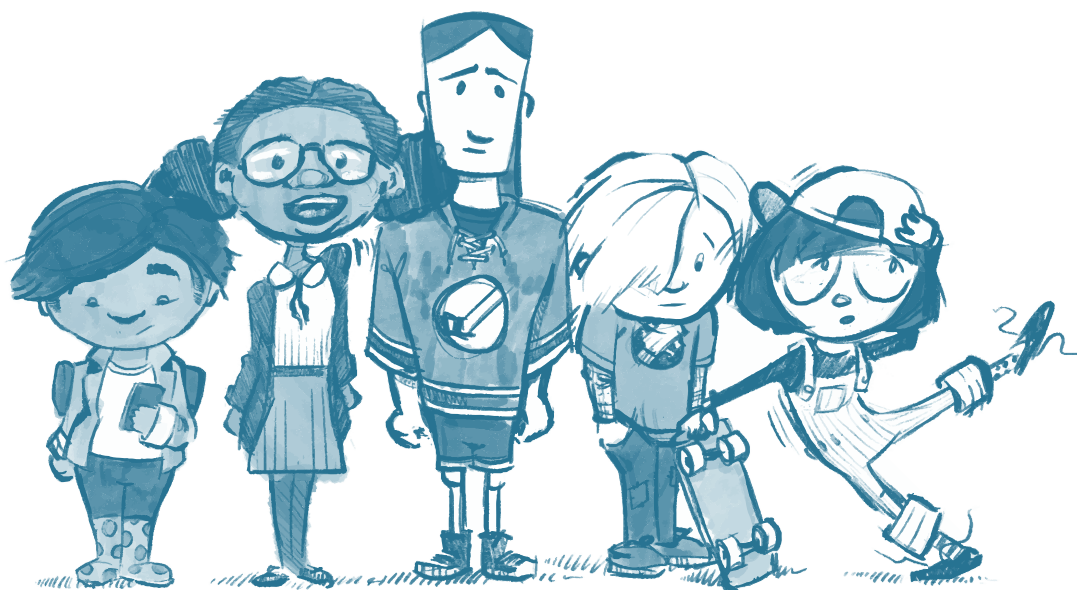


Elementary Mental Health Literacy Resource (EMHLR)



The Elementary Mental Health Literacy Resource (EMHLR) is the first of its kind classroom-ready resource designed for classroom teachers and related stakeholders to teach students in Grades 4 to 6 about mental health.

The conceptual framework of the EMHLR is drawn on an evidence-based mental health curriculum resource for the secondary school setting, *Mental Health & High School Curriculum Guide (the Guide)* (<http://mhcurriculum.org/about-the-guide/download-the-guide/>). *The Guide* has been extensively implemented and researched in Canada and internationally. The development of the EMHLR is also informed by a Delphi study involving 106 stakeholders (classroom teachers, school mental health professionals such as counsellors, psychologists, social workers, school administrators, special education experts and curriculum design experts) from 13 provinces and territories in Canada as well as professionals from four other countries: Japan, the United Kingdom, Finland, and the United States. The EMHLR is further informed by an environmental scan of related Canadian mental health websites and an extensive and systematic literature search of evidence-based mental health literacy programs. The EMHLR was developed in response to the many requests from school partners familiar with *the Guide*, who recognised the importance of introducing mental health literacy concepts to younger students.

Why teach mental health literacy in the elementary classroom?

Childhood and early adolescence (ages 7 to 11) are critical periods when young people develop skills and competencies fostering healthy personal development and social relationships, ethical and responsible behaviours, and productive work skills for life success.

Childhood and early adolescence are also critical periods for the onset and identification of mental and neurodevelopmental disorders. For example, most cases of Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Depression and Anxiety Disorder can be identified by early adolescence. While substantial work has been conducted in the secondary / post-secondary school setting, there is limited information addressing this topic in elementary / primary school settings. Therefore, it is imperative that a mental health literacy resource be created for use by educators for this age group.

What is the difference between social emotional learning (SEL) and mental health literacy (MHL)?

Schools have been a location where a plethora of interventions have been applied, often under the umbrella term 'social emotional learning' to address social and emotional skills (e.g. identifying emotions, perspective taking, self-control, interpersonal problem solving, conflict resolution, coping strategies, and decision making); attitudes towards self / others / school; pro-social behaviours; academic performance; conduct problems; emotional distress; and substance use. Mental health literacy differs from social emotional learning in addressing four interrelated components. While it may overlap with social emotional learning in building strategies to achieve good mental health, mental health literacy focuses on building competency in understanding the various states of mental health; in distinguishing and identifying between mental disorders and everyday life challenges; in breaking the barriers of stigma around mental disorders and their treatments; and in facilitating help-seeking behaviours when needed.



The term mental disorder encompasses both mental illnesses and neurodevelopmental disorders, in accordance with the DSM-5-TR.

What is the purpose of the EMHLR?

The EMHLR aims to help students:

- develop skills to obtain and maintain good mental health
- improve the understanding about mental health and mental / neurodevelopmental disorders
- reduce stigma against mental / neurodevelopmental disorders, and
- promote help-seeking intentions and behaviours when necessary

The EMHLR is flexibly designed for Grades 4 to 6 classroom teachers* to deliver the core concepts and classroom activities within diverse classroom settings. Teachers can adapt the activities using the pedagogies they are familiar with to best meet student needs.

EMHLR Components

The EMHLR provides teachers with classroom-ready lesson plans, activities and easily accessible resources to assist them in applying the content in the classroom (in-person, online and hybrid). The six modules are designed to be taught in sequence. Before delivering the resource, please review all of the modules to familiarise yourself with the content and delivery formats of the EMHLR. Each module is laid out in a similar manner and includes a number of features.

***Please note:**
'teachers' refers
to anyone who
is delivering this
resource

Core Concepts for Educators (Book 1) provides core knowledge to review before classroom delivery of the modules.

Lesson Plans (Book 2) includes various delivery format options to teach the concepts. Please review and choose the activities that best fit the needs and context for your students.

- **Learning Objectives** lists competencies students should achieve after completing the module
- **Major Concepts** presents the central ideas that the module addresses
- **Teacher Preparation** provides instructions on what you need to prepare (e.g. required materials and resources) for conducting module activities



How long does it take to complete the EMHLR?

The EMHLR can be applied as a classroom resource within existing curriculum frameworks to enhance the mental health literacy of both students and teachers. The EMHLR can be integrated as part of a curriculum component within an appropriate subject area. It is suggested to teach EMHLR as a block (six modules taught consecutively over a period of 8 to 12 classroom hours). Each module is designed to be completed within 50 minutes of classroom time except for the module addressing specific mental / neurodevelopmental disorders (Module 4). This module takes approximately 3 to 5 classroom hours.

Are teachers required to take training to implement the EMHLR?

This book, *Core Concepts for Educators*, serves as the foundational learning and training material to prepare educators to deliver the EMHLR in their classrooms. In addition to this book, we have many supplemental learning resources for those wishing to take a deeper dive into the concepts and increase their confidence. Please visit the mental health literacy curriculum website (<https://mhlcurriculum.org/>) to access these additional materials. The MHL team is also standing by to respond to any questions or offer support.

What are the connections between the EMHLR and current school curriculum?

The EMHLR can be taught within an appropriate subject area that shares similar learning outcomes for the EMHLR. The educational jurisdiction in each province and territory in Canada may require Grades 4 to 5 or Grade 5 to 6 students to complete different subjects. Please see the following example of how the EMHLR aligns with Alberta school curriculum learning outcomes.

Each module is intended to be 50 minutes, over a total of 8 to 12 class hours. Except Module 4, which takes about 3 to 5 class hours



What are the connections between the EMHLR and current school curriculum?

The EMHLR can be taught within an appropriate subject area that shares similar learning outcomes for the EMHLR. The educational jurisdiction in each province and territory in Canada may require Grades 4 to 6 students to complete different subjects.

Please refer to your provincial / territorial Grades 4 to 6 subject learning outcomes for possible matches with the EMHLR core concepts. We have created a Cross-Canada Curricular Alignments interactive tool to assist you with this process: <https://mhlcurriculum.org/654654123-2/emhllr-curriculum-alignments/>

You may match the learning outcomes of the required subjects designed for Grades 4 to 6 students in your region with those of the EMHLR and identify strategies to embed the EMHLR into your current school curriculum

The First Peoples Principles of Learning offer a valuable lens to explore the learning in these modules:
<http://www.fnesc.ca/first-peoples-principles-of-learning/>

“ Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.

~ First Nations Education Steering Committee in British Columbia



What are the major concepts for each module?

Module 1: Understanding mental health

- Everyone has mental health
- Mental health has a wide range of states, including no distress, mental distress (aka stress), mental health problems and mental disorders
- Mental health is more than a positive mood (good mental health isn't just feeling happy)
- It is important to use appropriate words to describe our emotions, to regulate and cope

Module 2: The stigma of mental /neurodevelopmental disorders

- Stigma involves negative thoughts, feelings and behaviours towards mental disorders and their treatments
- People with a mental/neurodevelopmental disorder can live a fulfilling life
- Stigma acts as a barrier to people seeking help
- We can all help to reduce stigma around mental disorders (e.g. using appropriate words to describe thoughts and feelings and life events)

Module 3: Mental health and the brain

- The brain changes over time
- Our thoughts, feelings, behaviours and reactions to the environment are linked with the brain
- The brain and the body are connected
- Mental health is a component of overall health

Module 4: Common mental / neurodevelopmental disorders

- All mental disorders reflect difficulties in thoughts, emotions and feelings, daily activities, physical health, behaviours and signalling
- The sooner people receive proper treatment and support, the better the outcome
- It is important to distinguish between expected life challenges and having a mental/neurodevelopment disorder

Module 5: Helping self and helping others

- Everyone has mental health that can be supported and promoted
- There are many ways of seeking help for mental health problems and mental disorders
- Getting help early for yourself and others increases positive mental health outcomes

Module 6: Getting mentally healthy

- What is good for physical health is good for mental health
- Coping with stress appropriately will help to build resilience and new skills
- 'The Big 5' pillars of health (restorative sleep, strong social connection, vigorous physical activity, healthy eating and helping others) enhance mental health