

Understanding Adolescent Depression and Suicide Education for Educators and Community Based Health and Human Services Providers

Workshop Evaluation

Toronto District School Board and Toronto Catholic District School Board

Background:

The Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board invited Dr. Stan Kutcher to present on adolescent depression and critical thinking about adolescent depression and suicide in a two related professional development training sessions in May and June 2011 (the Toronto Student Support Leadership Initiative). The first session (May 2011) was a single day presentation to over 400 attendees. The second session (June 2011) was a day long workshop for about 100 attendees per day, repeated over a period of four days (totally of about 400 attendees).

Introduction of the training program:

The featured training program developed by Dr. Stan Kutcher the Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health, “Understanding Adolescent Depression and Suicide Education” for educators, was modified to TDSB/TCDSB specifications and provided to the audience.

The training was divided into two sessions: The May session, delivered by Dr. Kutcher provided a review of essential concepts, theories, evaluation science and recent research findings in mental health and mental disorders in young people. The June sessions focused on two themes: 1. the identification, diagnosis, assessment, and treatment of depression and suicide; 2. strategies about how schools and community agencies could work together to effectively address depression, with the implementation of the “School-Based Pathway to Care” model (Wei and Kutcher, 2011).

The June workshop was delivered by Dr. Stan Kutcher and Ms. Yifeng Wei in an interactive approach, applying case studies and small group discussion to guide participants in enhancing their professional practice skills. .

Objectives:

- To gain knowledge about youth depression and suicide in a joint learning environment
- To build connections amongst educators and health human service providers in Toronto
- To develop a common language and knowledge for working together, and increase our skill level of working with children and youth suffering from depression

Participants:

There were about 400 people in both the May and June sessions, made up of representatives from children’s mental health centres, and from the school boards, including social workers, psychologists, and guidance counsellors. There were also a few representatives from other human health sector organizations. The majority of the audience had a high level of clinical experience working with this population. Most of the audience worked with youth over

the age of 12 but there were a number of attendees people who worked solely with younger children.

Location:

Monday May 16 - Liberty Grand

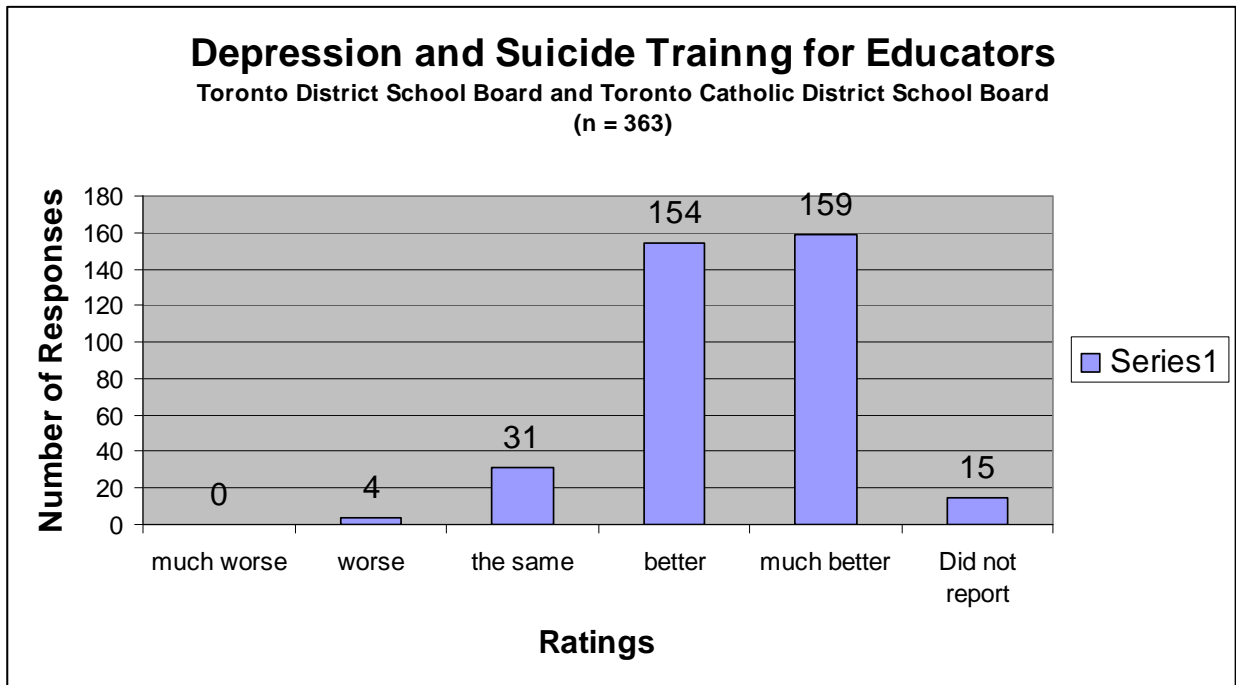
Monday June 13 - Thursday June 16 - Atlantis at Ontario Place

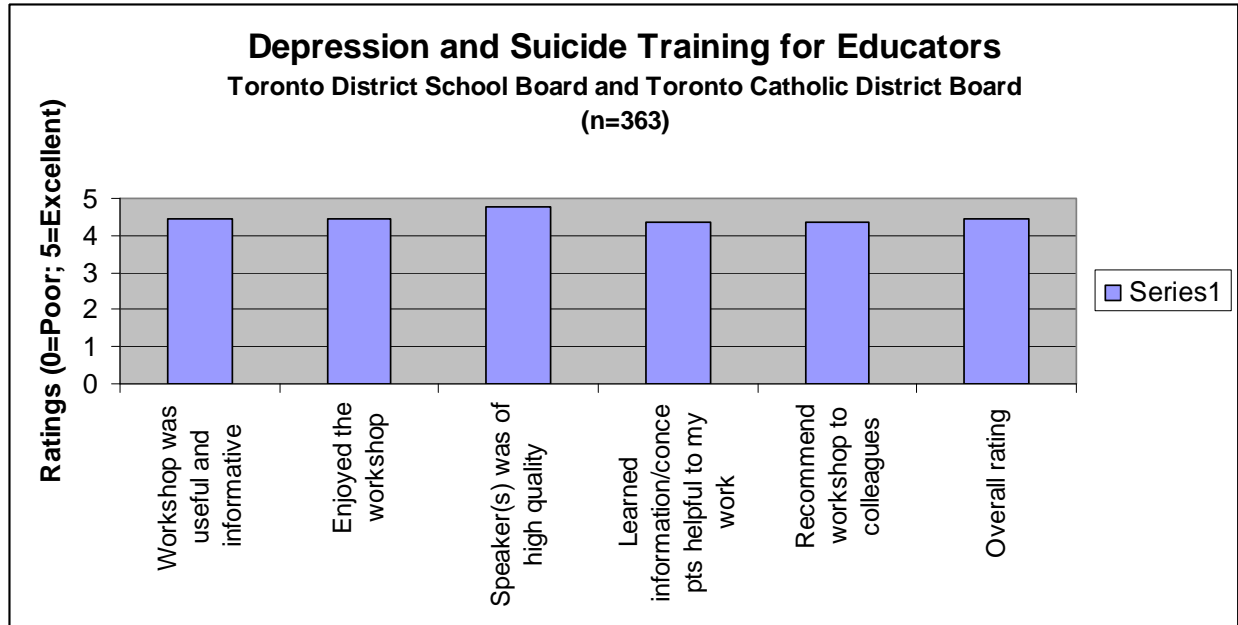
Time:

Monday May 16 – day long session

Monday June 13 - Thursday June 16 – day long sessions

Workshop Evaluation: June Sessions





Comments:

In addition to rating the workshop, 206 participants also commented on what they gained and how the workshop could be improved. Overall, most participants enjoyed the workshop and they expressed their appreciation in their comments. Significant themes emerging with regard to the strengths of the workshop include:

- The content was informative, useful, practical, concrete, valuable, and comprehensive; and the content was presented lively and comfortably, and easy to focus on
- The workshop format was interactive, engaging, and very well planned
- The speaker was knowledgeable, clear, concise, and was able to balance between humor and anecdotes versus serious nature/subject of discussion
- The case study approach was a highlight of the workshop, allowing for effective application of the knowledge into practice
- The resources, especially assessment tools were relevant, effective, and helpful in practice
- Group discussion provided excellent opportunities to meet professionals who work with youth in different organizations

Participants highly recommended the training, for example, some stated:

“Dr. Stan Kutcher’s delivery was relevant, accessible, informative, straightened areas that we need to address in educational settings to better serve, support students’ well being and success”

“Very pertinent information...Enjoyed the learning and the wonderful sessions we can use in our work. Really appreciate the multi disciplinary and multi agency approach”

“Terrific day, topic relevant, informative and interesting, kept my interest all day”

“The case studies and discussion were really great and helped me learn a lot about school system and how they work with dealing with depression and mental health”

Suggestions:

Participants also make recommendations on how the workshop can be enhanced in the following areas:

- The workshop should identify different target audiences and address their needs separately
- The workshop should save more time for networking among different agencies
- Multi dimensional modes of teaching could be implemented in the workshop such as media and video
- More case studies would have been appreciated
- The workshop should be held at the beginning of the school year (September)
- It will be great if follow-up sessions can be provided on other mental disorders
- There is a need to clarify what assessment tools were for what group of professionals