discuss the concerns. We look forward to sharing the results of these discussions with you in the next Newsletter.

A TRIBUTE TO KATHY CHARTERIS, SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER, HALTON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Submitted by Gabriella D'Ambrosio MSW, RSW, on behalf of the staff of the Halton District School Board

The communities of White Oaks Secondary School in Oakville, Ontario, School Social Worker Colleagues, and the Halton District School Board lost an outstanding contributor and compassionate and caring intervenor with the accidental death of Kathy Charteris, in early August 2011.

As summer approaches, we remember Kathy as an Icon who made a great difference in making her community a better place, and was loved by many staff, students, and families. This special woman was passionate about life, filling it with laughter, spontaneity and adventure. Kathy was passionate about the students she helped, and was well respected by school staff she worked with. She could also be counted on to take care of the needs of many students in her role as social worker, counsellor and provider of basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. There are countless stories of

Kathy heading off to homes with a carload of food or furniture and clothes. Students would keep in touch with Kathy long after their high



Kathy Charteris

school graduation.

Kathy was a consummate professional who dedicated her career to helping others. She ran many intervention groups, was the Clinical Coordinator for the School

In recognition of Kathy's outstanding contribution to the profession of Social Work, she received the OASW School Social Work Achievement Award in 2011, received on her behalf by her father Stan Charteris. She was also the recipient of the Coach of the Year award for her years of investment as a coach in skiing, snowboarding, wrestling and field hockey. Her wrestling teams affectionately called her "Mama Char", as she was much more than just a coach to them all.

Kathy lived each day fully, with passion, care and love. She played as hard as she worked and gave of herself to her colleagues and friends as she did to her students.

No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted - Aesop



MINDFULNESS IN CLINICAL PRACTICE

Brigitte Dorsey BSW, RSW

Thames Valley District School Board

Due to my voracious appetite for learning, many fields of study have influenced my conceptualization of human development. These include anthropology, ecology, mindfulness, psychology, social work, yoga and interpersonal-neurobiology, a field named by Dr. Dan Siegel, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine and author of *The Mindful Therapist*.

In 2011, I was fortunate enough to attend the Mindfulness for Youth conference in Banff, where Dr. Siegel was the keynote speaker. He shared some of the remarkable effects mindfulness has on the brain, including increased regulation of the limbic system and prefrontal cortex. He points out that when counseling you cannot be attached to the outcome and simultaneously be fully present. The most memorable moment was Dr. Siegel's "handy" model of the brain, which I suggest you witness yourself via the internet. Simply search "Dr. Siegel handy brain".

Also at this conference, Jennifer Cohen-Harper of Little Flower Yoga (New York) showed how to help children fidget in an acceptable way—by creating a four word or four syllable mantra to repeat (silently or aloud) while touching one's thumb to

each fingertip in turn. Of course, a positively focused mantra will have much more of a profound effect than just socially acceptable fidgeting.



Jennifer emphasized the importance of matching a child's affect before leading them to lower or raise their mood or intensity. This concept was later explained to me in precise psychological detail through the work of developmental psychologist Dr. Gordon Neufeld (Vancouver). Dr. Neufeld's vast works have led to my deeper understanding of the lifelong functions and processes of attachment, of how the brain 'pays attention' and why people bully.

Through his conceptualizations of resistance, Sam Himelstein of the Mind Body Awareness Project (San Diego) encouraged us to be honoured by a client's resistance. The act of resisting has developed over time as a way to protect themselves. Perceiving resistance

from this stance allows you to work with the resistance rather than against it, and help the client learn to connect and develop positive interpersonal interaction skills.

I picked up three CD's at the conference. They have been well used in my office and I would recommend them to you in supporting your clients. The CD's are *Calm Down Boogie* by Betsy Rose, *Still Quiet Place: Mindfulness for Young Children* and *Still Quiet Place: Mindfulness for Teens* both by Dr. Amy Saltzman.

More than the science, it was through my intuitive, heartfelt reaction that these concepts have become a deep-rooted part of my worldview. I greatly appreciate this opportunity to share with you those concepts and techniques that have shaped the way in which I work with children who struggle to succeed in the elementary education system.

I leave you with a thought of Albert Einstein's: "*whether you can observe a thing or not depends on the theory which you use. It is the theory which decides what can be observed.*"

May a soft heart allow you to observe the magnificence that surrounds us.

Photo Credit:

Mindfulness Child [Online Image]. Retrieved June 6, 2013, from <http://now.tufts.edu/articles/helping-children-become-more-mindful>

**The School Social Work Committee of the OASW
Is pleased to host its 26th Annual Symposium
"The Voices of School Social Workers"**

Thursday November 7, 2013

**Leonardo Da Vinci Banquet and Convention Centre
Online Registration Opens in September 2013**

MEDITATION AND ENERGY HEALING

Nicole Hartrell BA, M. Ed., TTN

Introduction by Rose D'Alimonte MSW, RSW, C. Mediator, Toronto Catholic District School Board

Nicole Hartrell is a retired teacher and Therapeutic Touch/Reiki healer. Nicole is a guest workshop facilitator who has introduced students, parents and staff, of the Supervised Alternative Learning program at TCDSB, to the empowering healing techniques of positive thinking visualizations/meditation. Nicole's dynamic and engaging personality coupled with her impressive gentle reflective skills has helped guide and teach students how to slow down, relax and enhance their own ability to reduce stress and feel healthier. Students are taught to focus on breath and body sensations and to non-judgmentally evaluate distracting thoughts and emotions. Benefits of meditation are noted in various studies showing that meditation effects the brain to reduce anxiety (Zeidan, F., 2012; Nauert, R., 2013). Our students, parents and staff have all commented on the calming benefits of practicing meditation and mindfulness. Nicole's positive thinking visualizations compliment the current Mindfulness Ambassador Counsel Sessions students enjoy in the Supervised Alternative Learning (SAL) classroom.

Rose D'Alimonte

After having taught for 25 years in the old City of York and Dufferin-Peel Boards, I became ill and made the decision to take an early retirement. My illness led me to investigate alternative medicine and therapies for total and holistic healing. In my usual style, I left no stone unturned: implementing a vegan (plant based diet) in my home; learning to meditate; using aromatherapy; spiritual retreats; yoga; tai chi; and the effective use of herbal and natural supplements, to name just a few.

One path in particular, changed my life in dramatic ways. When I was ill in the hospital a friend came to visit and performed Reiki (energy healing) on me to help me heal more quickly. The doctors were quite amazed when I healed in a matter of a few days. I was intrigued and had to find out more. I discovered a clinic in Mississauga where I could learn how to perform Therapeutic Touch, a similar form of energy healing, through the leadership of a medical nurse.

I basically learned that humans will not be in "disease" when we are at "ease!" A light when on! And over the years, I have learned that imbalances at the mental, emotional, spiritual and etheric levels will

eventually lead to illness at the physical level of our bodies.

After using my friends and family members as guinea pigs, I decided to share my new found practice in a nursing home where I volunteered for several years to assist seniors with various illnesses from depression to



Nicole Hartrell & Rose D'Alimonte

arthritic pain with wonderful and affirming results. Since then, I have delivered energy healing in my home and provide meditation/energy healing workshops to various groups.

Several years ago, I ran into an old student at a social function who happened to be married to a dynamic social worker, Rose D'Alimonte, with the Toronto Catholic District School Board. After having shared my knowledge of the effectiveness of

meditating and energy healing with Rose, we decided to introduce my techniques with her students of the SAL Program. The following is a description of one of the workshops I facilitated at SAL.

With great hopefulness, I begin the workshop for a dozen students and several parents and teachers, explaining the benefits of meditating at a mental, physical, emotional and spiritual level and that meditating allows us to be more peaceful and grounded. We also discuss the importance of positive thinking as our thoughts are also "energy" and we attract into our life what we think. I cite several scientific research and studies such as Kirlian Photography which takes photos of our "auras" (our energy fields) and Dr. Emoto's water experiment which supports the theory that our thoughts can alter our physical environment.

After a brief introduction of "my story," we begin with soft gentle music to learn the art of mindful breathing which is enhanced by using visualizations such as "being a tree" or sitting under a waterfall. I can see everyone begin to let go and relax. Some students are still struggling to let go of anxiety and the "monkey mind," so I teach them how to use a "mantra," which is a word or several

words that one repeats to release thoughts. The participants start to go into a deeper relaxed state. We learn how to release negative thoughts and emotions by blowing bubbles into the “universe,” and then we go into a “special place” (a beach, a garden, by the lake, grandma’s house etc.) to further relax and let go.

For deep tensions, I teach the group how to do a “body scan” to witness and search for tensions and releasing the tensions so that our bodies are “at ease.” Some students are able to apply these techniques when we use the visualization of “pacman” to chomp up all the tension!

For further healing, I introduce the group to the 6,000 year old ancient art of Jin Shin Jyutsu, which is like acupuncture, to clear our “flows” or “meridians” which are like electrical energy lines in our bodies. It is so simple that it’s almost silly: simple finger exercises to clear our main physical body networks and main human attitudes tied to these networks. Once our “chi” or “life

force” is strong, I teach the participants the basic positions of reiki to strengthen their energy centres. We include musical sounds and colours also for opening up the energy centres and clearing them.

Now that we are all blissfully relaxed and in a positive field, we learn how to visualize our desires/goals and how to manifest them through our thoughts process. We finally end off with thoughts of gratitude and sending love and light to others.

I ask for feedback after the workshop since the experience is very personal and was delighted to learn that several of the techniques really resonated for some of the students and many committed to using them during their everyday life.

After one workshop, Rose D’Alimonte made my day when she e-mailed me to let me know that one student who was particularly anxious was able to use my “bubble” meditation for releasing anxiety when she was going for a job interview! I was overjoyed! We can’t reach them

all, but if we can empower even one student, that makes it worthwhile.

There is no doubt that in the 21st century, stress will be our biggest “disease” which causes all other illnesses. Dr. Oz says that energy healing will be the most important medical technique in this century while experts like Dr. Deepak Chopra and Dr. Wayne Dyer underscore the importance of meditation and other alternative modalities in healing ourselves and the planet. As a retired teacher, my prayer is that we find a way to help our young people remain calm and peaceful so that they can succeed in anything they do. Our planet depends on it!!! It is my hope that in my senior years that I can make a difference in leading students and adults to some of the techniques I have learned.

For more information and for workshop requests call: Nicole Hartrell @ 416-231-5477 or e-mail: nicole.hartrell@sympatico.ca

ARBEIT SCHULE PROGRAM IN RURAL ELGIN COUNTY

An Interview with Caterina Vindasius

Krista Rivest BSW, RSW, Thames Valley District School Board



Please tell us a little bit about Arbeit Schule – the students you serve, the criteria, where and when you meet students and what staffing supports the program?

Arbeit Schule is a work oriented, independent study program that had 165 students registered last year. It serves primarily Mennonite students that for cultural or language reasons are unable to complete high school. When it was first created, the program was staffed by 4 regular teachers, 2 ESL teachers and 1 administrative assistant. Teachers meet with students 1-2 times/week - either in the community or at the homes of students. Meetings may happen either during the day or in the evening.

What was the gap in service that led to the creation of Arbeit Schule?

There was a group of Mennonite students in Elgin County that for cultural or language reasons did not continue on to high school after Grade 8. As part of a cultural expectation, most of our students are required to work, often having full time jobs.

In your opinion, what are the unique aspects of the program?

The program has Low German

speaking teachers. Each teacher has students from different grades working at different levels. Students can gain up to 14 Co-op credits and can do work through home study. The program also offers the flexibility when families travel back to Mexico for two months. Students maintain contact via cell phone.

What are some of your greatest challenges? Any great successes?

One of the great challenges was a shortage of staff because the program grew so much between September and December 2011. At times there are difficulties having the resources needed to meet their needs such as

photocopies of units and teaching/office supplies.

It is a huge success that students and families that have gone to Mexico call and text with their teachers. Also, more and more families are hearing about the program.

What advice do you have for those looking to create unique opportunities for students?

There are lots of similar programs - find out what works best.

Don't be afraid to think outside the box!

Ask anyway - if you never ask, you'll never get what you might want.

Are there any culturally sensitive suggestions that you can make to those who may have the chance to work with the Mennonite population?

There are many different groups of Mennonites in Southwestern Ontario - our area serves Low German speaking Mennonites from Latin America - educate yourself on the differences!

Be aware of your own clothing when working with students. Modesty is respected.

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK BOARD NEWS

YOUTH AND MINDFULNESS AT TCDSB

Dianne Banasco, Guidance Counsellor, MAC facilitator & TCDSB liaison for Mindfulness Without Borders & Brenda Welsh, Social Worker and MAC facilitator



“Emerging evidence indicates that the regular practice of mindfulness has numerous psychological, therapeutic and health benefits. As a result, mindfulness training has recently spread to the field of education...”¹

Within the Toronto Catholic District School Board, Mindfulness Without Borders (MWB) which promotes mindfulness, peacemaking and social-emotional learning (SEL) for secondary students was

introduced to educators and students at the 2010 TCDSB Mental Health Symposium.

MWB, founded by Theo Koffler, designed a twelve session program called Mindfulness Ambassador Council (MAC) which is run either within the classroom or in small group settings during the school day. The MAC helps youth to become more caring, kind and compassionate citizens. Each council promotes student success in school and life, by providing strategies which strengthens their ability to think critically and act thoughtfully. In the council, members explore and express their perspectives and learn from the insights of others. The MAC curriculum was modified exclusively for TCDSB and strongly aligns with our Catholic Graduate Expectations.

The council takes place in a circle and each lesson has a theme fostering

social-emotional competencies, kindness and healthy relationships. Mindfulness practices, including ‘TUZA’ - a three minute breathing exercise, and ‘circles of gratitude’ are incorporated throughout the sessions. Mindfulness Ambassador Council guidebooks, which clearly outline each session of the curriculum, are provided to facilitators. Students also receive their own MAC guidebook and journal.

The first training at TCDSB was in May 2011 attended by teachers, social workers and CYWs. In the fall of 2011, five pilot Mindfulness Ambassador Councils participated in a quantitative research study conducted by University of Toronto Faculty of Social Work to determine the efficacy of the curriculum. This evidence based research demonstrated that MAC participants were applying what they learned about mindfulness into their daily

lives. Almost three-quarters of the students found the MAC program to be highly valuable. The findings of the study indicated that the program helped participants to cope better with challenges, improve their relationships, calm themselves, as well as manage stress and anxiety.

Below are quotes from MAC student participants and facilitators:

"I liked learning ways to cope with stress because school has been very stressful for me." Loretto College student

"If someone is listening, there is a vibe you can feel." APPLE Program student

"The MAC program helped me learn how to communicate better." Supervised Alternative Learning (SAL) Program student

"The MAC program was a great source of information on how to understand and control my emotions, and it teaches me helpful meditation skills." Bishop Marrocco student

"Practicing something new can be a challenging task for youth as well as

for adults. I have consistently been amazed at the ability of our students to tune out technology and to tune into their hearts and minds through MAC. The curriculum invites all of us to communicate and to care more deeply about ourselves and others." Giselle Signoroni, SAL Social Worker & MAC facilitator

"In our busy curriculum filled classrooms, we need to provide students with the space to cultivate their inner peace and create room for acceptance, stillness, intuition and connection to self, others and their spirit. The MAC encourages students to become more reflective, creative and holistic thinkers. These are critical life skills which we as educators need to take time to teach and foster in our students." Louise Cusimano-Graham, Senator O'Connor Teacher & MAC facilitator

To date, over 1,200 TCDSB students from more than 20 secondary sites including regular high schools and alternative settings (APPLE, SAL and other Fraser College campuses) have implemented

MAC into their curriculum. As the program was designed to meet the needs of all students a modified version of the guidebook was developed for 'at-risk' youth with learning differences and/or behavior challenges. This modified version, which was launched within APPLE in 2011, incorporates more visual and tactile learning strategies.

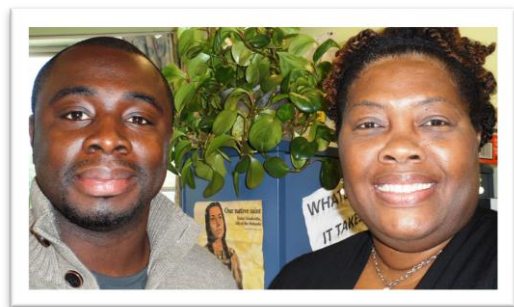
Mindfulness Ambassador Councils continue to evolve and become a vital component of TCDSB secondary schools. Our mission is to enhance our students' social-emotional learning and incorporate, as well as deepen mindfulness based strategies into the ethos of our secondary school communities.

For more information on Mindfulness Without Borders' programs, school presentations and professional development workshops, please contact leah@mwwithoutborders.org

1 Mindfulness Without Borders (2013). *Mindfulness Ambassador Council Facilitator Guidebook* TCDSB. p. 7

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS AS SAFE SCHOOL ADVISORS IN THE TCDSB

Marcia King MSW RSW, HBSW, TIR Facilitator & Augustine Jatoe MSW, RSW, Safe Schools Advisors & School Social Workers, Toronto Catholic District School Board



Augustine Jatoe & Marcia King

The Toronto Catholic District School Board, Safe School Department's mission statement identifies that a safe, caring and

inclusive school environment is key to student success. The Safe Schools Advisor role within the TCDSB offers experienced School Social Workers a unique opportunity to use their skills within a school board setting. The following is a brief description of the School Social Worker, Safe Schools Advisor's roles and responsibilities:

Resolution Conferencing and Mediation Circles (RCMC)

What is Restorative Justice?

Restorative Justice is the term used to describe an approach that responds to inappropriate or rule breaking behaviour. We all live in a society with a number of 'social contracts'. These are the rules for how we interact with one another that may include rules of law as well as codes of conduct.

The Resolution Conference and Mediation Circles (RCMC) is a practice based on community justice principles. It involves a face-to-face facilitated meeting with the students and other impacted parties within the community. The RCMC is used as a

proactive, preventative and reactive tool within the TCDSB Progressive Discipline model. A circle could be implemented before, during or after the suspension and/or expulsion process, or with an incident requiring a conciliatory response.

The Safe Schools Advisors are the lead trainers and coordinators for the TCDSB, RCMC process since 2009. They are responsible for the ongoing training and support of the RCMC process. The long term goal of the Safe Schools Advisors is to train at least 2 staff members within each of the TCDSB's 167 elementary and 31 secondary schools. They have presently trained over 300 facilitators at both the elementary and secondary level.

Threat Assessment Training and Consultation

The Safe Schools Advisors provide training and ongoing Threat Assessment consultation to the TCDSB community. The TCDSB

Safe Schools Department has created a procedural guideline for the implementation of the Threat Assessment process. The multidisciplinary process involves the core team members of a School Social Worker and school Principal. The other Threat Assessment team members may include trained administrators, Guidance Counselors, Psychology staff and a member of the Toronto Police Service.

The term "Threat Assessment" describes the process that is used to identify and assess threats and/or behaviours that may signal an individual's preparation and/or likelihood to commit a violent act. In addition to assessing the credibility of the threat, one must also assess the extent to which that person has the resources, intent and motivation to carry out the threat.

Certification Series Training

The Safe Schools Department delivers a number of professional

workshops to the TCDSB community. Some of the topics address proactive and reactive programs and/or approaches to building safe communities in TCDSB. Some of the topics covered are: bullying, classroom behaviours, restorative practice, progressive discipline, suspension, expulsion and threat assessment, just to name a few. Social Worker/Safe Schools Advisors deliver some of the proactive programs such as: Safe Schools Intervention, Safe Schools Transition Programs and introduction programs to threat assessment and restorative practice.

For further information please contact Marcia King (marcia.king@tcdsb.org) or Augustine Jatoe (augustine.jatoe@tcdsb.org), Safe Schools Advisors

TECH SUPPORT

SOCIAL WORK AND TECHNOLOGY

Embracing the Culture of Our Youth

Miguel Guayasamin MSW, RSW, Halton Catholic District School Board

Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, Formspring, SnapChat, Instagram, Vine...these are just a few of the social media sites and communication apps that our youth are engaged in. Technology continues to grow at a pace that at times can seem so incomprehensible, and youth are keeping pace, but this can sound so foreign to many of us. Technology is their playground, whether it is how they communicate or engage with the world around them, or because they are at the helm in creating it. Like the 17 year old who was recently paid approximately \$30 million for an app

that he created, or the 18 year old who created a super capacitor that can now charge our cell phones in under 30 seconds or even the 16 year old who just this week won a scholarship to attend Apple's largest technology conference because of an app he submitted.

Social Work, for the most part, is often not associated with technology and in some cases it may seem to be the anti-thesis to what it is we do. However, as we see how each generation of youth embrace it at younger ages, perhaps they are letting us know that we need to understand

this better to understand them. This is no easy task, because even for those of us that try to stay abreast of new developments, it always feels like we are lagging behind. Even when I have tried to get ahead of the curve, I am quickly informed that it was last week's news.

The hope and intention for this section in the newsletter is share information about technology, from what is trendy with our youth, to websites and apps that are out there that can support us in the work we do with them. Even if we still cannot manage to grasp or don't quite get

what these things mean or are about, they can make for powerful tools to use in our interactions with youth. I will readily use my ignorance as an opportunity to allow them to be the expert and inform me of what the latest tech trend is. It is evident in these moments that they feel empowered and appreciated, which always goes miles for us in establishing relationships with them. To be honest, I have even claimed not to know something to allow for this process to happen.

Okay so **what** are all the sites and apps noted at the beginning of this article? Most are familiar with Facebook and Twitter, but here is a brief summary of the others. Tumblr and Formspring are posting sites.

Typically on Tumblr youth scroll through various pictures, memes or short commentary. On Formspring you can post questions to be answered by others anonymously. Snapchat is a messaging app where youth are sending pictures or videos of themselves that will only exist for a few seconds for the person who has received it. Instagram is a picture sharing app, where others can see pictures you upload documenting your day to day life. Vine is the latest trend where youth are creating and posting very short six second videos that others can view. It is so popular that Ellen has recently started a new segment in her show where she shows some of the more amusing videos out there.

As for websites that I have found helpful to support youth around their mental health, teenmentalhealth.org which has been developed with the support of Dr. Stan Kutcher, has a variety of tools and videos that are engaging and relevant to youth. They have a curriculum guide that can be ordered to provide mental health training for teachers and lesson plans for educating youth. Also mindyourmind.ca is another youth friendly site that has many online games and resources that educate around mental health and addictions.

If there are any questions about technology or have information of useful apps or websites, please let us know so that we can share this information with one another.

CHECK OUT THIS MEDITATION APP: HEADSPACE (ON-THE-GO)

Krista Rivest BSW, RSW, Thames Valley District School Board



HeadSpace is a mindfulness app that you can take with you! Developed by Andy Puddicombe, who used to be a Buddhist monk, it is an opportunity to practice

mindfulness no matter where you are – once it is downloaded and saved, no internet connection is needed. HeadSpace starts with a free 10 day meditation series – with each meditation being only 10 minutes long, which makes it very easy to fit into what are often our already busy lives! Should you enjoy the 10 days, you do have the option to purchase a further subscription that includes several meditation series including ones on happiness, creativity,

discovery and many others! Andy Puddicombe smoothly guides you through the meditative process, helping you to calm your mind and decrease your stress. HeadSpace is available for both Android and iPhone. More information can be found by going to: www.getsomeheadspace.com

Social Work Theme for 2013

“Restoring Hope: The Power of Social Work”

“Social workers have the right education, experience and dedication to help people build and restore hope when they most need it!”

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The Ontario Association of Social Workers, School Social Work Committee is committed to the development, promotion, and advocacy of School Social Work for the purpose of improving the quality of education and life for children, families and communities in Ontario

