### Symptom or Behaviour: Depression-related symptoms

#### Classroom Strategies:

- Seat the student near the front of the classroom where the teacher can readily provide assistance or the student can easily leave as part of a coping strategy.
- Allow frequent breaks to help students with concentration problems.
- Work with the student's parents and the school team to modify the student's program if the student is experiencing extreme tiredness, difficulty remembering things in class, or difficulty concentrating. Modifications could include:
  - adjusting the student's workload;
  - scheduling study periods for times when the student is most likely to be alert; determining a schedule that encourages attendance;
  - using multiple-choice questions instead of open-ended questions or oral questions;
  - providing extra time for the student to complete tests.
- Work with the student to develop clear expectations that he/she feels are reasonable.
- Provide ongoing feedback on progress.
- Help the student to set realistic goals and to monitor his/her progress.
- Work with the parents and school team to help the student plan and complete goal-directed activities.
- Provide the student with guidance on how to organize and plan the day (e.g., use of a checklist or agenda).
- Establish a format and routine for regular communication between the school, parents, and any mental health professionals who may be involved, using a daily agenda or e-mail "check-in".
- Work with the student on developing his/her problem-solving skills.
- Assign one task at a time.
- Help the student break a project or large assignment into smaller, manageable chunks and make a schedule for completing each chunk. Have the student hand in one chunk at a time. Provide positive reinforcement when each unit is completed.
- Make sure the student has all relevant class notes and study information prior to a test.
- Ask open-ended questions for which there is no specific, correct answer, to enable the student to contribute to discussions without fear of "being wrong" in front of others.
Depression-related symptoms continued

- Find ways to increase the student's self-esteem; for example:
  - Identify and focus on the student's strengths and make positive statements about the student's past successes.
  - Help the student to identify character strengths that enable him/her to perform well on a daily basis in many fields of activity.
  - Provide positive feedback and compliments, focusing on specific things the student has done well (i.e., giving individualized rather than merely general praise).
  - Strategically introduce opportunities for the student to participate in structured positive social interactions with peers (e.g., group assignments, small-group work).
  - Work with the parents to find ways to increase the student's interest and involvement in a range of activities to help decrease his/her preoccupation with negative thoughts.
  - Check in with the student each day (e.g., greet the student at the door and ask a question about something of interest to the student).
  - Correct errors or suggest improvements in the context of offering praise and support, as the student may be unusually sensitive to criticism.
  - Check to find out whether the student has a network of support (e.g., parents, friends, relatives).
  - Find ways to connect a student who is socially isolated to peers with similar interests.
  - Provide the student with opportunities to participate in making decisions about class activities and assignments, to help increase his/her motivation, interest, and feelings of success.
  - If a student is returning to school after a hospitalization or a prolonged absence, be prepared to develop a plan for the student's reintegration and create a manageable strategy (both for teacher and student) for catching up on classes and assignments and addressing potential issues related to stigma among peers. Establish a support person whom the student can contact and who will check in with the student regularly during the initial weeks of the transition to school.
  - Be aware of and familiar with your board's procedures for dealing with students who are expressing suicidal thoughts.

Source: Based on information from: Calear 2012; CYMHIN-MAD, 2011;
| Student diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder | • Establish a method for regular communication between the school and parents about the expectations for the student and/or homework tasks.  
• Consult with parents and mental health professionals (if involved) to identify strategies they recommend and to determine what strategies may best help the student.  
• Provide clear, simple instructions to the student, in small chunks, since complex instructions may intimidate or confuse the student.  
• Consult with parents and mental health professionals (if involved) for information about the student's symptoms and to learn if there are any limitations that may affect his or her ability to learn.  
• For students who are taking medication, it may be appropriate to try to discuss with the student and/or parents whether there are any potential side effects, how they may affect the student's learning, and how to adjust instruction to compensate.  
• Check in with the student on arrival to determine how the student is feeling and, where possible, provide alternatives to stressful activities on difficult days. Adjust the homework load to prevent the student from becoming overwhelmed.  
• Adjust expectations until symptoms improve. Helping a student choose and focus on attainable goals when symptoms are more severe will improve the student's chances of success.  
• Set up a procedure to allow the student to exit quickly and safely from an overwhelming situation.  
• Allow extra time for the transition to a new activity or location. Refusal by a student with bipolar disorder to follow directions or move on to the next task may be caused by anxiety and may not be intended as defiance.  
• Use strategies at school that are consistent with those used at home.  
• If a student is thinking that everything is going wrong, help him or her to focus on things that are going right (e.g., have the student write about something that has gone wrong and on.  
• Work with the parents and the school team to develop supervision and safety plans to address behaviour that may put the student or others at risk.  
• Monitor what takes place within the classroom and between classes (if possible) to help students for whom transitions are difficult.  
• If a student is returning to school after a hospitalization or prolonged absence, be prepared to develop a plan for the student's reintegration and create a manageable strategy (both for teacher and student) for catching up on classes and assignments and addressing potential issues related to stigma among peers (e.g., whether and how to explain the illness to peers; managing fall-out from extreme behaviour or behaviour that is perceived as bizarre by the student's peers). Establish a support person whom the student can contact and who will check in with the student regularly during the initial weeks of the transition to school. |

Source: Based on information from: Hincks-Dellcrest-ABCs, n.d.; CYMHIN- MAD, 11