



## MEASURING PROGRESS ON WELL-BEING Report No. 17-028

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COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC)

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### **Well-being Objective - By 2019, the District will enhance the use of resources and supports to improve the well-being of all learners and staff.**

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board identified well-being as one of five key priority areas for the 2015-2019 strategic plan. In the plan, well-being for the District is described as “a culture which supports and respects the well-being of every individual in safe and caring learning and working environments.” The objective states: “By 2019, the District will enhance the use of resources and supports to improve the well-being of all learners and staff.” The strategies to support this objective are:

- “Build capacity to improve mental health supports”;
- “Increase opportunities to support and encourage creative expression, physical health and physical literacy”; and
- “Develop and implement the well-being framework and School Well-being Plans to enhance school climate.”

The OCDSB is an established leader in promoting student well-being through the development of a district-wide well-being framework (January 2014, revised May 2015). The Ministry of Education has begun developing a framework for student well-being to be used provincially. As part of this work, the Ministry is collaborating with stakeholders across the province in order to learn from and build on the successful work underway and to collectively move toward a shared goal of promoting student well-being. The development of this provincial framework will help to inform our thinking in terms of alignment with other boards and with Ministry perspective. In 2016, the Ministry put forth the following working definition for well-being:

Well-being is a positive sense of self, spirit and belonging that we feel when our cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs are being met. It is supported through equity and respect for our diverse identities and strengths. Well-being in early years and school settings is about helping children and students become resilient, so that they can make positive and healthy choices to support learning and achievement both now and in the future.

– *Ontario’s Well-being Strategy for Education: Discussion Document, 2016, p. 3*

The OCDSB's Framework for Student Well-being (K-12) discusses the OCDSB's vision, themes from existing research, and sources of evidence, organized under three dimensions of well-being:

- Socio-emotional (sense of belonging and relationship skills);
- Cognitive (engagement, sense of meaning and purpose, and self-efficacy); and
- Physical (safety, physical activity, nutrition, and healthy choices and perspective).

These three dimensions provide a structure for promoting well-being and for schools in developing well-being plans.

### **School Well-being Plans**

The development and implementation of school well-being plans has been identified as a key strategy for making progress on well-being. The OCDSB has established a requirement that all schools develop a school plan for student well-being on an annual basis, share that plan with their school community, and continually monitor implementation throughout the year. The development of school well-being plans has been supported centrally with a variety of resources (i.e., the OCDSB Well-being Framework, the book *Well Aware* by Patrick Carney, the Leading Mentally Healthy Schools Handout, and the Ministry of Education's *Supporting Minds* document). As of April 2017, 91% of schools submitted their 2016-2017 well-being plans. Although this represents great progress in this area, the goal is to have all schools submitting these plans and doing so relatively early in the school year. With the implementation of school well-being plans identified as a key strategy for the well-being objective, this is an area of focus moving forward.

### **Exit Outcomes**

Given the OCDSB's increasingly comprehensive view of student success, with particular attention on student well-being, the Exit Outcomes have become an important area of focus. The Exit Outcomes are characteristics and skills required for OCDSB students to be successful after graduation for every student. They are:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Characteristics:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Resilient;</li><li>○ Globally Aware;</li><li>○ Collaborative;</li><li>○ Innovative/Creative; and</li><li>○ Goal-oriented.</li></ul></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Skills:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Critical Thinkers;</li><li>○ Effective Communicators</li><li>○ Academically Diverse;</li><li>○ Digitally Fluent; and</li><li>○ Ethical Decision-makers.</li></ul></li></ul> |
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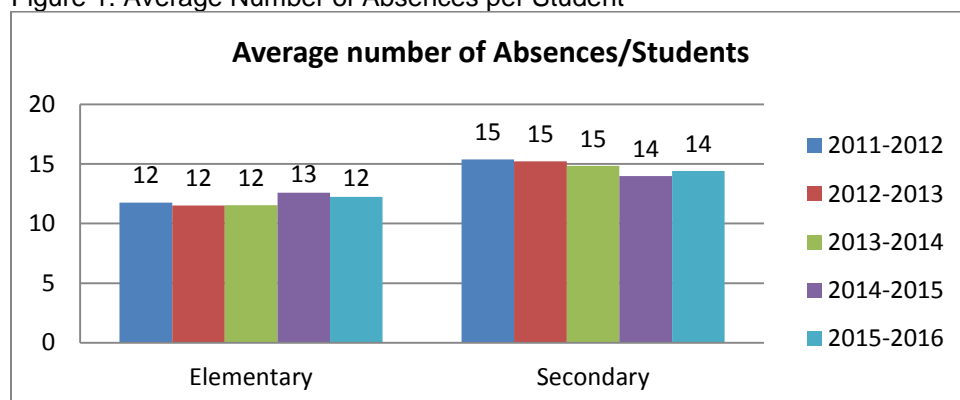
The Exit Outcomes move away from a purely academic definition of success and emphasize the whole student, with the characteristics outlined fitting well with the OCDSB's work on socio-emotional and cognitive well-being. Work has been underway to pilot and refine a self-assessment tool of these characteristics so that students will have a mechanism for self-reflection on their strengths and areas for growth. The tool will provide students with valuable insight in terms of their own personal progress and areas for improvement on dimensions that extend far beyond traditional assessment areas.

## **Evidence for Overall Student Well-being**

### **Absenteeism**

Absenteeism is a useful index for measuring student well-being. Days away from school are often taken in response to feeling unwell, either mentally or physically. As such, changes in absenteeism over time can serve as evidence of trends in overall well-being. Certain limitations, however, must be kept in mind given that not all absences are indicative of negative well-being (e.g., a student missing school to attend a family function) and that schools differ in their practices for coding absences. As presented in the figure below, student absence rates suggest that both elementary and secondary absences have remained relatively stable in recent years.

Figure 1. Average Number of Absences per Student



*Note.* Numbers are based on full day absences and do not include Continuing Education. Data labels are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Student absenteeism was further explored by disaggregating the data for students who were frequently absent. Approximately 45% of students were identified as being absent for 11 days or more (using the same criterion identified for the Employee Attendance Management Program); however these students accounted for nearly 80% of all absences. As a next step, district-wide absence data will be explored for possible trends and/or areas of concern. This examination will consider things such as attendance patterns by month, specific dates with high absence rates, and correlations with other data sources. This information will help inform focused discussions with principals about school-based attendance patterns as part of our ongoing data literacy initiative, and can be used to develop strategies to reduce student absenteeism. Improvements in attendance can positively impact both student learning and well-being, and as such work in this area is important for progress on the well-being objective.

### **Suspension Rates**

Student suspension data provides information on rates of unacceptable/unsafe behaviour. Work to reduce student suspensions aims to address the underlying reasons for the behaviour and is important for making progress on the well-being objective. As presented in the table below, there has been an overall reduction in both the number of suspensions as well as the number of students suspended over the past few years. This overall reduction is the result of a decrease in suspensions at the secondary level; there was a slight increase in elementary. The pattern of decrease in

secondary suspensions is interesting and may be an indicator that the OCDSB's commitment to collaborative problem solving and restorative practices are having an impact on school climate. Further details on suspension information will be presented in the upcoming Memo 17-055, 2015-2016 Student Suspensions.

Table 1. OCDSB Student Suspensions

	2013	2014	2015	2016	% $\Delta_{13/14}$	% $\Delta_{14/15}$	% $\Delta_{15/16}$
<b>Number of Suspensions</b>							
<i>Elementary</i>	1,488	1,597	1,613	1,635	7.3%	1.0%	1.4%
<i>Secondary</i>	2,310	1,686	1,573	1,315	-27.0%	-6.7%	-16.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,798</b>	<b>3,283</b>	<b>3,186</b>	<b>2,950</b>	<b>-13.6%</b>	<b>-2.9%</b>	<b>-7.4%</b>
<b>Number of Students Suspended</b>							
<i>Elementary</i>	899	944	936	942	5.0%	-0.8%	0.6%
<i>Secondary</i>	1,348	1,025	983	880	-24.0%	-4.1%	-10.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,247</b>	<b>1,969</b>	<b>1,919</b>	<b>1,822</b>	<b>-12.4%</b>	<b>-2.5%</b>	<b>-5.1%</b>
<b>Number of Students Enrolled</b>							
<i>Elementary</i>	48,133	48,126	48,176	47,685	0.0%	0.1%	-1.0%
<i>Secondary</i>	24,798	24,252	23,978	23,886	-2.2%	-1.1%	-0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>72,931</b>	<b>72,378</b>	<b>72,154</b>	<b>71,571</b>	<b>-0.8%</b>	<b>-0.3%</b>	<b>-0.8%</b>

### **Evidence by Dimension of Well-being**

Evidence for measuring progress in student well-being can be organized according to the following three dimensions:

<b>Dimensions of Well-being</b>		
Socio-emotional	Cognitive	Physical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training in mental health;</li> <li>• Well Aware Pilot Project;</li> <li>• OurSCHOOL Parent Survey;</li> <li>• School-based Substance Abuse Program Evaluation;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training in Executive Function;</li> <li>• Collaborative Problem Solving Training;</li> <li>• OurSCHOOL Parent Survey;</li> <li>• EQAO Student Questionnaire;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily Physical Activity;</li> <li>• Participation in Spark Program;</li> <li>• EQAO Student Questionnaire; and</li> <li>• Enrolment in Physical Education courses.</li> </ul>

Progress in the area of employee well-being can be measured by:

- Supports provided through Employee Wellness;
- Employee sick leave usage;
- Employee exposure to aggressive student behaviour; and
- Training in healthy workplaces.

## **Socio-emotional Well-being**

Students who are resilient manage their emotions well, cope better with setbacks and demonstrate positive socio-emotional skills and enhanced well-being.

## **Training in Mental Health**

A key strategy for well-being is to build capacity to improve mental health supports. During the 2015-2016 school year, progress has been made through employee training in a variety of areas. Although this training aims to provide employees with the knowledge and skills to help students, the experience gained from the training sessions is expected to equip staff with strategies that have a positive impact on their own well-being. This training has focused on:

- ASIST – a two-day course designed to help caregivers recognize and estimate risk, and intervene to prevent the immediate risk of suicide (50 trained);
- SafeTALK – a three-hour workshop that prepares staff to identify people with thoughts of suicide and connect them to suicide first aid resources (175 trained);
- FRIENDS – a full day of resiliency training for professionals working with children (69 trained);
- Reaching In Reaching Out – a two-day skills training program for professionals designed to promote resiliency in children (44 trained);
- Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) – three-day training for staff interested in becoming proficient in using the CPS model to better understand and support children and adolescents with behavioral challenges (107 trained); and
- Compassion Fatigue – a full day of training to enhance understanding of compassion fatigue and offer practical strategies to support personal and professional wellness (129 trained).

## **Well Aware Pilot Project**

Well Aware is a school-based, tier-1 approach which emphasizes mental health promotion and universal support for all students. This literacy-based program consists of 20 short texts, 4 per grade from grade 4 to 8, which are meant to provide an awareness of mental health issues. The program was piloted at Jack Donohue Public School in April 2016, after which nine teachers and their students provided feedback.

Feedback from the pilot suggested a positive impact on the students involved. As presented in the figures below, the majority of teachers felt that their students were able to relate to the texts, and that they were engaged in classroom activities and discussions. Reports from teachers also suggested at least a small increase in students' knowledge of mental health and awareness of stigma. It is important to note however, that this evidence is based on feedback from nine teachers and therefore a larger sample would be required for a more comprehensive evaluation of the program. That said, this preliminary feedback is promising and has helped guide continued implementation, as described below.

Figure 2. “Students in my classroom were able to relate to the Well Aware texts”

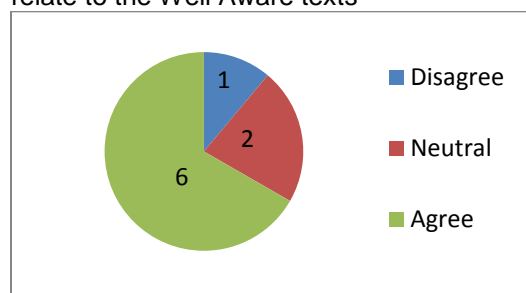
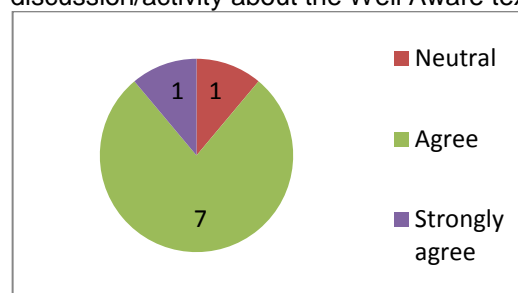


Figure 3. “Students in my classroom engaged in discussion/activity about the Well Aware texts”



The feedback provided gave insight into the duration of the program and the usefulness of the texts involved. The pilot project was conducted over a condensed period of time (one month) which students and staff reported was not enough time. Furthermore, feedback suggested that the program was a better fit for junior students than their intermediate peers. These findings were informative for shaping phase two of the pilot which is currently running in grade 4 classrooms in 7 elementary schools (12 classrooms overall) for the duration of the 2016-2017 school year.

### OurSCHOOL Parent Survey

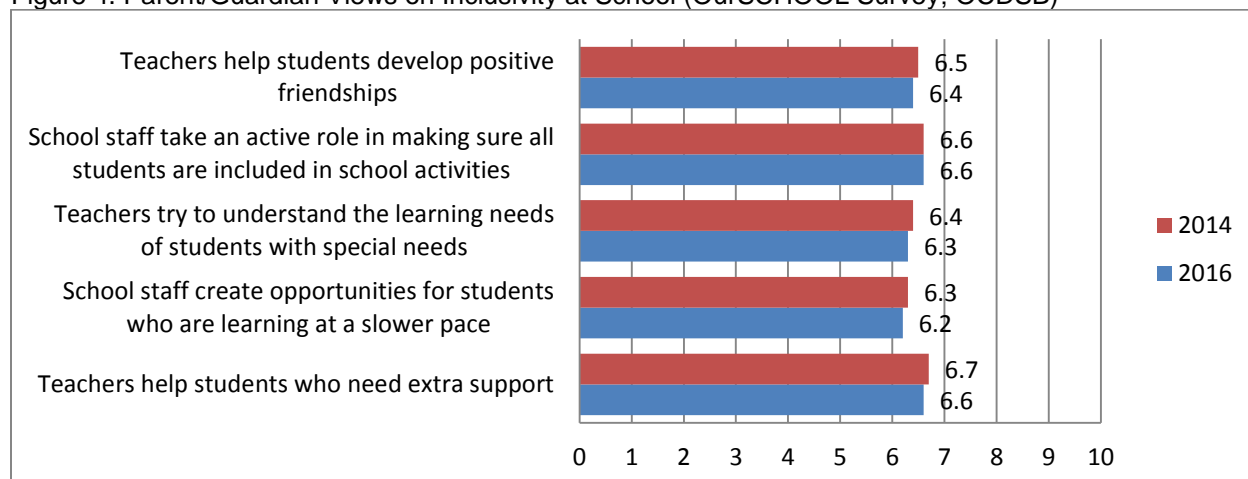
The OurSCHOOL survey is a voluntary online questionnaire, developed by The Learning Bar, which is used by school boards to collect anonymous and reliable data about school climate. In June 2016, the OCDSB surveyed parents/guardians about school climate and received 8,843 responses. Parents/guardians were asked a series of questions about their child’s school experience, and their responses are presented on a 10-point scale, with 0 indicating strong disagreement, 10 indicating strong agreement, and 5 being neutral. These responses, alongside results from the previous parent survey (2014), can be used to measure progress on well-being.

### Inclusive School

Parents/guardians were asked a series of questions about their views on inclusivity for their child at school. Responses to these questions serve as evidence of student socio-emotional well-being. As presented in the figure below, 2016 ratings ranged from 6.2 to 6.6. Among the survey items, the highest levels of agreement were for: “Teachers help students who need extra support” and “School staff take an active role in making sure all students are included in school activities.” The lowest levels of agreement were for: “School staff create opportunities for students who are learning at a slower pace” and “Teachers try to understand the learning needs of students with special needs.”

Parent/guardian perceptions of inclusivity have remained fairly stable since the last administration of the survey in 2014; although it is important to note that ratings decreased slightly for almost all inclusivity questions. One important consideration when interpreting the change over time is the substantial increase in the response rate for the survey. Uptake for the survey increased by 73% (up 3,331 respondents since 2014); therefore, the data includes a broader representation of parent/guardian views which may also contribute to the more recent scores being slightly lower.

Figure 4. Parent/Guardian Views on Inclusivity at School (OurSCHOOL Survey; OCDSB)



Note. Data presented is for the OCDSB. Canadian norms are not available for the Parent Survey.

### School-based Substance Abuse Program Evaluation

The OCDSB invests in a school-based substance abuse counselling program in collaboration with Rideauwood Addiction and Family Services and other local partners. This cooperative initiative provides counseling services for all publicly-funded high school students in Ottawa (including students at the Ottawa Catholic School Board, Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est, and Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Ést de l'Ontario). Although data specific to the program and its success is currently only available in an aggregate format across all four districts, the most recent evaluation of the program demonstrates success of the initiative and therefore speaks to the positive outcomes resulting from OCDSB investments in student well-being.

Students receiving counselling services through the school-based program in 2015-16 ranged from 13 to 19 years of age, with the majority being between 15 and 17. Those who provided consent also participated in the evaluation, provided that they completed and submitted clinical assessments and academic records both before and after counselling (for a minimum of three months). In total, the sample for the evaluation consisted of 111 students.

Rideauwood's evaluation compared student/client assessments before and after treatment (or at the end of the school year if still receiving treatment). These comparisons revealed that, among the most commonly reported substances, 56-88% of clients reported reducing or stopping substance use. It is important to note that substance use frequently occurs alongside other mental health needs. Pre and post-treatment comparisons showed that the number of clients flagged for mental health needs reduced across almost all domains with marked reductions (based on the number of clients flagged) in the following areas:

- 23% reduction for crime and violence;
- 19% reduction for an eating disorder;
- 16% reduction for externalizing disorder;
- 16% reduction for substance disorder; and

- 13% reduction for internalizing disorder.

These findings show promising outcomes for the Ottawa school-based substance abuse counseling initiative, and suggest that the program contributes to positive well-being. Given the OCDSB's involvement in this collaboration, the program's success speaks to the District's progress in this area.

### **Cognitive Well-being**

Cognitive well-being includes self-efficacy, creativity, flexibility, and critical thinking. These cognitive skills overlap with other aspects of well-being, as well as with other objectives in the strategic plan (e.g., learning and engagement).

### **Training in Executive Function**

To support cognitive well-being and the development of the student characteristics identified in the OCDSB Exit Outcomes, early work is being done to develop students' Executive Function skills. Executive functions are foundational skills that support learning and work habits, such as sustained attention, task initiation, organization, and flexible thinking. Well-developed executive function skills not only support academic achievement, but also foster well-being through increased independence, self-advocacy, and emotional regulation. To support the development of executive function in OCDSB students, the district has engaged in capacity-building with educators in this area.

The OCDSB developed an online course 'Executive Functioning and Learning Strategies for the Classroom' which allows for flexible access to course content and targeted staff learning. The course launched in the fall of 2014 for select teachers (i.e., those who received students from a Junior Language Learning Disability specialized class) and by December 2015 was made available to all teachers. As of April 2017, 615 staff members have registered to access the course content.

### **Collaborative Problem Solving Training**

The Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) approach aims to improve underdeveloped cognitive skills (e.g., flexibility, tolerance, problem solving) as a means to address the underlying cause of challenging behaviours. Through CPS, teachers work to identify lagging skills and teach to these deficits. Since 2010, over 500 staff members have received this training. To evaluate improvement in the classroom related to CPS training, staff were surveyed and asked to reflect back to before their training and indicate whether or not they have seen improvements. The survey had a 63% response rate with results demonstrating that:

- 76% of respondents indicated a reduced level of conflict with key students;
- 70% of respondents indicated increased confidence in their ability to manage problem behaviours in the classroom;
- 63% of respondents indicated a reduced stress level as a result of problem behaviours; and
- 47% of respondents indicated a reduced level of conflict in the classroom (note that this question did not apply to 31% of respondents).



The results from the survey demonstrate a positive impact from CPS training both in terms of staff and student well-being. Of the staff who responded, nearly 80% indicated that they use the CPS approach in their current work and 75% agree that the CPS strategies address student needs in the classroom and successfully support students. The results from the survey also demonstrate areas of need. Staff reported insufficient support and the inability to consult with other colleagues using the program as a barrier to implementation. To address this need, Learning Support Services plans to create CPS a designated Google+ Community site to promote district-wide conversations and target training going forward.

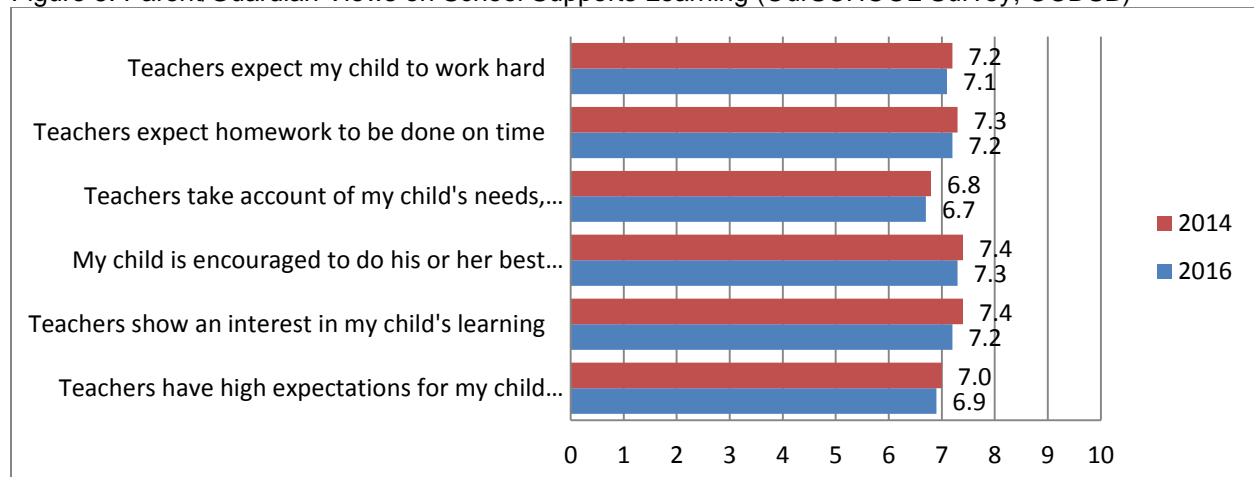
### OurSCHOOL Parent Survey

As mentioned above under socio-emotional well-being, The OurSCHOOL Parent Survey can be used to monitor student well-being based on responses from 8,843 parents/guardians in 2016.

#### School Supports Learning

Parents/guardians were asked about their child’s support for learning at school, which serves as evidence of the child’s cognitive well-being. These questions focused on teacher expectations, encouragement, and interest. Overall, the mean rating was fairly high, with scores ranging from 6.7 to 7.3. Although scores were largely consistent with the 2014 administration, there was a slight decrease for most survey items. As discussed, the slightly lower scores for 2016 must be interpreted in the context of the substantial increase in the participation rate. The item where parents’ indicated the highest of agreement was “My child is encouraged to do his or her best work.” The items with the lowest level of agreement were: “Teachers take account of my child’s needs, abilities and interests” and “Teachers have high expectations for my child to succeed.”

Figure 5. Parent/Guardian Views on School Supports Learning (OurSCHOOL Survey; OCDSB)



Note. Data presented is for the OCDSB. Canadian norms are not available for the Parent Survey.

### EQAO Student Questionnaire Data

Alongside EQAO assessments of literacy and numeracy, students complete individual questionnaires which include questions on self-efficacy. Until 2012-2013, questions

about self-efficacy in literacy and numeracy were asked in alternating years. Therefore, calculations for the previous three-year average are based on 2011-2014 for math and 2010-2011 and 2012-2014 for reading and writing. The results demonstrate that responses have been quite stable over time with the proportion of students responding 'most of the time' (in response to each question) fluctuating within 2% from the previous three-year average. There are, however, differences across the grades and subjects which provide useful insights to the cognitive well-being of OCDSB students. The results are presented in the figures below, with the proportion of students who responded 'most of the time' depicted in the middle bar, with the previous three-year average to the left and the provincial average to the right.

Figure 6. I'm a good reader - EQAO Questions

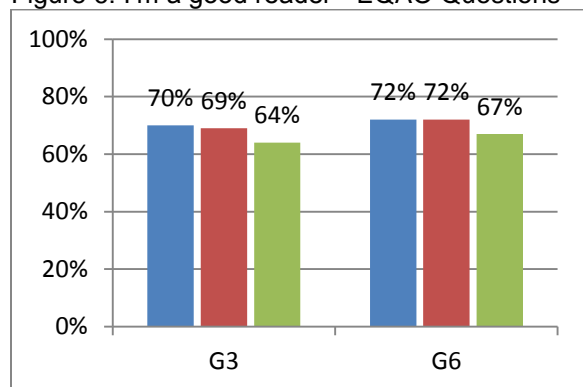


Figure 7. I'm a good writer – EQAO Questions

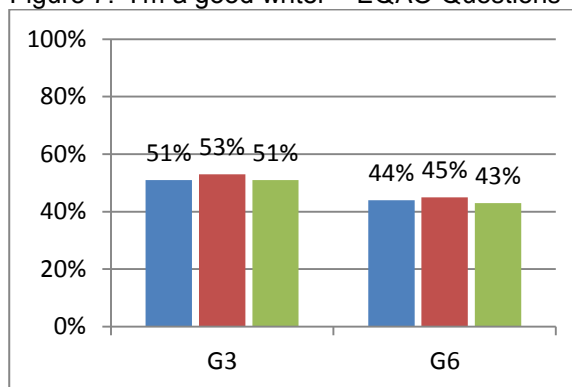
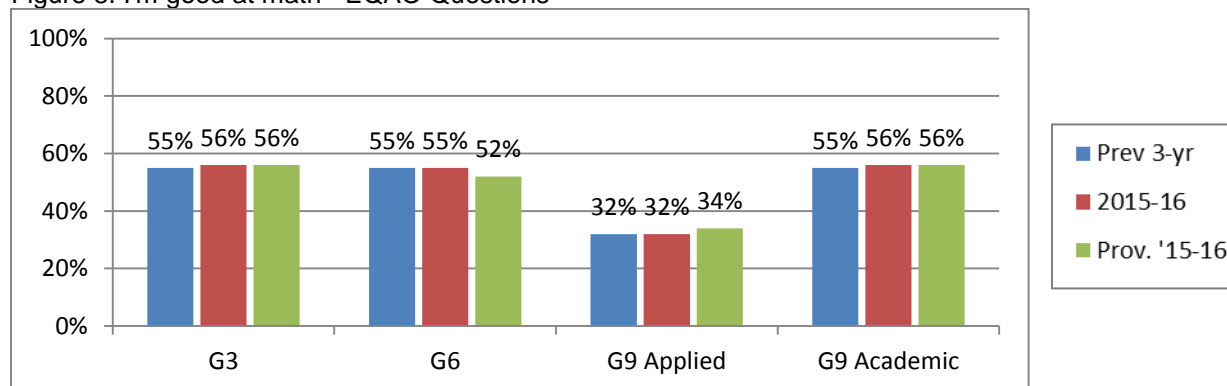


Figure 8. I'm good at math - EQAO Questions



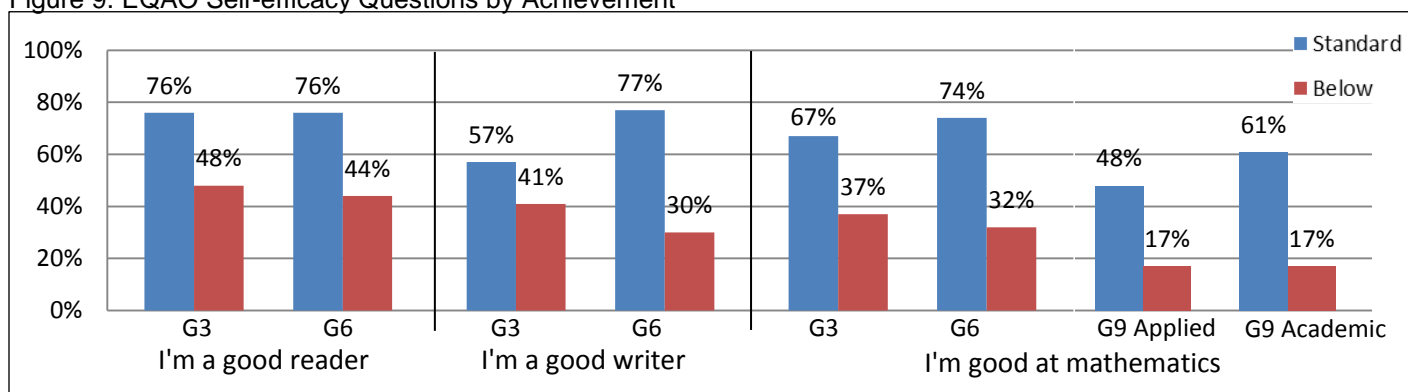
Students tend to be more confident about their reading ability than their writing or math. While grade 6 students tend to be more confident in reading than their grade 3 counterparts, they are less confident in writing and quite similar in math. Compared to the province, OCDSB students are more confident in reading and writing in both grades 3 and 6. They are also more confident in math in grade 6, while equal in grade 3 and grade 9 academic.

The finding deserving of the most attention, based on this data, is the responses of students in grade 9 applied math. These students are less confident, both compared to their peers in academic math and compared to the provincial average of students in applied math. This difference is especially informative in light of the difference in

academic achievement of students in applied versus academic math (with the proportion of students in applied meeting the standard 42% less than those in academic, as reported in the Annual Student Achievement Report 16-125).

The figure below presents the cognitive well-being data in the context of achievement data. Data was organized by subject and by grade, and responses about a given subject (reading, writing, math) were graphed based on whether or not students met the provincial standard for that subject. Overall, those who met the standard on a particular assessment reported that they felt good at that subject 16-47% more than their peers who did not meet the standard. Although this data does not suggest causality, it does highlight the importance of mindset and can be used to inform future work around setting expectations.

Figure 9. EQAO Self-efficacy Questions by Achievement



### **Physical Well-being**

Characteristics of physical well-being include physical activity, nutrition, and healthy choices. Research in this domain has demonstrated the benefits of physical well-being, including better executive function and less stress. One strategy under the well-being objective is to: “Increase opportunities to support and encourage creative expression, physical health and physical literacy.” The information presented below can be used to assess progress in this area.

### **Daily Physical Activity (DPA)**

The Ministry of Education promotes and supports student participation in physical activity through Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) 138: Daily Physical Activity (DPA) in Elementary Schools (grades 1-8). The Ministry requires that all elementary students participate in moderate to vigorous activity for a minimum of 20 minutes, on a daily basis. In 2015, Public Health Ontario conducted an evaluation of DPA policy implementation across the province and found that, based on their survey responses, only 61% of schools and 50% of classrooms were classified as meeting the policy requirements<sup>1</sup>. Barriers to meeting the requirements were identified as competing curriculum priorities, lack of time, teacher readiness, and lack of space. To address

<sup>1</sup> Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Status of Daily Physical Activity (DPA) in Ontario elementary schools: findings and recommendations from an evaluation of DPA policy implementation. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; 2015.

these barriers and support implementation of DPA, the OCDSB held professional development sessions to help teachers find ways to purposefully integrate DPA into their classrooms. These sessions were designed to help teachers overcome barriers by demonstrating how DPA can be integrated with existing activities, rather than being something additional.

Two rounds of training (22 half-day sessions overall) were held in the 2016-2017 school year, during which 174 attendees from 96 OCDSB elementary schools took part. Two secondary school teachers also attended. Based on qualitative feedback from these sessions, there is evidence of teacher learning about new ideas for DPA, ways to integrate DPA into other curriculum areas, resources available, and integrating technology. Feedback from participants also helped identify areas of need, which will help shape the next steps for providing support for DPA implementation. The greatest needs identified included changing mindsets (teachers, students, parents, and administrators), French resources, inclusion/ differentiation, supplies/equipment/funds, and the need for more network sessions related to physical literacy.

### **Participation in Spark Program**

The Spark program promotes good health and life-long wellness for elementary, middle, and high school students. The program was initiated in 1989 by a group of researchers and has since evolved into coordinated packages of evidence-based curriculum, on-site staff development, extensive follow-up support, and expert-selected content-matched equipment. Over 45 refereed research publications have reported evidence of the positive effects of the Spark Physical Education program, including physical fitness, motor skill development, and academic achievement.

The Spark program has been operating at the OCDSB for six years and has grown from implementation in two to 13 schools. In these schools, students engage in physical fitness and then proceed to an academic class. By pairing fitness classes with academic classes, students become more engaged in their learning and retain and apply the necessary skills for learning and academic success. Earl of March Secondary School has evidenced the impact on student well-being through qualitative feedback:

- “ I actually feel good... definitely more fit.”
- “SPARK has definitely helped me focus in my other classes... especially English where I’m normally spaced-out.”
- “I have way more energy throughout the day than I used to.”
- “I feel more confident.”
- “I’ve decided to sign-up for another fitness class next semester.”
- “I’m going to miss SPARK.”

Furthermore, administrators have observed:

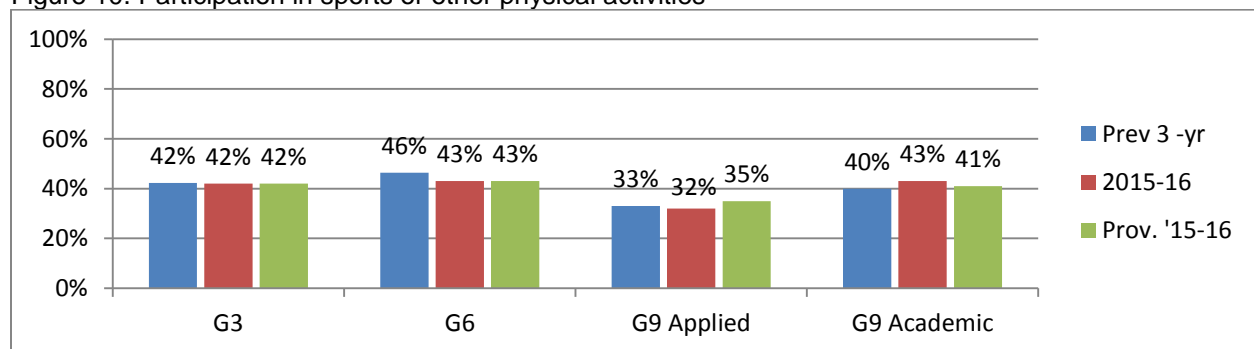
- Engagement at school – students are involved, connected, and supported;
- Improvement in achievement (e.g., all 19 students in a grade 9 applied math met overall expectations with improvements from Level 1 to Level 3);
- Fewer absences;
- Pro-active and healthy lifestyles;
- Individual success – accumulation of credits, 5K runs, personal fitness;

- Most students continued to take Physical Education and Fitness classes;
- Acquisition of essential skills in literacy and numeracy; and
- During the SPARK program, no enrolled students were suspended (compared to five suspensions in the same group of students the previous semester).

### EQAO Student Questionnaire Data

Students in grade 3, 6, and 9 (applied and academic math groups) were asked about their participation in sports or physical activities. The proportion of students who responded most of the time (every day or almost every day) is depicted in the middle bar for each group in the graph below, with the previous three-year average to the left and the provincial average to the right.

Figure 10. Participation in sports or other physical activities

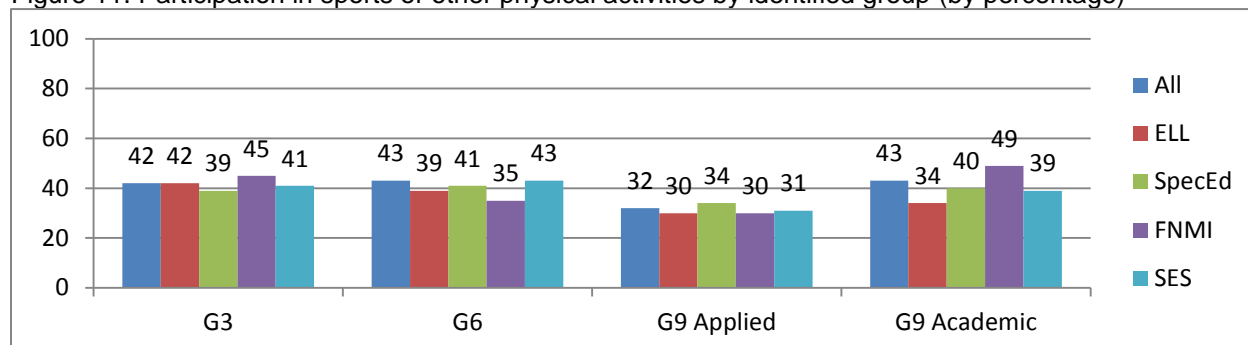


Overall, the data suggests that OCDSB results are fairly consistent over time and with relation to provincial peers. Comparing last year to the average across the previous three years, student participation in sports or other physical activities was the same in grade 3, but dropped by 3% in grade 6. While students in applied math also dropped slightly (1%), students in academic math reported a 3% increase. Compared to the province, student physical activity participation rates were the same in grades 3 and 6. Students in grade 9 applied math reported participation in physical activities 3% less than the province, while students in academic math reported 2% more. It is important to note that labour disruptions may have impacted this data both at the District and provincial level for 2015-2016.

In addition to overall student responses, EQAO questionnaire data can also be disaggregated by student group (see figure below). This allows for further exploration of the responses, with both the well-being objective and the equity objective in mind. The results for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) students should be interpreted with caution given that the small sample size leads to fluctuations for that group. For English Language Learners (ELL), students with special education needs (SpecEd), and students residing in lower-income neighbourhoods (SES), participation in physical activities occurs less than all students on three of the four assessments. Ensuring equity of access and opportunity for physical activities for all students is important work for making progress on the well-being and equity objectives. As such, the OCDSB covers the costs for elementary student participation in athletics, aiming to address barriers faced by low-income families and promote participation for all students.

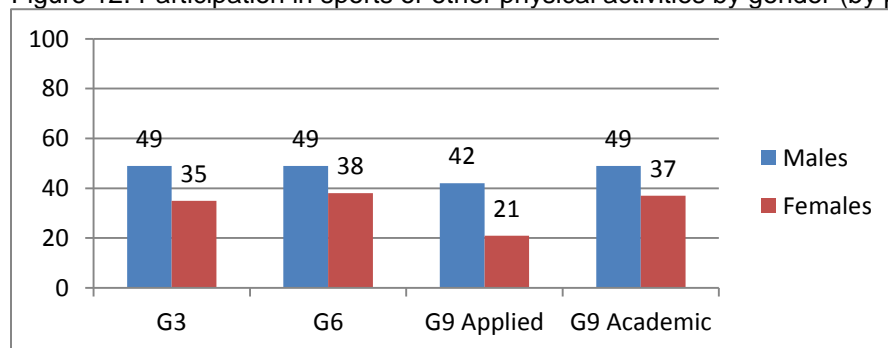
Additionally, there are options available to low-income secondary students through funds which principals can access or apply for to cover fees for athletics.

Figure 11. Participation in sports or other physical activities by identified group (by percentage)



EQAO Questionnaire responses can also be disaggregated by gender (see figure below). For grades 3, 6, and both grade 9 math courses, boys report much higher levels of participation in physical activity than girls do. This is an important finding as it highlights the need for differentiated strategies to encourage young girls to become more physically active in support of well-being. Although girls reported less physical activity, they reported greater levels of participation in art, music, or drama activities (8-10% more than boys). This shows that girls are not less engaged in extra-curricular activities, but rather may be engaged in different kinds of activities that may not have the same physical benefits.

Figure 12. Participation in sports or other physical activities by gender (by percentage)



### Physical Education Enrolment

Secondary student enrolment in Health and Physical Education courses can serve as evidence for student physical well-being. This data suggests that there are some slow changes in the type of physical education courses students are selecting. The Healthy Active Living Education course is mandatory in grade 9 and optional for students in grades 10-12. Recent statistics for enrolment in this course, both by the number of students and proportion of the population enrolled, is presented in the figures below.

Figure 13. Number of students enrolled in Healthy Active Living Education

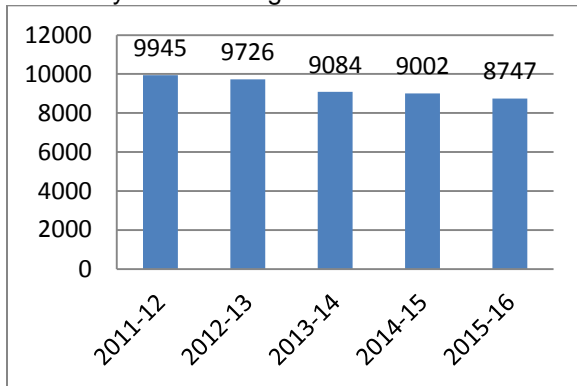
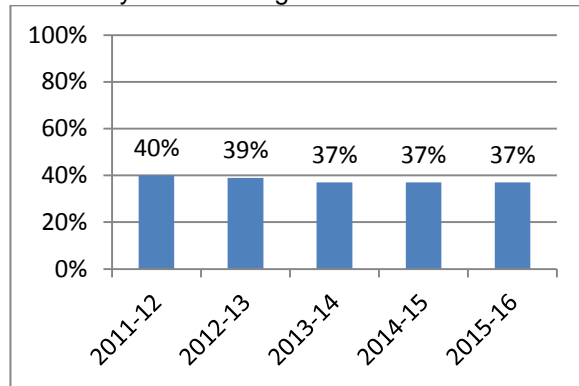


Figure 14. Proportion of students enrolled in Healthy Active Living Education



Although the number of students opting to take Healthy Active Living Education has been on the decline, the opposite trend can be observed for Healthy Living and Personal and Fitness Activities. In recent years, the number of students enrolled in personal fitness courses has increased, as shown in the figures below. This suggests a change in the way in which students are electing to engage in physical education and can be used for future planning of physical education at the secondary level.

Figure 15. Number of students enrolled in Healthy Living and Personal Fitness

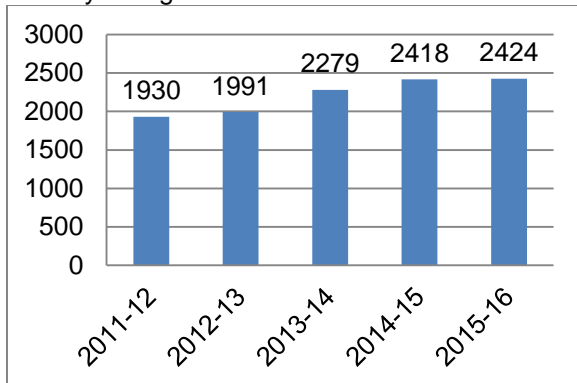
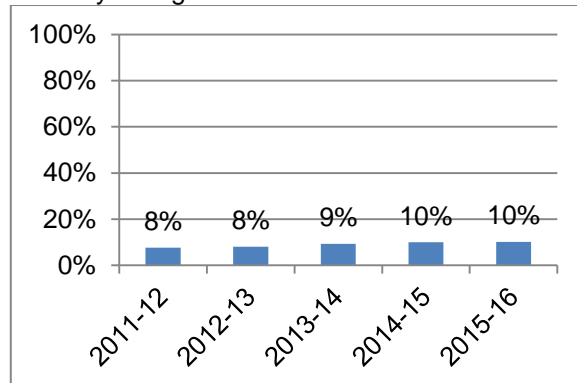


Figure 16. Proportion of students enrolled in Healthy Living and Personal Fitness



## **Staff Well-being**

The OCDSB well-being objective makes specific reference to the well-being of staff and the goal to support a safe and caring working environment. Success in this area has recently been acknowledged in an annual Forbes report which identifies the OCDSB as one of Canada's Top 100 Best Employers. This recognition is based on feedback from randomly sampled employees (estimated 100-200 per organization), who were asked about fairness, opportunities for growth, the value placed on diversity, etc. The responses from OCDSB employees led to the District being the highest ranking school board on the list.

To continue making progress in this area, work to improve staff well-being is underway. Under student well-being, this report reviewed recent work with regards employee training and capacity building so that staff could better serve students. In addition to

supporting students, this training has a positive impact on staff. Furthermore, a number of supports and services are in place to promote staff well-being, as detailed below.

### Supports Provided Through Employee Wellness

The Employee Wellness and Disability Management Division of Human Resources promotes staff well-being by providing supports to OCDSB employees. These supports include facilitating access to benefits (e.g., health and dental coverage), resources (e.g., information on coping with grief or dealing with change in the workplace), and services (e.g., confidential assistance for work, health, and life concerns). In addition, the Division manages supports for disability cases and WSIB claims. Employee uptake on the supports provided has been quite high, as shown in the table below.

Table 2. Employee Wellness Services and Supports

Service facilitated	# of times accessed	
	2014-15	2015-16
Morneau Shepell's services <i>(e.g., fitness coaching, retirement planning, health and benefits consulting, workplace learning, etc.)</i>	1286	1000
Short-Term Childcare Service	<i>unknown</i>	439 <i>(493 days)</i>
Support provided	# of cases/claims	
	2014-15	2015-16
Short and long-term disability cases <i>In addition to which, the Division also provides ongoing support for employees with permanent disabilities that require accommodations and employees with claims made in the previous year</i>	983	1024
WSIB claims	1020	1017

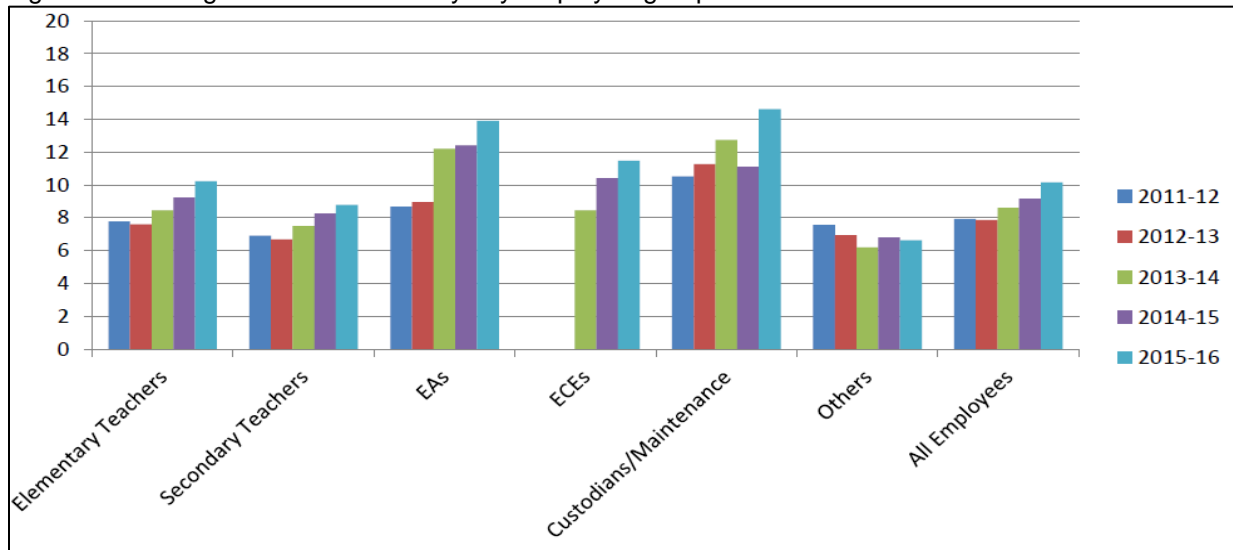
Given the high level of support provided and the large volume of cases, it is not surprising that the disability management team exceeds the current capacity of five employees. Although the supports offered to OCDSB employees serve as evidence of critical work being done in the area of staff well-being, this information also highlights the need for more staff and resources in this area.

### Employee Sick Leave Usage

As was the case for student well-being, staff well-being can be measured by absence rates. The School Boards' Cooperative Inc. 2017 Absence Study reveals an increase in employee sick leave used over the past five years. Since 2011-12, OCDSB employees' average number of sick days has increased from 7.93 to 10.16 in 2015-16. The steady climb in sick leave usage is consistent across almost all employees groups, as shown in the figure below, as well as across the province.



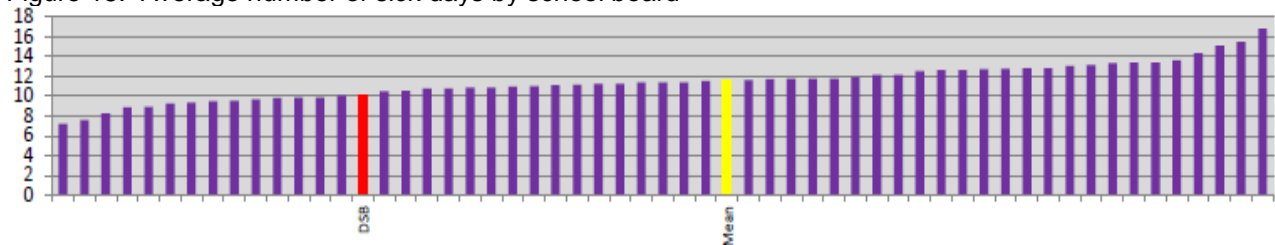
Figure 17. Average number of sick days by employee group<sup>1</sup>



Note. ECEs for 2011-2013 are included under EAs, where data was available.

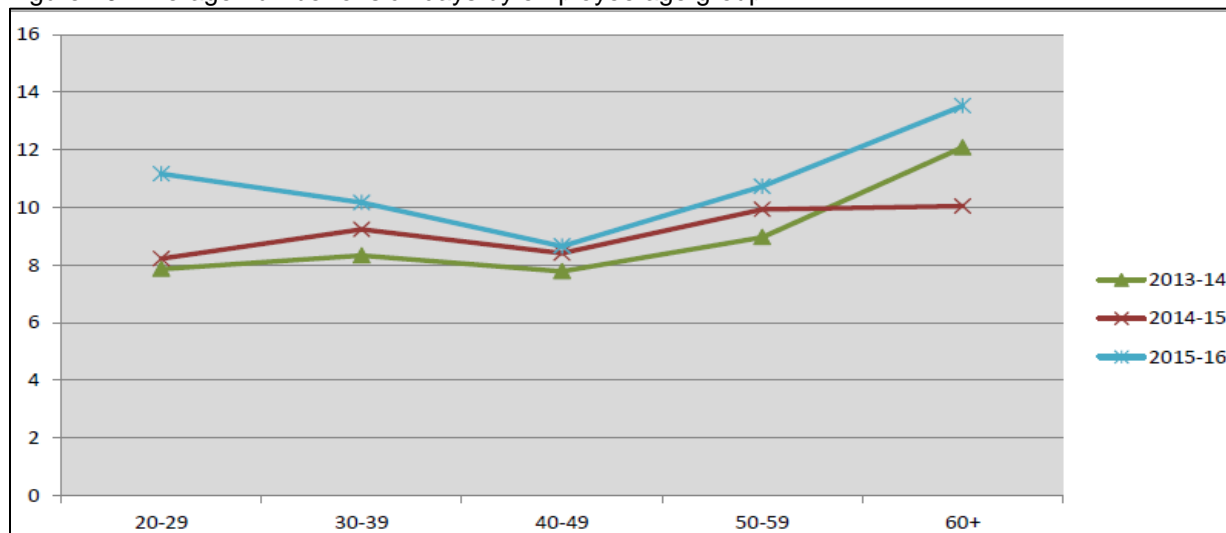
The SBCI Absence Study included 55 other school boards in Ontario that, as a whole, experienced an increase in sick leave usage at a rate similar to the OCDSB. The average number of sick days for OCDSB employees, however, is lower than the rate of 75% of other boards included in the analysis.

Figure 18. Average number of sick days by school board



In further exploration of employee sick leave data, absences can be disaggregated by age. An examination of the data by employee age group suggests that there were increases in sick leave usage for all age groups in the OCDSB, with the largest increases being for employees under 30 and for those over 60. Important to note is that these groups have relatively smaller populations and therefore may present greater variability from year to year. With that limitation in mind, the differences do suggest that the older and younger age groups may benefit from differentiated supports to ensure positive well-being.

Figure 19. Average number of sick days by employee age group<sup>1</sup>



Recent work to reduce employee absenteeism has included the relaunch of the Attendance Management Program and the addition of an Attendance Management Coordinator. The Program's primary focus is to create and maintain a healthy workplace, on the basis that addressing workplace wellness and promoting a healthy workplace will support employees' regular attendance. The program consists of four phases, each of which involves a meeting between the employee, his/her supervisor, the union and, in most cases, Human Resources. Early work under this new program revealed that many cases involved an underlying medical condition, and therefore employees were referred to a disability coordinator. This has contributed to the need for an increase of staff in the disability management team, as mentioned above. Overall, feedback from employees, supervisors, and unions about the program has been positive.

### Employee Exposure to Aggressive Student Behaviour

In addition to employee sick days, one indicator related to staff well-being is exposure to aggressive student behaviour. In accordance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act, employees use a standard form to report incidents of physical force, attempted physical force, or threat of physical force (e.g., a child threatens an employee). In recent years, the number of forms submitted has risen, particularly in the elementary panel. While this rise may be coincident with an increased emphasis on reporting, it is also coincident with anecdotal reports of increased aggressive behaviour in Kindergarten and primary classrooms. This is an area where additional work is being done to understand the issues; this work includes training, classroom supports, implementation of safety plans, etc. In addition, work is underway to improve the reporting of such incidents so that in future the data can be examined with more precision (e.g., narrow in on a specific grade level) and greater accuracy (e.g., take into account duplicates from multiple staff members reporting the same incident).

<sup>1</sup> School Boards' Co-operative Inc. (SBCI) 2017 Absence Study.

## **Training in Healthy Workplaces**

Work to address the need for increased support in the area of staff well-being has been underway with the OCDSB's participation in the Workplace Mental Health Leadership™ certificate program. This program, offered through Queens University and Morneau Shepell, showcases organizational leadership and commitment to a mentally healthy workplace through best practices and innovative solutions. As of March 2017, 89 OCDSB supervisors have participated in this training. These OCSDB staff members participated in modules designed to increase:

- Awareness of the importance of a mentally healthy workplace;
- Accountability for a safe and healthy workplace;
- Recognition of the factors that influence a mentally healthy workplace; and
- Capacity to respond to potential health issues, improving the likelihood of a better outcome.

In addition to participation in the Workplace Mental Health Leadership certificate program, the OCDSB has secured training opportunities for two OCDSB employees in a workshop presented in partnership with Ottawa Public Health. The workshop, *Investing in Healthy Minds at Work*, will take place in the fall of 2018 and will provide resources to OCDSB leaders for promoting a mentally healthy workplace.

## **Summary of Key Findings & Next Steps**

From the vast amount of evidence described above, there are some key findings which are instrumental in guiding the next steps for work in this area.

- Overall well-being:
  - The overall reduction in suspensions indicates progress on student well-being; however, this reduction is driven by a decrease at secondary level. There was a slight increase in elementary suspensions. This data will be further explored in an upcoming memo.
  - Although absences rates have been fairly stable over time, the data shows that the vast majority of absenteeism comes from students who are absent for 11 days or more. Specific strategies to target students who are frequently absent would make for greater progress on this objective.
- Socio-emotional well-being:
  - Results from the OurSCHOOL Parent survey demonstrate inclusivity for students in terms of teachers helping students who need extra support and making sure students are included in school activities. Areas which could use more work include creating opportunities for students learning at a slower pace, and trying to understand the learning needs of students with special needs.
  - A number of employees have received training in a variety of areas related to mental health. Additionally, investments that have been made (e.g., Rideauwood, Well Aware Pilot Project) have shown promising results with the opportunity to continue/expand these supports in the future.

- Cognitive well-being:
  - Results from the OurSCHOOL Parent survey demonstrate supports for student learning, particularly with regards to students being encouraged to do their best work. The area requiring the most attention is teachers taking account of a child's needs, abilities and interests.
  - EQAO Questionnaire results reveal a striking difference in self-efficacy for students in grade 9 applied mathematics, as compared to their peers in the applied course. The link between self-efficacy and academic outcomes highlights the importance of mindset and can be used to inform work around setting expectations, particularly for those students in applied math.
  - Staff training has been a key strategy in supporting student cognitive well-being. Exciting developments include the roll-out of the online course on Executive Function and the positive feedback highlighted in the Learning Support Services preliminary evaluation of the Collaborative Problem Solving Program.
  
- Physical well-being:
  - Results from the EQAO Questionnaire show that student reports of participation in physical activities are fairly consistent over time and in comparison to the province. Of interest, there is the marked gender difference with girls participating substantially less often than boys. Next steps involve differentiated strategies to encourage physical activity for female students.
  - Staff training on DPA has been taking place throughout the year to educate staff on ways to integrate DPA into existing activities. Future work in this area should aim to address barriers identified by staff during training, such as teacher/student/parent/staff mindsets, resources and supplies, and the need for network sessions.
  - Evidence of progress can be seen in the success of the Spark Program. Although qualitative and preliminary, staff and student feedback on the program is highly positive. Next steps in this area could involve supporting schools interested in offering this program and monitoring student outcomes.
  - There is evidence of a shift in the way in which children engage in physical education. Although there is a decline in enrolment in traditional physical education, there has been a recent increase in personal fitness. These trends are informative for planning of physical education at the secondary level.
  - One important next step in this area is the collection of data on student nutrition and eating habits. The OCDSB recognizes the importance of healthy eating and the need for data to monitor progress, in order to better understand student needs in this area and continue moving forward on this objective.
  
- Staff well-being:
  - Forbes' recognition, based on employee input, as one of Canada's Top 100 Employers serves as evidence and positive feedback of the work being done to support staff well-being.
  - A range of services and supports are available to support staff well-being; however to maintain this level of support additional resources are needed in the Employee Wellness and Disability Management Division of Human Resources.

- Employee absenteeism continues to rise; however OCDSB employee sick leave usage remains lower than the majority of Ontario school districts. Strategies for supporting employee attendance are being implemented and thus far are receiving positive feedback.
- The increase in the number of reports of aggressive incidents is important data to consider in the context of staff well-being. Continued work will be done to better understand the issues and provide supports. Further, improvements in the way in which incidents are recorded and tracked will produce more accurate and precise data in the future, which in turn can be used to inform strategies to support staff.
- Next steps will involve OCDSB participation in training through Ottawa Public Health on the implementation of the standard.

The well-being objective is vast in breadth. Specific strategies are needed, as have been outlined, to address specific areas of need within the different dimensions of well-being. However, big picture strategies are also needed to bring cohesion to the work. An overarching strategy for upcoming work includes making links to the development of self-regulation skills. A focus on self-regulation will support many of these areas, and for this reason has been identified as the theme of the 2017 Parent Conference. Furthermore, connections to self-regulation and the Exit Outcomes are being built into the 2017-2018 Speaker Series.

Other big picture strategies have been identified in the strategic plan and the Director's Workplan. This involves continued support for schools in the development and implementation their School Well-being Plans and monitoring of school climate. It will also include the continued work on the Exit Outcomes self-assessment tool as a key mechanism to support student reflection on achievement and well-being.

This report looked beyond student well-being investigate progress in terms of the well-being of OCDSB employees. This is an area that requires more focused resources and strategies in order to move forward on the well-being objective. The well-being of employees is not only reflected in the health of the OCDSB as an organization but has a direct impact on student well-being as well.

### **Guiding Questions**

The following questions are provided to support the discussion of this item by the Committee:

- How does the evidence presented determine our current progress on the well-being objective?
- Have the investments that have been made helped realize the goal of enhancing resources and supports to improve the well-being of all learners and staff?
- How will the work underway support further progress on the well-being objective?
- How does the work discussed relate to the work under the other strategic objectives?
- How does this work align with the framework for student well-being?

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Secretary of the Board