

**Director's Blog: Perspectives Along the Path of Learning**  
~ *By Kathi Wallace, Director of Education, SCDSB*

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I am honoured to serve Simcoe County's public education system as Director of Education. Our dynamic learning and teaching community has been an integral part of my life journey, both as a student and as an educator. Thank you for letting me share my thoughts and ideas with you. Feedback is welcome through the email address: [webadmin@scdsb.on.ca](mailto:webadmin@scdsb.on.ca) (While I won't be able to respond to all comments, I will read every one of them.)

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**'Open Minds, Healthy Minds' – Our Role in Supporting Student Well-Being**

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, 1 in 5 individuals are touched by issues relating to mental illness.

This is a staggering statistic. Once symptoms of mental illness are recognized, help can make a positive difference for the majority of people who are affected.

And that is one of the reasons the Ministry of Education has identified mental health as a key focus. This summer, the Ministry sent school boards information about the government's launch of a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy entitled *Open Minds, Healthy Minds*. You can read this document [here](#).

We all have a role to play in helping remove the stigma attached to mental illness.

In the Simcoe County District School Board, we have already identified student well-being as a key priority along with student achievement - we believe one contributes to the other. Both our multi-year plan, [The Simcoe Path](#), and our Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement and Well-being highlight strategies and goals in these areas. The Ministry's *Open Minds, Healthy Minds* report also identifies clear steps we can take to help remove the stigma, and help students, staff and those in our school communities understand mental illness and get help if needed.

On August 30, during our first Director's Meeting of the new school year for all principals, vice principals and managers, I focused on the theme of mental health and well-being. We featured a dramatic presentation by the group *Elevated Ground*,



which helped us view these types of issues through the eyes of young adults.

We also developed our recent Parent eBulletin, *Bringing School Home*, to further discuss mental health and well-being. Please [click here](#) to read the information we sent to our subscribers (and please feel free to share this information with others).

It is important to remember to nourish our own sense of well-being as we support our students; our children. With this in mind, I would encourage all staff to access the resources posted on the "[Health and Wellness](#)" page of the staff website under "Departments" and "Human Resources."

And, finally, I invite you to review these helpful links:

- Canadian Mental Health Association: [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)
- Kinark Child and Family Services: <http://www.kinark.on.ca/index.aspx>
- New Path: [www.newpath.ca](http://www.newpath.ca)
- Simcoe County Child, Youth and Family Services Coalition: [www.simcoecountycoalition.ca](http://www.simcoecountycoalition.ca)

*All the best,*

*Kathi Wallace  
Director of Education*