

Improving School Success through Parent Engagement during Covid-19

Alison MacLellan MSW RSW

HRCE School Social Worker Eastern Shore
and Marine Drive families

December, 2020

What is Parent/Family Engagement?

Family Involvement:

- Families are involved when they support and participate in their child/youth's well-being which includes school, create home environments that support them and collaborate with the community to provide resources/services to help educational success
- Family involvement is “Doing to”
- Family engagement is “Doing with”

Family Engagement:

- an ongoing process that includes families as active decision makers and equal partners in service delivery at individual, organizational and system levels.

(Ferlazzo, 2011)

How does Parent Engagement help with school?



Addresses barriers

- Social-emotional, behavioural, cultural inequity, diverse learning needs
- Attending to the family's concerns and needs and engaging family members as equal partners in the help seeking process, sustained engagement in services

Increases success

- The Nova Scotia Department of Education Inclusive Education Policy reflects the importance of the well-being of all students and the impact it has on their achievements.

Inclusive Education Approach

- **Family Centered**

A family centered approach is focused on meeting the needs of both the clients and families, where the family as a primary component and unit of attention.

- Build meaningful relationships with students, parents/guardians, families, and other members of the school community to collectively support students' well-being and achievement.



Inclusive Education Approach

Families as Experts

- You are the expert in your child or youth. You can offer valuable insight and knowledge when working with schools and other supports.
- You provide the inside scoop, and we provide our expertise on learning and academics.
- School supports can offer expertise across cognitive, social and emotional wellbeing that can greatly impact students success.





Inclusive Education Approach

- Parents are Essential Decision Makers
- Schools encourage parents to maintain ongoing, regular contact with teachers about their child's well-being, including their strengths, challenges and interests
- **Student Support Teams** are collaborative approach to work with families and students.
 - Regular participation to assist with individual programming or supports for their child
 - *(Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2020)*

Inclusive Education Webinars HRCE

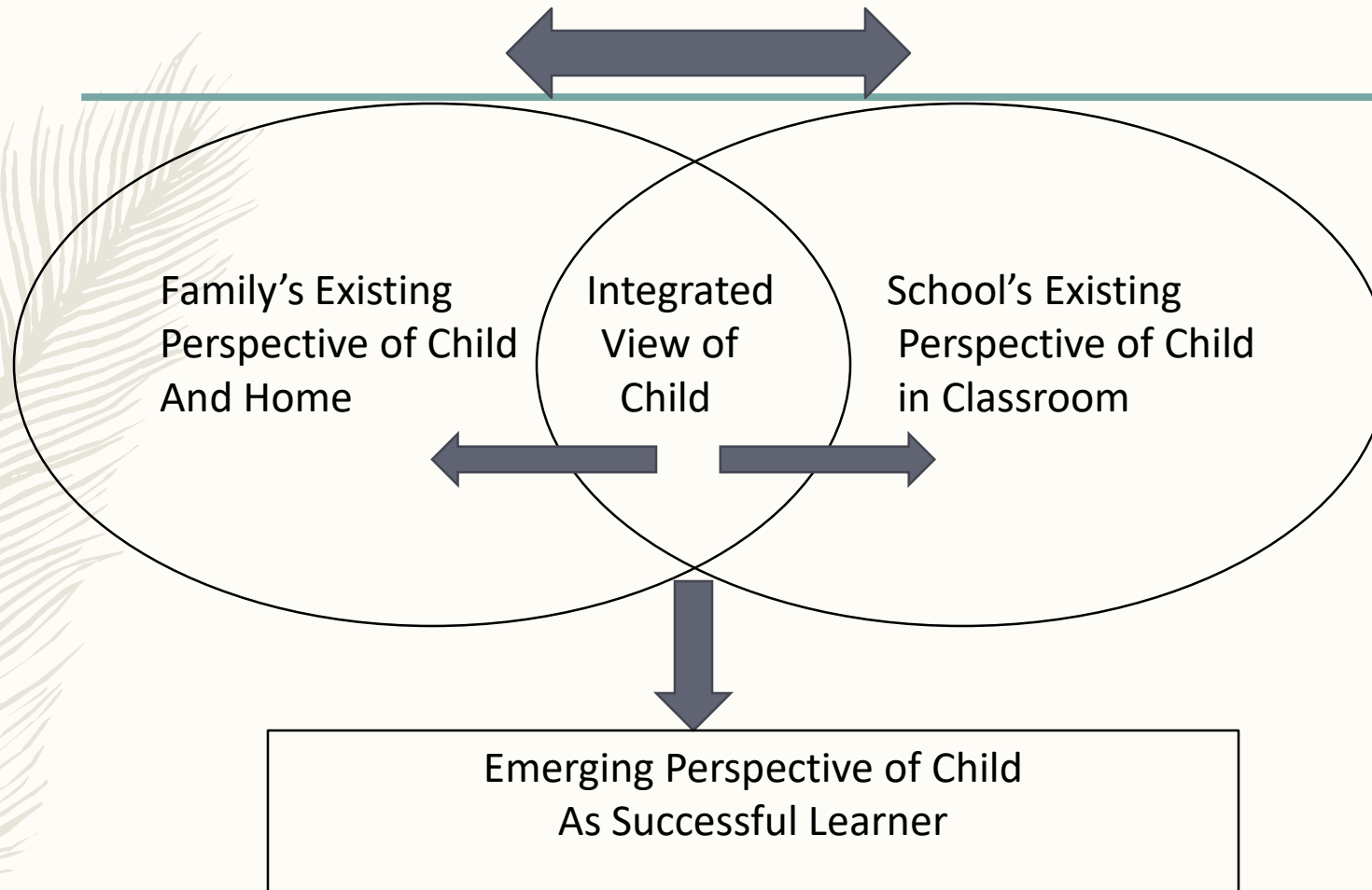
- [Preparing for School Through Relationships](#) (IWK, 2020)
 - Promotes understanding of relational theory and restorative approaches
 - Supports policies and practices that support positive well-being and relationships
 - Importance of inclusive principles particularly with the Mi'kmaw people
 - *Kinu means inclusive*
 - African proverb Ubuntu “I am who I am because of who you are”



Frances Waterman-O'Connell, BACS, ECE, B.Ed., M.Ed., ILA
Safe and Inclusive Schools Consultant
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Tracey Devereaux, B.A., B.Ed.
Restorative Approaches in Schools Coordinator
Department of Justice

Home/School Relationship





Covid-19: our new reality in 2020

- This virus has complicated our lives in so many ways
- Navigating new world of online schooling and working from home and for many this is inaccessible and working from home has not been an option
- Supports and services were shut down completely
- Many are accessible virtually and some began being offered in person but have now been affected once again with second wave
- We acknowledge in our rural community our accessibility challenges are further heightened
 - Lack of affordable, reliable transportation, internet and social and leisure opportunities for students and families in and outside of school

Concerns about impact of Covid-19

- Access to services limited increased wait times for health services
- Lack of structure, routine and safety of school led to isolation, lack of socialization with peers
- Financial difficulties increased stress on families “Most of the kids she sees aren't worried about getting the coronavirus. Instead, they tell her about missing their friends and teachers and feeling anxious that they don't know when that will ever change.”

– *(Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2020)*



Covid-19 Federal Government Financial supports

- [Canada's Economic Response Plan to Covid-19](#) (Government of Canada, 2020)
 - CERB being transferred into EI for qualified individuals
- [Covid Federal Benefits](#) (Chisholm, 2020)
 - Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit
 - Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit
 - EI Sickness Benefits



Things to look for in youth who may be struggling with impact of Covid-19

- Withdrawal from regular peers, activities, academics
- Increased apathy, low motivation, increased sleep
- Increased stress about school, friends
- Generalized anxiety





Navigating Tragedy: What to look for in students significantly impacted

- If students and families have experienced tragic or traumatic circumstances due to Covid-19 or other issues it can be important to identify the signs and ways to help
- [For Parents and Caregivers](#)
- [For Teens](#)
- [For School Age Children](#)
- [For Children of All Ages](#)

(IWK, 2020)

No matter their age, students likely want answers to these questions:

1. Am I safe?
2. Are you, the people who take care of me, safe?
3. How will these events affect my daily life?

Grief Resources

- [kidsgrief.ca – kids grief support resources](http://kidsgrief.ca)
- [Wellness Together Canada](#)
- [Youth outreach programs](#)

Bereavement Coordinator
Pediatric Palliative Care Service
IWK Health Centre
Phone: (902) 470-8942
Fax: (902) 470-7928
[IWK Grief and Bereavement Support](#)

NSHA
Tel: 902-473-3119
Fax: 902-473-3103
CONTACT - PALLIATIVE CARE

- [Grief and bereavement services](#)



Helpful Webinars to Cope with Covid-19

- [IWK Road to Resilience](#) (IWK, 2020)

- Resiliency and Wellness in Uncertain Times-

- Prasanna Kariyawansa, SWC
Program Educator, Trauma Informed Care

- Holly Murphy, RN, BscN, MN
Advanced Practice Leader, Trauma Informed Care

IWK Mental Health and Addictions ProgramWK Mental Health and Addictions Program

- Coping with Uncertainty

- Alexa Bagnell, MD, FRCPC
Chief of Psychiatry

IWK Mental Health and Addictions Program



Resources for Students



- [Mental Health Supports, Children and Youth](#) (Government of Nova Scotia, 2013)
- People can contact the Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 anytime of day.
- The province's toll-free Mental Health Crisis Line is 1-888-429-8167 and available 24 hours, seven days a week.
- If you're experiencing an emergency, call 911.
- [Resources, guidelines for Covid-19](#) (Government of Nova Scotia, 2020)

Attending School During Covid-19



- Difference between Fear and Anxiety
- [Facing your Fears in Covid-19 in the Return to School Process for Educators and Families](#) Webinar by Private Psychologist Cathy Hubley Carruthers, 2020
- Provides Scale to help determine if experiencing Fear or Anxiety
- **Fear** is normal in Covid-19 (concern of impact of virus on self and others)
- **Anxiety** is excessive fear out of proportion of current risk ie inability to engage in certain activities (attendance, participation in classes)



Nova Scotia Back to School Plan

- [Back to School Plan 2020](#) (Department of Education, 2020)
- Three education models
- Health protocol and steps to reduce impact
- Trauma informed, focus on well-being
- Know structure and routine are important for youth, and socialization is vital to well-being so hope to have in person instruction if at all possible

Managing return to school amid Covid-19

- [Helping your Family Return to School During a Pandemic](#) (Abenstein et. al, 2020)
 - Messaging
 - Handwash, handwash, handwash
 - Masks and comfort
 - Physical distancing
 - Family conversations
 - Sick days
- [Covid With Kids: Returning to School](#) (Covid With Kids, 2020)





What can we do to limit spread?

- [Preventing Covid-19 spread in schools](#) (NS Department of Education, 2020)
- [Our Shared Health Our Shared Responsibility](#) (HRCE, 2020)
- [Covid-19 Daily Checklist](#) (Government of Nova Scotia, 2020)

How to Cope for Parents: Tips and Resources

- [How to Parent in a Challenging World- Parent Resource](#) (IWK Trauma Informed Care Team, 2020)
- [Tips for parents well-being during Covid-19](#) (Whittal et al., 2020)
 - Be aware of your stressors
 - Take care of yourself by planning ahead
 - Return to more regular routines and organization
 - Try to be aware of your thoughts



Tips for parents on easing transition back to school



- [Supporting your kids mental health during return to school amid covid-19](#) (Unicef, 2020)
- [Back to School Guide for Parents 2020-21](#) (Cheo, 2020)
- [Covid-19 support and resources](#) (CHEO, 2020)
- [Back to School During Covid-19 tips for managing anxiety](#) (CAMH, 2020)

What can we do to help our students?

- What do to if you're anxious or worried about covid-19 (Whittal et. al, 2020)
 - Unplug and stop watching the news
 - Stop talking about covid-19
 - Protect yourself
- Managing stress and anxiety during the pandemic in Nova Scotia (Smith, 2020)
 - Limit screen time
 - Plan safe ways for students to see friends (distant and virtually)
 - Promote community involvement and engagement with safety in mind
 - Allow children some decision making power
 - Flexibility in expectations



Learning at Home: Worries and Challenges

– Coping with Covid-19

- Take Action
- Take Care of yourself
- Stay connected with family and friends
- Help others if you can
- Self-Management Strategies
- Have a Plan

– Finding Balance at Home

- Importance of play
- Sharing food together
- Physical activity
- Relax and play
- Connect with others
- Take care of your mental health

– *(Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2020)*



Parent Tech 101: Helpful Info for Online Schooling

- [How to join a Zoom meeting \(Zoom, 2020\)](#)
- [TILT tutorials and how to guides](#)
- [Keeping up on your Child's Learning and needs](#)
- [Parents Guide to Google Classroom](#)
- [Tech Tool Kit for Parents and Families](#)

- (Government of Nova Scotia, 2020)



School Success at Home

- [Powerschool 101 for students](#)
- [Powerschool 101 for Parents](#)
- [How to sign up for the parent portal for Powerschool](#)
- Maintain regular contact with teachers and support staff
 - Email, phone or video chat
 - If you have concerns about peer issues [How to report bullying/cyberbullying](#)
 - *(Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2020)*



School Success and Covid-19



- Given the impacts of Covid-19 its important Now more than Ever for parents to be engaged in their children’s attendance and achievement at school
- Currently parents cannot attend school for meetings, however schools are working hard to provide opportunities for families to video conference through zoom, and communicate by phone and email.
- We rely more than ever on virtual technology to assist students with their studies using Google Classroom to get caught up.
- If you have concerns about your students well-being or academic progress at school, please contact the teacher or staff member for help !

References

-
- Abenstein, D, Abenstein, D. and Alli-Shaw, F. (2020). Helping your Family prepare for return to school: during a Pandemic! Retrieved September 3, 2020 from https://www.canva.com/design/DAEELiTDO7M/nJ5f3SdmrDMODZEV9qNMMQ/view?utm_content=DAEELiTDO7M&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=viewer
- CAMH. (August, 2020). Back to school during COVID-19: Helping with children's anxiety. Retrieved October 13, 2020 from https://www.camh.ca/-/media/files/camh_covid19_infosheet-backtoschool-children-anxiety-pdf.pdf
- CAMH. (August, 2020). Back to school during COVID-19: Tips for parents' well-being. Retrieved October 13, 2020 from https://www.camh.ca/-/media/files/camh_covid19_infosheet-backtoschool-parents-wellbeing-pdf
- Canadian Virtual Hospice. (2020). Talking with Kids and Teens about Serious Illness, dying and death. Retrieved September 11, 2020 from <https://kidsgrief.ca/>
- CHEO (August, 2020). Back to School During Covid-19: Tips for Parents and Caregivers. Retrieved September 4, 2020 from <https://www.cheo.on.ca/en/resources-and-support/resources/P6225E.pdf>
- Chisholm, C. (November 22, 2020). Need to isolate or take sick day due to COVID-19? Here are the federal benefits available. Retrieved November 25, 2020 from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/isolate-sick-day-covid-federal-benefits-1.5808635?fbclid=IwAR2A6J9i39JrM7qzBwq2SZo_0JwwdSQhHSzVzVYVx2x6DzEdrXE8YTt2lc
- CovidwithKids (2020). A toolkit for coping with kids at home during the covid-19 pandemic: Returning to school. Retrieved September 3, 2020 from <https://www.covidwithkids.org/returning-to-school>
- Government of Nova Scotia (2020). Curriculum: Parent/Family Information. Retrieved November 1, 2020 from <https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/parentfamily-information>
- Government of Nova Scotia (Updated October 6, 2020). Preventing Covid-19 Spread in Schools. Retrieved October 20, 2020 from https://www.ednet.ns.ca/backtoschool/files-backtoschool/preventing_covid-19_spread_in_schools_en.pdf

References

- Government of Nova Scotia. (2020). Mental Health: Children and Youth. Retrieved October 13, 2020 from <https://novascotia.ca/dhw/mental-health/children-and-youth.asp>
- Government of Nova Scotia. (updated October 5, 2020) Daily Covid-19 Checklist. Retrieved October 19, 2020 from <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/Daily-COVID-checklist-en.pdf>
- Government of Nova Scotia (2013). Families: Prevention and Early Intervention Services for Youth. Retrieved September 28, 2020 from <https://novascotia.ca/coms/families/prevention-and-early-intervention/services-for-youth.html>
- Government of Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. (May 2, 2019). Students and Parents User Guides. Retrieved November 12, 2020 from <https://inschool.ednet.ns.ca/>
- Government of Canada. (November 24, 2020) Canada's Covid-19 Economic Response Plan: Support for individuals. Retrieved November 24, 2020 from <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-finance/economic-response-plan.html#individuals>
- Halifax Centre for Education (September 10, 2020) Our Shared Health: Our Shared Responsibility . Retrieved October 2, 2020 from https://www.hrce.ca/sites/default/files/hrsb/shared_health_shared_responsibility.pdf
- Hubleby-Carruthers, K. (2020). Facing your Return to School Fears in Covid-19: Strategies for Educators and Families in Nova Scotia. Retrieved November 16, 2020 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CW7qUv8NREg>
- Involvement or Engagement? Larry Ferlazzo May 2011 | Volume 68 | Number 8 Schools, Families, Communities Pages 10-14
- IWK Health Centre. (2020). Road to Resilience Webinar Series: Skills and Strategies to Prepare for the upcoming School Year. Retrieved September 8, 2020 from <http://www.iwk.nshealth.ca/mental-health/parents/road-resilience-webinar-series>
- IWK Health Centre (May 4, 2020). Coping with Tragedy. Retrieved September 18, 2020 from <http://www.iwk.nshealth.ca/COVID-19/coping-with-tragedy>

References

- Nova Scotia Health Authority. (2020). Grief and Bereavement Services. Retrieved September 4, 2020 from <https://www.cdha.nshealth.ca/palliative-care/grief-and-bereavement-services>
- Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2020). Inclusive Education Policy. Retrieved September 3, 2020 from <https://www.ednet.ns.ca/docs/inclusiveeducationpolicyen.pdf>
- Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. (July, 2020). Back to School Plan. Retrieved August 20, 2020 from <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/back-to-school-plan.pdf>
- Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. (July, 2020). What We Heard. Retrieved August 20, 2020 from <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/education-what-we-heard.pdf>
- Parent Resource Final. (2020). IWK Trauma Informed Care Team. Pages 1-2. Retrieved October 2, 2020 from http://www.iwk.nshealth.ca/sites/default/files/mha/PARENT_Resource_Final.pdf
- Smith, E. (July 9, 2020). Psychologist warns of mental health costs of keeping kids out of school. Retrieved September 2, 2020 from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/psychology-kids-school-pandemic-stress-anxiety-kiran-pure-mental-health-1.5643653>
- Unicef (Updated August 28, 2020). Supporting your Child's Mental Health During Covid-19. Retrieved October 14, 2020 from <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/supporting-your-childs-mental-health-during-covid-19-school-return>
- Wellness Together Canada. (2020). Mental Health and Substance Use Support. Retrieved October 15, 2020 from <https://ca.portal.gs/>
- Whittal, M., Miller, L., Robichaud, M. (March 3, 2020) What to do if you're anxious or worried about coronavirus (covid-19). Retrieved October 15, 2020 from <https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/what-to-do-if-you-are-anxious-or-worried-about-coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Zoom (2020). How to Join a Zoom meeting. Retrieved November 27, 2020 from <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193-Joining-a-meeting>