

Compassionate Ottawa

Ottawa, une collectivité compatissante

PROJECT SUMMARY

Dying, Death, Loss and Grief: building a shared language for school communities

Background:

Compassionate Ottawa (CO) has adopted the Compassionate City Charter, developed in the UK, to guide its work. The Charter identifies 13 social changes in key institutions and activities if a city wants to become a compassionate community. A critical element is the school system at the elementary and secondary school levels. CO has identified working with the Ottawa school system as one of its initial priorities.

Over the past year CO volunteers have had discussions with the leadership team at the two French-speaking Ottawa boards (Catholic and Public) to determine their interest in working with CO to facilitate having their systems becoming compassionate communities. The response has been extremely positive and both boards decided to partner with CO and work on a specific project for schools entitled *Dying, Death, Loss and Grief: building a shared language for school communities*.

Goal:

The project goal is to bring the school community (four different audiences) to a base level of understanding (awareness) on the topics of dying, death, loss and grief.

Approach and Methodology:

Schools usually take a specific approach for building the capacity to introduce new topics into their programs. They use a continuum approach that has three phases: awareness for the entire community (common language); literacy (working knowledge for some groups) and expertise (in depth knowledge and skills for specialists). This project will focus on the first phase of this continuum which is consistent with the work that has already been done in developing the provincial mental health and well-being sustainability practices framework.

The project will involve a national and international literature review on the topics relevant to the project scope. The outcome of the review will then be examined by an expert in the field with the goal of identifying information that should be considered for the development of presentation materials. The working group members will review the expert's recommendations, discuss the findings and come to a consensus on what to include in the presentation materials for the four targeted audiences at schools. Once the draft materials are ready they will be tested with a small number of individuals representing each of the four targeted audiences. Feedback received as a result of the testing will be used to finalize the materials.

Output and Evaluation:

Presentation materials with speaking notes will be developed in English and French by spring/summer 2019 to serve as tools to bring the school community (four different audiences) to a base level of understanding on the topics of dying, death, loss and grief. Presentations delivery is expected to start in the spring of 2019.

A list of resources/references will also be developed as part of the project. Project Evaluation will be linked to the overall Compassionate Ottawa evaluation.

Management:

The project will be steered by a working group consisting of representatives from the two school boards, volunteers from Compassionate Ottawa as well as a few organizations who work with children to offer palliative care or other health and social services or are involved in the development of compassionate communities.

Volunteers and various partners involved in the working group will contribute to the project success by not only helping steering the project but also by sharing information, knowledge and expertise to make the project materials of a high quality and helpful for the community.

Timelines:

Literature review and examination of its outcome	by Mid to end of September 2018
Discussion and decision on the content of materials	by end of October 2018
Development of presentation materials and list of resources	by end of November 2018
Translation of materials	by Mid December 2018
Collection of feedback on materials	by Mid March 2019
Finalization and presentation to schools and city of Ottawa	by Mid to end of April 2019
Conclusion and report writing	by end of May 2019

Funding:

A small grant was received from the Ottawa Community Foundation to carry out most of the project activities. Other fundraising activities continue as additional money will be required to conclude the project. The two French school boards have offered to provide in kind resources such as personnel time and meeting facilities to make the project successful. Volunteers and other key partners organizations representatives are also providing their time.

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