



M E D I A R E L E A S E

September 6, 2017

School Attendance Rate on the Rise

Every day counts. That's the message District School Board Ontario North East worked hard to get out during the 2016-2017 school year. It appears it worked.

A report presented by DSB ONE Mental Health and Well-Being Lead Denise Plante-Dupuis at the regular meeting of the Board on September 5th indicates that rates in chronic absenteeism at DSB ONE schools declined by 6 percent in 2016-2017. Student absences dropped from 26.3 percent to 20.13 percent.

"In 2013-2014 we were 7th in the province for chronic absenteeism. 23 percent of our students were persistently absent," said Plante-Dupuis. *"Unfortunately, that climbed a bit in 2015-2016, where about 26 percent of our students were chronically absent throughout our Board. Last year we came forward with an Attendance Tool Kit, to provide some resources to our staff in terms of helping them reduce chronic absences and increase a sense of belonging among our students."*

The tool kit promoted the review and monitoring of school data regarding absences, early outreach to families and students, consistent and intentional messaging beginning in the early years, an increase in community understanding that attendance is important for academic success, and engagement strategies to increase student attendance. It also encouraged good attendance through social media postings, ensured students had a sense of belonging, and celebrated attendance by recognizing good and improved attendance.

"It's great news for our District," said Director of Education, Lesleigh Dye. *"Our staff have worked extremely hard to ensure our schools are welcoming and caring. One of the things I've heard that has made a big difference are those phone calls home to parents. Parents have talked to their children and said 'I've had enough calls...you need to get to school'. That's only one way of supporting students, but there are many, many ways."*

"The 6 percent drop in our absentee rate is reflective of a lot of effort by our staff in assisting students and their families, and recognizing the need to be in school," added Board Chair Doug Shearer. *"I have a lot of respect for our staff. Kudos to them all."*

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District School Board Ontario North East

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"Our next steps are to continue to see that decline," added Dye. "We know we have some schools who have higher rates of absenteeism than others. Our senior team will need to look at the supports we are providing, and differentiate them, so that all schools can see that reduction."

"There's more work to be done, but we're now in a better position to understand what's going on in a more effective manner, to identify trends better, and identify individual needs better," added Shearer.

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